

Adolescence and Extra-Curricular Activities: A Study of Select Schools in Kolkata

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by

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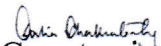
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Certified that the thesis entitled

Adolescence and Extra-Curricular Activities: A Study of Select Schools in Kolkata submitted by me for the award of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Arts at Jadavpur_University is based upon my work carried out under the supervision of Prof. Dalia Chakraborty, Department of Sociology, Jadavpur University.

And neither this thesis nor any part of it has been submitted before for any degree or diploma anywhere/elsewhere.


Countersigned by the
Supervisor:
Dated:


Candidate:
Dated: 10/04/2022

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Any sincere ambition finds its motivation in significant life events and therefore people located in there. This research endeavor too ensued from multiple motivations, as generated by my supervisor, teachers, parent and surely the adolescents in my field of study. Though pursuing research and writing a thesis is quite a personal engagement, but definitely not a selfish one. For I always saw a bigger promise in revisiting education and more so for the adolescents.

Every research encounters ordeals of its kind, both personal and professional. And during those hours of crumbling down some people stand tall to pull you up and one can never thank them enough.

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Arunima Bhowmick

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Chapter 1

Introduction

This research was embarked upon with a very humble yet inviting purpose in view. Like any research it began with a dream to unravel the intricacies of training at the same time self-inducted learning that happens at the fringes of formal education. Indian education system, and particularly schooling processes have been time tested with long drawn tradition of home-bound learning to Gurukul set ups to semi-formal ‘patshalas’ and finally the formal modern education that came holding the hands of colonial rule. At every stage of educational development, the relationship between the teacher and the taught remained the pivotal point of interest as this gave way to exchanges which brought into its folds many more forms of influences and socialization, like that of the parents, state and religion. Schools today, unlike the pre-modern times, are expected to follow the universalistic and non-affectual modes of training the pupils of an impressionable age. And if I take the leverage to put across this functional attribute of education in a more rigid term, I would argue it to be fulfilling the task of disciplining a more or less passive population, who are yet to be adults, and thus ready to be turned into desirable citizens of tomorrow. The social and cultural significance of having such an institutionalized body for imparting requisite training, more often than not, lies in the political needs of the time that it comes to exist in. However, the training remains pertinent at any point, but with changes in mode of execution. Identifying the changes in mode of training remains a prime concern both in education and sociology of education in particular, as sharp inequalities, discontents over the state

responsibility and intervention, course content, rising aspirations of the middle class, equality of opportunity, and the promises of employability have marked the contemporary education scenario of India.

Formal education, both at primary and secondary level, is structured around curricular programs and extracurricular activities, fulfilling certain manifest functions from early childhood to adolescence. Such programs and activities build up on several cultural and socio-political ideas, which are in turn observed as a part of achieving educational goals. However, lying beneath organized policies and regulations are considerable latent functions that are fulfilled without much conscious effort. In this light, I took a plunge into the modern schooling system to locate the role of extracurricular activities and the associated hidden curriculum. The aim was to delineate the changing patterns of extracurricular courses and exploring its influence on adolescents. The initiative was taken keeping in mind that it would help highlight how the larger socio-cultural and political forces come to play in training the future citizens. In turn, the lacunae in these training programs and the education system at large could be located.

Objectives of the Study

Discussion on the aim of this study would only be fruitful once the literature and epistemological positions are flagged. Thus, listing out the objectives discretely shall be slightly tedious, as overlapping concerns and perspectives are sure to overpower. Nevertheless, some key concerns that have motivated this study could be posited below and in later sections be substantiated with specific

secondary literature and primary field data that coaxed me to fulfil these objectives

1. The need to explore the domain of extracurricular within the field of education and account for the changes.
2. Understand the need and utility of these extracurricular activities in relation to the adolescent age group.
3. Locate the political and cultural impingements upon this field of experience in education.
4. To comprehend parents', teachers' and other agents' (within the schooling system) negotiation in relation to construction of adolescence.
5. Delineate the religious practices that intertwines with varied extracurricular activities at schools.
6. Explore the economic forces functional in shaping the field of extracurricular and its corresponding repercussions on adolescence.
7. Trace the ideas of gender as they come to exist through educational practices, and more specifically through extracurricular activities.
8. Find how other lines of stratification in terms of class, religion and ethnicity gets reproduced or obliterated while carrying out these ECAs.
9. Observe how the adolescent self-negotiates and emerges through the field of education, both dependently and independent of the other controlling social forces and agents.

With the above objectives in mind and methodological mooring at hand, the larger aim was to understand the adolescence through their engagement in the sub-field of extracurricular activities within the schools of Kolkata.

Objective of this research could be further exemplified as I take a turn towards the plethora of work that already exists in the domain of school education at large and extracurricular activities involving the adolescents in particular. Thus the literature reviewed and the secondary sources of information chanced upon in the form of advertisements, local parable, regional adolescent fictional characters, letters of educationists, government programs, policies and orders in that regard, and many more helped further distill ‘where to look’ and ‘what to look for’ to fulfil the aim of this study. Nevertheless, some social and disciplinary commitment to produce knowledge that is significant in building upon the discourse on education cannot surely be ruled out. So I believe it would be judicious to briefly run through the literature and its methodological influences, which I engaged with continuously to arrive at a clearer and elaborate understanding of the objectives at hand.

A Slice of the Literature

Having taken interest in the sociology of education and history of modern education in India, I started to explore the work of Abhijit Pathak, Krishna Kumar and N. Jayaram alongside short essays written by Rabindra Nath Tagore. In their work and further I explored how the western education, implemented in India during colonial rule, and its varied ramifications. Although the colonized subjects were initially denied education, it was later contended that by educating

the social elites of India the colonial mission could be better executed. Education, on these lines, was conceived as a way to cultivate ‘civilized’ beings who would work toward the professedly shared aims of both the ‘colonised’ and the ‘coloniser’. References to Macaulay’s instruction on colonialism and its civilizing mission in a speech in 1833 revealed how he envisaged modern English education as the only hope for India. The advent of missionaries and educators to India was allowed keeping such ideas in mind. Such was his belief in the supremacy of English education that he said:

We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern, a class of persons Indian in blood and color, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals and intellect. (quoted in Ghosh, 1993: 185)

Thus colonial education found legitimation as a moral and ideological apparatus for training the Indian masses. And its enticement wasn’t easy to resist as even the progressive thinkers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy saw possibilities of a successful renaissance in the country, more specifically in Bengal, through English education. English education with its mission to uplift the masses surely transmitted the ideals of colonial citizens, leaving a deep impact on our collective minds. Krishna Kumar (1991) has rightly observed that the colonial citizen became a new symbol of secular identity. He has later discussed how such ideological control and cultural negotiations percolated into structured classroom education, making it a fertile location for the state to deploy its top-down approaches to influence the people in post independent era as well. However, it would be unfair to conceptualize the Indian education of pre-colonial era as free of all pathologies and any such legitimization of hierarchical

culture. After B.R. Ambedkar and Jyotirao Phule one can surely not totally overlook the preeminence of Brahminical supremacy within the education system then. Thus the ideological intervention in education and training based on those lines were present time immemorial. In fact, such practices even continued under the garb of secular education and universal elementary education in the post-independence era.

In contrast to these traditions of training with high-handed prescriptions along the line of inequality, Tagore and Gandhi raised their voice in dissent. From their writings and educational initiatives one could see that they were neither negating the essentials of modern education nor were they interested in reviving orthodox ways of teaching-learning. Rather, they proposed alternative paths based on counter philosophy. Gandhi, through his ideas on 'Nai Talim', sought education to provide a mind-body-soul development. He wanted to introduce handicraft in schools which would enable the learners to relate ideas taught with practice and generate enthusiasm. A kind of vocational learning was on Gandhi's mind, which he thought would generate employability and profit-yielding jobs in the days to come. Moreover, he saw introduction of craft on an extensive level in schools as a way to supplement bookish learning. He believed that through hands on crafting activities students shall gain knowledge in other branches of science and literature. He often said: "Why should you think that the mind is everything and the hands and feet nothing?" (Gandhi, 1951:73). Gandhi's revolutionary ideas on work education appeared extremely pertinent and thus policies imbibing the same in the post-independence era.

In a similar vein, Tagore too saw blind emulation of English education and mindless dependence of bookish learning as life negating. He wanted students

to draw learning resources from pursuits in music, drama, dance, painting and handicraft. These according to Tagore would lay the foundation for learning through life-practices and thereby ensure overall development of the personality. His ideal of 'Tapovan' — a sacred place amidst the nature where the *guru* and *shishya* shall exchange knowledge and wisdom—was something to reckon with at Shantiniketan. He tried to create such a space in Shantiniketan and denounce the factory-like schooling system that produces products in place of creative and thoughtful adolescents. He emphasized that through creative pursuits only could a child engage in a learning process that allows freedom and thus a pronounced sense of joy. To refer to his essays on 'Siksha' as published by Visva Bharati (1397), he wrote: "the joy of self-realization through the easy path of book learning does not have the same sense of fulfilment as one has in winning the truth through an arduous assignment" (Bhaya, 2012: 135) It is from the writings and speeches of such great thinkers of independent India that this research found a historically relevant indigenous philosophy, sustaining ideas on education that happens outside the textbooks and classrooms. Thus extracurricular activities, though not under the similar nomenclature, remained a vital alternative strain in education, as conceived by political and cultural revolutionaries. In doing research on extracurricular activities in schools of Kolkata one needs to orient oneself with the long history of cultural renaissance and its community of stalwarts in the field.

Building upon the notions of training as an integral part of education and trying to understand the same through extracurricular activities, I moved further to explore the western philosophical and theoretical work in similar light. Emile Durkheim's (1925) notion of acting individual was found very interesting

herein. In his famous work '*Moral education*', Durkheim has given a vivid account of socialization of the adolescents. Through education in particular, individuals are necessarily socialized into "good" citizens and subsequently produce social action that harmoniously converge varied interests. From Durkheimian perspective then, education was devoid of power relations and would work towards the betterment of society as a whole. In his seminal work '*Moral education*' (1925), Durkheim talk about the second phase of childhood where one confronts a kind of 'normlessness' and thereby needs to instill a sense of discipline, alongside retaining the individual will and autonomy in meeting collective interests. While referring to the second period of childhood as the critical moment in the formation of moral character, Durkheim writes:

.... if, beyond this second period of childhood-i.e., beyond school age-the foundations of morality have not been laid, they never will be. From this point on, all one can do is to complete the job already begun, refining sensibilities and giving them some intellectual content, i.e., informing them increasingly with intelligence. (Durkheim, 1925: 18-20)

Durkheim transpired codes for inculcating a spirit of resignation and finding legitimate ambition. He believed that aligning those ambitions with social principles was the ideal way to generate happiness. While Durkheim was interested in locating the construction of social citizens Talcott Parsons (1942) was interested in seeing how education produces socialized action in tune with demands of employment. Talcott Parsons' notable discussions on "youth culture" in 1942 was a significant watershed for the construction of a new and significant stage of life called the adolescence. We can point out here how sociologists patronizing a functional school of thought have always upheld the

positive function of education, with specific intellectual and social commitment to restore order in society.

The functionalist approach to education no doubt remains a qualifying one, as it upholds and emphasizes the herculean task of education to organize training in modern society. But one cannot possibly ignore the elements of control and corresponding apparatuses at play to fulfil such training. The layers of politico-economic directives and socio-cultural ascendancy that education contain within itself needs unfurling. Several theorists like Pierre Bourdieu (1977) and Paulo Freire (1971) engaged in critical exploration of the institution of education. While analyzing pedagogic practices Bourdieu (1984) poised schools as institution harnessing and amplifying social inequalities. Bourdieu saw schools to be organized around social norms and cultural values representing the middle classes. Thus students from relatively privileged background enter the school system to seek validation for their class position, and use it as a site to reproduce gestures, lessons, behaviors befitting the same class position. They reproduce forms of cultural capital in its embodied/symbolic and material/objective nature through consolidation of their aspirations and certification of their manners within educational institutions. On the other hand, students of dominated classes, experience schooling quite differently. For them school serves as a site for alienation, isolating and discriminating them by posing challenge to their social and cultural ways. Since the school system comes to exist through practices of the dominant classes, it percolates the image that marginalization of students not coming from the dominant class is a product of their own deficit. Bourdieu argues that the sympathetic tone set by the dominant class around cultural deprivation in no

way tries to reverse it, rather it acts as a tool to legitimize the domination. He argues that the education system rather becomes “an instrument of reproduction capable of disguising its own function” (Bourdieu, 1986: 55).

However, even before Bourdieu Paulo Freire, in his famous work, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1971), expressed similar views. His ideas on ‘banking’ system of education and how the education imparted to the lower, working class students remain bereft of critical pedagogic intervention is worth mentioning. In Freire’s account, the teachers think, and the students are thought about; the teacher acts and the students have the illusion of acting through the action of the teacher. In doing so, a subtle consciousness is aroused regarding “the need of them to be ‘integrated’, ‘incorporated’ into the healthy society that they have forsaken”. (Freire, 1971: 112) There seems to be a strong absence of a dialogical exchange in education, rather the effort remains to make the girls and boys more ‘human’ as per the understanding of the powerful/oppressing class in an urban scape. Hence transforming them into objects that need to be guided and cared for while leaving them with a sense of permanence of their ‘trying’ conditions, lurching for an unachievable change ever after. Thus, interest lies in changing the consciousness of the oppressed, not the situation which oppresses them.

Why Delve into Extracurricular?

Literature on education and postulates for training rendered, thereby guides this research into re-establishing as well as revising the epistemological exercise done till date. With that aim the sub-field of extracurricular was selected to locate how the educational processes are carried out through these activities

within the schools. Adolescents' participation in extracurricular activities is often associated with positive behavioral outcomes, implying that such activities directly decide their development. Researchers have found association between extracurricular participation and academic achievement (e.g., Broh, 2002; Winne & Walsh, 1980); social adjustment (Mahoney, 2000; Mahoney & Cairns, 1997) and high school completion and engagement in risky behaviors (Mahoney, 2000; Eccles, J. and Barber, 1999). Questioning such uniform and universalizing impact of extracurricular activities on adolescence, Coleman (1961), in his comprehensive study on adolescent society, has focused on the determining relation between distinct social context and extracurricular activity participation.

Besides, some empirical studies in the same light have also been done. For instance, Parbin Sultana (2012) conducted a study on the extra-curricular activities carried out in few secondary schools in Assam. This study particularly focused on the problems of co-curricular activities. Her study reveals that many of the schools have no playground to conduct co-curricular activities and many schools have not yet been able to introduce some important co-curricular activities. Annu Singh and Sunita Mishra (2013) conducted a study in Lucknow (Uttar Pradesh) and found that students of private schools showed better participation in extracurricular activities than students of public school. Students in private school show more positive feeling and find outlet for their competitive spirit through engagement in extracurricular activities. However, the study also argued how participation in extracurricular activities takes time away from regular curriculum-based studies.

Jacquelynne S. Eccles & Bonnie L. Barber (2003), in their research on extracurricular activities and adolescent development under the Michigan Study of Life Transitions tried to focus on the association between participation in extracurricular activities and educational attainment. They summarized that participants in most structured extracurricular activities did show better educational outcomes in comparison to non-participants. Participation in religious activities revealed lower rates of drinking and other risky behaviors. Identify formation and peer group memberships could also be understood in mediation with varied ECA participation among the adolescents. Nancy Darling & Linda L. Cadwell (2005) too conducted a study to understand adolescent adjustment and revealed similar positive attitude with regards to participation in ECA. Donna Eder and Stephen Parker (1987) while trying to locate cultural production and reproduction of gender within schools traced a relationship between participation in athletic-related extracurricular Activities and the Peer-group culture of the students. They examine certain extracurricular activities that influence the predominant male and female cultures of early adolescents. For instance, in sports Male athletes are encouraged to be achievement oriented and competitive, and female cheerleaders are reminded the importance of appearance and emotion management. Such studies within the country and beyond have definitely guided my research. More so the studies have given enough impetus in believing that the domain of extracurricular in education is surely something that needs further reviewing with changing socio-cultural fabric. A fresh enquiry into the role of extracurricular activities entails contextualizing the action (institutionalized forms) and act (particularistic negotiations) in a distinct social setup to understand both—the point of

convergence and recent divergent offshoots. Social context redefines the relationship between extracurricular activities, associated values and identity. Adolescents' activity-based identities that are nurtured by community and school-based value system are susceptible to change with regard to changes in economic, social and cultural conditions that they are played out in. Hence studying the social context (the school, teachers, parents and peers) and its influences in deciding extracurricular participation among adolescents became indispensable for this research.

While identifying the social values associated with different extracurricular activities as unveiled in the literature and as gathered from my pilot study with the adolescents, I came across few generic attributes. Students do enjoy a choice in pursuing extracurricular activity, but surprisingly, most of these choices are guided either through direct intervention of parents and schools or by a subtle sense of status attached in pursuing some activities, which, in turn, redefine the sense of achievement for students. Academic achievement vis-à-vis the concept of 'athlete boy' or the 'popular girl' at school plays a determining role in the future career aspirations of the adolescent. Prior research has provided insight into the differences between poor working class and middle class parents in terms of parenting styles and school-related assistance. Such difference in availability of cultural capital and consequent structuring of adolescents' 'habitus', as understood by Pierre Bourdieu, played a vital role in both choice and organization of extracurricular activities. Thus inviting an enquiry into the class dynamics that lay beneath the apparently egalitarian education system. Besides, Organization and Administration of Extracurricular activities, both determines and are determined by the participation level of adolescents. This

cyclical impact runs from one epoch to the other, as schools move from serving one socio-political goal and developmental agenda to another.

The Education Commission in India (1964-1966), under the guidance of D.S. Kothari, discussed how school curriculum was to be conceived as the totality of learning experiences that the school provides for the pupils through manifold activities in the school, which are carried out under its supervision. Such view breaks down the distinction between curriculum and extra curriculum for sure. But the report also mentioned about the introduction of work-experience (which includes manual work, production experience etc.) and social service as integral part of general education. Stress was on moral education and inculcation of a sense of social responsibility. The schools were recommended to recognize their responsibility in facilitating the transition of youth from the world of school to the world of work and life. The Report clearly states: Work-experience and national service, including participation in meaningful and challenging programs on community service and national reconstruction should become an integral part of education. With regard to secondary education the commission elucidates that educational opportunity at the secondary level is a major instrument of social change and transformation.

According to the recommendation of the Report, the provision of facilities for secondary and vocational education should conform broadly to the requirements of the developing economy and real employment opportunities. Such linkage is necessary to make technical and vocational education at the secondary stage effectively terminal. Facilities for technical and vocational education should be suitably diversified to cover a large number of fields, such as agriculture, industry, trade and commerce, medicine and public health, home management,

arts and crafts, secretarial training, etc. Recommendations for large scale development in games and sports had been put forth with the objective of improving the physical fitness and sportsmanship of the average student as well as of those who excel in this area. Thus we find a strong focus on extracurricular in the report, keeping in mind the community and national integration interests.

Another policy of 1986 defined art education as an integral part of extracurricular activity up to the secondary stage for sensitizing learners towards finer aesthetics. Similarly, National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) formed a focus group to discuss the need of moving art education to mainstream curriculum for revival of Indian cultural tradition. These policy transformations surely find reflection in extracurricular activity being offered at schools and mould the socio-cultural bearings of the Institutions. These even lead to differential adoption of programs by private and public schools based on several funding issues, thereby making it necessary to document organizational disparity within the larger schooling system and locate the formalities of a bureaucratic structure. Hence learning about political motivations that guide the execution of extracurricular at school one surely gets intrigued to find its socio-cultural ramifications and the gap that has been long incorporated systematically.

The extracurricular, therefore, comes to accommodate varied conditions and possibilities within the education system. It acts as the foreground for replication of several social and cultural practices existing in the society at large. Religious orientation and education that are so integrally bound, find its lingering elements come alive through extracurricular even in a secular modern schooling system. Similar to cultural reproduction associated with religious and

economic activities that consciously and unconsciously penetrate the teaching-learning processes at school, there takes place gender reproduction and stereotyping. And enquiry into this has promoted several scholastic endeavors. Awareness about gender socialization at school has shifted the focus towards extra-curricular and informal activities to understand how gender stereotypes are reproduced on much expanded level. A gender stratification system begins to emerge as males show more disdain for females' activities than vice versa, and males have access to larger territories that are strongly guarded from female intrusion. Inequality echoes loudly within our schooling system and understanding such power dynamics in the face of globalization could help highlight some niche areas of change. Besides, the designing of curriculum and extracurricular in times of some powerful counter cultural movements across the lines of gender could help reflect upon the intensity and strength of such social deviations.

Extracurricular activities often cut across grading system while accommodating students' spontaneous responses. They help break away from the rigidity of a curriculum structure. Students of relatively varied age group and different academic class enjoy a substantial amount of social interaction, developing an activity based 'culture' and an identity shaped by shared sense of 'style'. Such group formation also impacts the adolescent's interaction with key adults and the wider support system. I have already mentioned that activity choices are guided by larger social and psychological forces. But extracurricular participation also introduces role models in the form of coach or teacher who become a rich source of cultural and social capital for the students. Exploring such peer group affiliation and attachment to normative social institutions –

school and teachers, would help understand the predetermined anticipatory socialization occurring during adolescence. Taking account of such social interaction in light of competition and cooperation can make one privy to the everyday negotiations within the field of education. Inter- and intra-school competitions around extracurricular activities often reward the ward with heightened self-esteem, but to what extent these successes uphold the collective spirit as well as cultivate individuality is something that surely this research seeks to explore.

Why Study the Adolescent?

Age and life cycle research found a relatively delayed entry in sociology around the middle of twentieth century with industrialization having become the new order. Emile Durkheim in his famous work 'Moral Education' (1925) mentions about the second phase of childhood where one confronts a kind of 'normlessness' and demands instilling a sense of discipline, while retaining the individual will and autonomy for meeting the collective interest. Anthropologist, Margaret Mead (1928), who had journeyed through the South Pacific territory of American Samoa to discover whether adolescence was universally traumatic and stressful time due to biological factors, found that the experience of adolescence strongly depended on cultural upbringing. After spending about nine months observing and interviewing the Samoans, as well as administering psychological tests, Mead concluded that adolescence was not a stressful time for girls in Samoa because Samoan cultural patterns were very different from those in the United States. Thus the Western world purposively

identified this age group (10-19 years) as one of 'stress and storm' (Hall, 1904). Nevertheless, there cannot and mustn't be a singular construct of adolescence, as the self during these years draw upon varied and intersecting lifeworld, keeping in tune with the time and space considerations. The adolescent cannot be conceptualized into a fixed age category under the same nomenclature across locations, as they often carry overlapping traits and behaviors along their path of 'being' and 'becoming' from childhood-to-adolescence-to-adulthood.

On the other hand, Dhurjati Prasad Mukerji (DP) (1946) in writing on the youth of India, referred to them in statistical term that includes people within the age group of 15-25 years, and observed that only a section of it can be said to be living on unearned income or wealth of the family i.e. the students. He reiterates that the sex-urge, which becomes the necessary factor for characterization of this age group, is only one of the forms of social energy that defines the youth and that, according to him, is controlled and subordinated to law, codes, orders, pressure of customs. Thus, the main problem lies in subordination of youth and unpleasantness of control. He sees the gap between adolescence and his initiation into a membership of society as the problematic that demands greater attention. DP sees the Indian adolescence as essentially wards of the middle class guardian who passes down all the weaknesses and strengths of that middle class situation. Therefore, we see that adolescence finds fresh meanings traversing space and time. More importantly, it tends to break the age boundaries and the corresponding features associated with the same through their locational distinctiveness and cultural idiosyncrasies. In this light revisiting the adolescent was felt to be a demanding endeavor, as the Bengali childhood has always found a grand place in the literature and varied art forms

as produced by the same community. Thus an attempt to contextualize the idea of adolescence in Bengal in neoliberal order becomes necessary. With the onset of puberty, the lifeworld that produces experiences with objects, events and emotions of everyday creates a shared space of liminality. The liminal often coaxes the adolescent to understand their journey across the lifeworld of neighborhood, family, and friends to arrive at a culture which both liberates and confines them in terms of food, language, sexual practices, and material aspirations. In trying to locate this threshold of experiences, both by the adolescent and their lifeworld, the character of ‘Topshe’ from *Feluda*, the famous detective novel of Satyajit Ray has been revisited and a social history of the same is brought out to inform the research further. This shall offer a peep into the construction of adolescence for Bengalis in an urban setup along the lines of their cultural negotiations, binging at the ideological and moral standards.

With industrialization and modernization setting foot across the globe, the not-so-universal adolescence did find a defined presence within an age bracket. Modern education and formalized schools started to segregate the pupils on the basis of age at the entry level and made it a strict practice for serving requisite lessons based on age. Psychologists too started to define age-specific IQ (intelligence Quotient) scores necessary for carrying out cognitive and motor skills. With secondary education becoming an institutionalized mass experience adolescence found a new definition in relation to years of secondary schooling and saw an emphasis of their removal from the labor market, thereby prolonging their social dependency.

Another important thing happened as educational system started to segregate according to the age of students i.e. the primary and secondary education drew distinction between childhood and adolescence and blurred the tendencies of overlap in actions and behaviors of boys and girls during these liminal times. This fluidity in experiences is surely important to understand the adolescence and invites a recourse through education itself to trace them as acting upon the adolescent. The Indian education system that has moved from the “Guru-Shishya” tradition to the modern hour-bound classroom transaction between teacher-taught surely plays a transitional role in becoming an adolescent. The journey from diffusive learning experiences during early years to the specificity of educational training, the adolescent surely encounters and correspondingly imbibes plethora of socio-cultural practices that give them a new character. Thus historical notions of adolescence as ‘coming of age’, being controlled by raging hormones, succumbing to peer pressure and an age synonymous with strangeness with reference to taste for almost everything needed a revisit. And the envisioning could be possible only through exploration of their thriving presence in a school set up, where they relatively spend maximum hours.

A significant factor that seems to render a new character to the adolescents is the economic dispositions that has come about with globalization and its collateral liberal policies. The adolescents are also now a new category of consumers in the free market, whether it be for products like education or other material goods representing a specific culture. The cross cultural influences in the globalized social order has brought fresh products onto the selves of the commodity market and these at times are now solely designed to cater to the adolescent demands, if not needs. From hip-hop music to Korean music bands

flooding the international market, the technologically well-connected adolescent seems to build an image of oneself that's well past the 20th century moorings around them. Their moody expressions, bouts of nonsensical laughter, incomprehensible sullenness, absurd fickleness, tendencies of defiance and trifling yet passionate arguments need deep interrogation with changing times. On similar initiatives, *In Act your Age! A cultural Construction of Adolescence* (2012) Nancy Lesko critiqued all homogenous and naturalized idea of adolescence. She argues that prioritizing biological determinism in constructing adolescence and representing them as collectives expressing standardized behavior and needing consequent support must be revisited. The turmoil of growing up does not always consume the awakening moments of the adolescence and thus they often react and respond based on their varied class, caste, ethnic and gender locations. Thus, the negotiated understanding about ones lived experiences and experiences of others (friends, peers, educators, parents and guides) in relation to them shall help understand adolescence with greater agency.

How Engage Methodologically?

I believe the debates around methodological collectivism and methodological individualism, and its significant engagements with purely generalized statistical analysis or accounts of subjectively understandable action respectively, have come a long way. While discussing social phenomena, Sociology has talked about various social collectives and its institutional forms, and education too found a similar treatment in initial enquiries. Understanding

education through policies and programs of the state was possibly the call of the hour, as a larger promise of formulating and reworking on the universality of modern education was to be met. But it would be unfair to state that the ‘subjectively understandable’ actions were not absorbed into the larger design of educational initiatives and consequent research. Weber has said in this regard that “in sociological work these collectivities must be treated as solely the resultants and modes of organization of the particular acts of individual persons, since these alone can be treated as agents in a course of subjectively understandable action” (Weber 1922: 13). Thus, my exploration into the field of education and particularly into the sub-field of extracurricular needed such methodological orientation with the actions that define or construct the institution of education in a specific time and space. Besides, my engagement with the adolescence in this sub-field of extracurricular practices made it all the more urgent that a subjective account of meaning-making be recorded. With such research forbearing and conditionality in demarcating the ‘field’, the methodological grooming rather turned out to be quite fluid and accommodative in case of this study.

The pilot study prior to embarking upon this research endeavor had provided certain limitations and advantages regarding application of certain methods. These hints surely played out consciously and unconsciously in determining the methodological stand that I would take and the methods I would deploy. I was becoming audience to several extracurricular activities at school and a rich source of information was on display through varied art forms, both still and performative. So the fieldwork that had primarily started with interviews got further extended to include aesthetic and sensory experiences. It is here that I

propose to pursue an ethnographic engagement with the field, but not limiting my role to a mere observer or a mere participant in my site of exploration. Rather a keen interest developed to visit few select schools of Kolkata and collaborate with the objects of research in the meaning making processes, as they conduct themselves in their field of practice. Any social science research is a creative pursuit where images, sounds, tastes and bodily feelings get distilled through the consciousness to build a landscape of reality. And possibly it is through all these non-verbal cues and their verbal validation that a consensus in meaning is arrived at. Robert A. Nisbet has aptly observed: “Behind the creative act in any science, physical or social, lies a form and intensity of imagination, a utilization of intuition and what Sir Robert Read called ‘iconic imagination’, that is not different in nature from what we have learned of the creative process in arts” (Nisbet, 1977: 6). For that matter, how so ever science perseveres towards distinctiveness in style and technique in unveiling of reality across time, the ways of understanding always draws upon the evocative power and aesthetically nurtured imagination. Thus the spirit of creation and discovery is fed by the evocative experiences, giving window to artistic and scientific representation of truth. Hence aesthetic inspirations and to be more specific art can no way be an escape from reality, on the contrary I see it as a ground for ‘value relevant’ interpretation along with the respondents from field who are engaging in and co-creating those aesthetic moments of reality. Thus, an ethnographic account would merely not end with narrating the experiences of the respondents from the field but also invite participation in the meaning making task as a researcher, taking into account varied forms of expression; be it paintings, musical compositions, dance recitals or ritual practices of any sort.

Initiating an aesthetic-experiential method after Weber, this study was designed to bring to light the intricacies of evaluations made by one's self and see it as an integral part of empiricism, removed from the idea that synthetically demands exclusion of value-judgement. Therefore, what demands deploring, is the ethical convictions circumscribing the field of one's experiences for 'understanding' the other's values and its relevance in a given field. Adopting such an attitude and thereby guarding this scientific research endeavor from the values that objectively try to overpower the subjects, I seek to make 'understanding explanations' by drawing upon all sources of practiced, lived and institutionalized experiences from the field of extracurricular as created by the actors upon collaboration. Such methodological engagements are bound to expose further nuances while at the field. Thus methods shall be mixed for eliciting relevant data in an ethnographic site and requisite philosophical coherence will be sought for the same. Thus I have tried to deal with those in greater detail in the next chapter.

Significance of the Study

The ambition to reconnoiter the domain of extracurricular activities within the field of education and see its impact on adolescence surely has some larger promises to fulfil. As the study was about to take flight, the question of its significance in the present times and in a metropolitan city of Kolkata occupied my mind constantly. In fact, trying to answer this question I found validation for the universal correlations that were being reckoned continuously in relation to the empirical findings. The field of education has evolved massively in last

two decades with privatization and globalization wrapping the society from all sides. Education is no longer a public facility exclusively provided by the state. Private players have been rendering services and products in this domain for quite some time now. In such a situation it becomes imperative to see how the market forces are *lassie faire* within education and makes it a ripe site for accommodating neoliberal twists on an everyday basis. Exploration into the field of extracurricular would surely give away the varied ways in which education is being economically tapped and thereby the social and cultural bearings of a community gets reproduced or reformed. It is through the lens of extracurricular that the educational aspirations of a community and therefore the socio-cultural beliefs and practices of the same be discerned. Employability and its close association with education for a thick and homogenous middle class can be understood in new light. Socially it would offer meaningful suggestions regarding how education and employability are intrinsically weaved, and how it seems to continue being the same with new dimensions cropping up. In fact, after the idea of risk society as deliberated upon by Ulrich Beck (1992), the modern industrial society with its technologically maneuvered economies and corresponding cultural edifices seem to build threats and crises from within itself, along the organizational and institutional structures. Risks are posed on all fronts: be it family and other social relations to economic exchanges that seem to become heavily dependent on such forces, institutions and actors that are almost alien and obscure in the globalized world. And consciousness of the risk something deeply being raised to changes our defenses and reactions to the same. Here I would like to pose Beck from his book *Risk Society* (1992):

In the risk society, the past loses the power to determine the present. Its place is taken by the future, thus, something non-existent, invented, fictive as the 'cause' of current experience and action. We become active today in order to prevent, alleviate or take precautions against the problems and crises of tomorrow and the day after tomorrow - or not to do so. Bottlenecks in the labor market projected in mathematical models have a direct effect on educational behavior. Anticipated, threatening unemployment is an essential determinant of the conditions of and attitude towards life today. (Beck, 1992: 34)

In this vein locating the case of adolescence becomes very pressing as they are the future employees and citizens of any given society. Adolescence in the rapidly growing terrains of consumerism is no more a docile and subordinate entity. They are also looped into the market dynamics as they are seen as potential consumers in their own right. Though they might not be in a position to actively participate in the market exchange, but surely their desires and needs are tapped by the market via the parents who are still economically their providers. However, the choices that the adolescent make being exposed to the claims and enticements of the market often supersede the parental guidance and control. This agency of the adolescent transpires to other aspects of their being and becoming, thereby giving them a new character. This redefining of their position in the age hierarchy alongside social classification of class, gender and race becomes culturally very significant for any community. The urban adolescent can never be analogous, and all the more so in a heightened consumption culture. Therefore, this study was designed to identify the variations and offer an accommodative, non-linear understanding of

adolescence. Such a non-universalizing view from below would further help in understanding the predicaments and thereby the needs of the future citizens in making, building hope for creating a suitably concomitant social scenario or ironing out the discrepancies as and when possible. Thus the larger goal of capitalism and political sanctions of the same could be unraveled through this study and a negotiated adoption of the same shall be figured out.

Description of the education system and its multiple agendas bring into its folds the overlying influences of other institutions such as religious, political and legal. The disciplinary demands of sociology of education can no way be limited to an isolated analysis of education system. The concerns that interlace the domain of education needs explanation from all sides, approaching it from varied vantage points (i.e., of culture, religion or politics). For instance, the rise and penetration of the popular culture into the widely spread social fabric via technologically mediated forms shall find representation in education too. Thus accounting for the same would furnish the discipline and enrich the already existing discourse on education.

Several paradigms have emerged in sociology of education in India since 1974, since its introduction as an undergraduate program in the University of Mumbai. Geetha B. Nambissan after Karuna Chanana (2013) says, “Sociology is seen as different from education because ‘sociology has been and is mainly theoretical and empirical, whereas the latter was and has been applied and normative’.” (Nambissan, 2013: 12). Against such a backdrop research in sociology that had education as its focus was mostly informed by liberal perspectives and hovered around equality of educational opportunity. Thus research on education long preoccupied itself with policy formulation and state initiatives in the field. In

lieu of these some contesting views did emerge with relation to education and mobility strategies being employed by some classes. But it was not until 1980s that Meenakshi Thapan drew attention to the learning experiences of the students and how it was influenced by larger institutional and structural forces in her study of Rishi Valley School. Such work and many more that account for narratives from below would surely be of some qualifying drift to the discipline. Sociology itself has long engaged in understanding social orders and disorders, but this pursuit shall remain unsatisfactory till varied actors in the social organization of life are identified and analyzed reasonably. Thus this study on adolescence with reference to education shall help build the bridge between sociology and education, offering insights into the later with epistemological rumination of the former. To view the adolescent in new light under the prism of present socio-cultural and economic order, one can recognize their quasi-child or quasi-adult form. This form and its cultural as well as political validation surely hints at a new social order in incubation. Thus sociology needs to be sufficiently fed with these knowledge paradigms from below and enough impetus be generated for taking up fresh methodological and ontological challenges.

Chapter 2

Methodological Moorings

Doing social science research has always been a chase to locate and thereby treat ‘value’ in some way or the other. This grappling with value positions along with ethical negotiations have revealed a significant journey in methodological styles from the positivist school of ontological realism and epistemological objectivism to naturalistic paradigm of ontological relativism and epistemological subjectivism. The metaphysics undergirding the positivist enquiry of an ‘ultimate truth’ and the need to document ‘how things actually are’ or ‘how they actually work’ demands the scientists/researcher to follow the rigor of scientism rather than science. Their tasks thus boil to finding some causality in this ‘actual reality’ and thereby make predictions and determine the same. In this process, the researcher necessarily must distance oneself from the ‘object of enquiry’, ensuring no value preference or even value engagement of any kind to influence the order of the ultimate truth. However, such warrant for detachment and control becomes justified as it maintains the ‘higher order social good’ and gives primacy to the value in an ultimate truth, which is always an ideal. Thus ‘wisdom ethics’ (ideals) (Diener and Crandall 1978) come to play over the ethics and values in conducting research. Objectification of the human subjects of research leads to anxieties over depersonalization and compromising the value of human life per se. Thus to address the ethical costs of pursuing a putative truth, the social science researcher and the community forgo the underlying premise of ‘how things actually are’ or ‘how they actually work’.

Instead, the concern for value could possibly be shifted towards a non-deceitful enquiry from below, perceiving social realities as constructions embellished by social actors from among situations, stimuli and events of experiences. Experiences of the individual and their meaningful interpretation of the social justifies for a more personal, thus idiosyncratic construction and therefore accommodates a contrasting value orientation. Hereon the naturalists move to a fresh metaphysical assumption of multiple reality and methodologically contrast the traditional researcher-researched objective and distanced relationship.

I would rather propose a ‘lover model’ (Reinhaz, 1984) which is of mutual respect, trust and exchange between the researcher and the researched — a constant negotiation in getting to the elements called information or data. I find an interesting dimension to build upon from here in relation to my field experiences as a researcher, where I find my respondents carrying an imagination and therefore intuition of the reality and they collaborate with me in making meaning of their experiences and situations, proposing strategies and interpretations for the same. The locus of control never leaves the field and it’s always guided by an aesthetically informed imagination that is weaved by both the researched and researcher. This aesthetically constructed reality and the logic of discovery over logic of demonstration suggests a blend between the scientists and the artist, paying renewed attention to values by tapping on senses and sensory experiences from the field.

2.1. The Art of Science

Imagination and perception move in tantamount to create a vision of society—one that's constantly a 'becoming' one. Any social science research is a creative pursuit where images, sounds, tastes and bodily feelings get distilled through the consciousness to build a landscape of reality. Nisbet has aptly observed: "Behind the creative act in any science, physical or social, lies a form and intensity of imagination, a utilization of intuition and what Sir Robert Read called 'iconic imagination', that is not different in nature from what we have learned of the creative process in arts" (Nisbet, 1977: 9). In that case, no matter how much science perseveres towards distinctiveness in style and techniques for unveiling of reality across time, the ways of understanding always draws upon the evocative power and aesthetically nurtured imagination. The impact of authority and its dislocation on human life in Weber's concept of power; the torments and pain of alienation as perceived by Marx; the madness in magic and exaltation in worship of the sacred experienced by Durkheim have all been important aesthetically to have motivated, inspired and thus produced realizations of the kind as we read in their famous theoretical works. Thus the spirit of creation and discovery is fed by the evocative experiences, giving window to artistic and scientific representation of truth. Hence aesthetic inspirations and to be more specific art can no way be an escape from reality, on the contrary, "... it's a means of bringing to highest level a form of observation and an intensity of understanding that is often thwarted by what Robert Bridges once called 'endless literalness' of what lies around us" (Nisbet, 1977: 12). Both the scientist and the artist alike drive to get away from the taken-for-granted perception of the world and highlight the plethora of events from

every day in a new light, thereby offering a new vision, another truth and locate a fresh value position within the same banal and mundane events.

A hypothesis or theory that pledges to account for variable incidence of any social phenomena, pressingly is a distillation of a set of perceptions and experiences. The problems, ideas, views, analyses and forms which fosters any research for an artist or scientist often draws upon the unconscious as much the conscious mind. From eclectic, unorganized observation and reading, musing, dreaming as well as buried experiences, all impress the understanding guarded by logic, reason and empirical distinctiveness. To raise the entire debate on art and science here in relation to discussion on methods and value orientation for the same was in the spirit to move backward in the journey of styles and forms of scientific evolution to unravel the genesis of problem solving that lies in aesthetic experience and reflective intuitions. Scientific discovery is not mere, as any treatise of method may say, an episode of 'problem-defining' and 'problem-solving' thought. Thomas Kuhn (1922-1996) has said in this regard that a great deal of science seeks answers to problems which are like puzzles at its bottom. "...It too in its way the solution of a puzzle presented by experience or visual reality" (Nisbet, 1977: 18). The great cognateness between art and science was best subsumed in the work of Max Weber, especially in his *Methodology of the Social Sciences* (1949). Weber's profound emphasis on the importance of understanding the realm of motivation, feeling and spirit that guides action through what he called the 'verstehen' is a crucial disjuncture between realm of 'value preference' and 'value relevance'. He harps at once on the need to go to the roots of intuition, 'iconic imagination' and delve deeper into aesthetic experiences.

2.2. Value Neutrality to Value Relevance - Posing Max Weber

The phrase ‘value free Sociology’ or ‘value neutrality’ is almost synonymous with the name Max Weber. The historical context that fed Max Weber’s methodological reflections was the class room lecture styles at German University. Here he came across thinkers like Wilhelm Dilthey, Genist and Treitschke and their classroom lectures loaded with political views influenced his later concerns about values in teaching and finally research. Thus he wrote an essay “*The Meaning of Ethical Neutrality in Sociology and Economics*” and reassessed his position on values and its treatment with regards to science and logic of discovery. He writes: “Of those scholars who believe they should not deny themselves practical evaluations in empirical discussions, the most passionate ones - such as Treitschke, and in his own way Mommsen as well - were actually the easiest to endure. For the very intensity of the emotional emphasis at least enabled a student for his part to gauge the subjectivity of his teacher's evaluations in its influence upon a possible tarnishing of his statements and thus to do for himself what the temperament of his teacher had not been granted” (Weber 1975: 318). Weber proposes a value free teaching whereby the student’s rights to think and decide for themselves and determine the ‘meaning’ of ‘scientific facts’ is encouraged.

He further argues that any objective position nurtured by the teacher or a researcher could be a strong subjective assertion of his own that passes in the name of ultimate truth and possibly compromise the primacy that the ‘research question’ demands. In fact, similar worries got transposed to his scholarship on social science method and he embarked upon locating meaning and relooking values in sociology, both substantially and methodologically.

Weber's uniqueness is not in his value-free sociology, rather what extends beyond the popular understanding of his historical and empirical work is his peculiar combination of value sensitivity, humanism and ethical responsibility. He might have very often been associated with 'scientific amorality' by seeking scholarly objectivity, but what he perhaps was suggesting is a transition from 'value preference' to 'value relevance'. Wrote Max Weber: "an attitude of moral indifference has no inner relationship with scientific objectivity" (Weber, 1949: 60). On taking this reading as a point of departure, I see an emphasis on morality in the methods of doing science, of granting autonomy and taking responsibility of our empirical enquiries. In Max Weber's discussion on "the meaning of ethical neutrality" the idea of value permeates at two levels that I find significant for my initiation of an 'aesthetic-experiential' method: firstly, the recognition of interrelation of value spheres and their irreconcilability. In recognizing the possibilities of normative ethics, he says that ethics is not the only thing valid in the world and it exists parallel to value-spheres. These values can often be realized by taking ethical responsibility of realizing the same. Weber writes:

...the empirical-psychological and historical analysis of certain evaluations with respect to the individual social conditions of their emergence and continued existence can never, under any circumstances, lead to anything other than an "understanding" explanation. This is by no means negligible. It is desirable not only because of incidental personal (and non-scientific) effect: namely, being able "to do justice" more easily to the person who really or apparently thinks differently. It also has high scientific importance: (a) for purposes of an empirical

causal analysis which attempts to establish the really decisive motives of human actions and (b) for the communication of really divergent evaluations when one is discussing with a person who really or apparently has different evaluations from one's self (Weber, 1949 13-14).

Thus, Weber brings to light the intricacies of evaluations made by one's self and sees it as an integral part of empiricism, removed from the idea that synthetically demands exclusion of value-judgement. What demands deploring, is the ethical convictions circumscribing the field of one's experiences for the 'understanding' of other's values and its relevance.

The shift from 'value judgements' to 'value interpretation' that we observe in the methodological concerns of Max Weber, brings us to the notion of culture providing as well as protecting 'value-ideas' underlying any scientific knowledge. While retaining elements of value-relevance (*Wertbeziehung*) with culture being on a constant process of change and so the value ideas. Thus the second level of approximation about 'value freedom' comes from his separation of subjectively 'rational' action from normatively 'correct' action. The subjective intentions are often designed and guided by the individual in a way to adopt means that are normatively correct for an end. Thus the adaptation that works at the subjective level for arriving at the objective ethical correctness entails an 'understanding explanation'. Weber argues:

The means employed by the method of "understanding explanation" are not normative correctness, but rather, on the one hand, the conventional habits of the investigator in thinking in a particular way, and on the

other, as the situation requires, his capacity to “feel himself” empathically into a mode of thought which deviates from his own and which is normatively false according to his own habits of thought (Weber, 1949: 41).

When we disembark from the sphere of objectively given technical standards, we are then interface with multiple possibilities of evaluations, which are informed culturally and thus relevant. Weber observed:

We are cultural beings, endowed with the capacity and the will to take a deliberate attitude toward the world and to lend it significance. Whatever this significance may be, it will lead us to judge certain phenomena of human existence in its light and to respond to them as being (positively or negatively) meaningful. The concept of culture is a value-concept. Empirical reality becomes "culture" to us because and insofar as we relate it to value ideas. All knowledge of cultural reality ... is always knowledge from particular points of view.... Without the investigator's evaluative ideas, there would be no principle of selection of subject-matter and no meaningful knowledge of the concrete reality. There is no absolutely "objective" scientific analysis of culture — or... of "social phenomena" independent of special and "one-sided" viewpoints according to which — expressly or tacitly, consciously or unconsciously — they are selected, analyzed, and organized for expository purposes (Weber, 1949: 72, 76, 81-82).

Thus drawing attention to the subjective character of value judgements, Weber distances himself from methodological positivism of a certain kind and

precisely endeavors to show the interdependence between values and science. Weber, therefore, gives two-fold dynamic of value-freedom: one, to guard science from the values that objectively try to overpower the subjects; second, to prevent the ethical-moral sphere being shadowed by the apparently pseudo claims of an objective science.

2.3. Aesthetics - A Methodological Flight

Talking about Weberian understanding of “value relevance” we have drawn out the path leading to subjective evaluations that remain persistent in understanding the meaning of social action. And one of the important way to add to this journey of interpretation of values is to account for experiences that weave into information aesthetically. Thus the pressing need arises to first locate the sphere of art and then move into the aesthetically evaluative plane, discerning both the technicalities of art making on one hand and purely empirical-causal explanation on the other. Aesthetic evaluations, more precisely to be referred to as aesthetic appreciation have found mention in several scholarly work. From George Simmel’s (1949) ideas of Sociability, Wolfgang Iser’s aesthetics as a general science of sensory perception, Gernot Bohme’s (1993) view on phenomenological aesthetics to Henri Lefebvre’s (2004) ‘rhythmanalysis’ all have highlighted social aesthetics as the key way to holistically focus on human relations and social situations. One’s experience in a field of research is not restricted to seeing and accounting for what merely lies out there. It entails resounding and recapturing of the objective forms in the process of making, accounting for the subjective ‘becoming’ constantly

happening at the ontological level. This process of ‘becoming’ exposes varied forms of expression, gestures, attitudes, linguistic usages, self-presentations, self-anonymity/ concealment, embodiments of varied kinds and several covert meaning-making techniques. All of these come to exist through sensory perception and aesthetic appreciation. Philosophically aesthetics can be understood from three foci point: art, aesthetic property, and aesthetic experience. For art has always been seen as a mode of expression and communication. Levinson (2005) mentions in *The Oxford Handbook of Aesthetics*:

A conception of art is tied to the *mimesis*, *imitation*, or *representation* of the external world, perhaps in distinctive ways or by distinctive means. This conception of art has very deep roots, and can be located, though with some anachronism, in the earliest works in the canon of aesthetics, the *Republic* of Plato and the *Poetics* of Aristotle. The view, modified so as to allow for representation of matters beyond the visible, finds expression in the aesthetic theories of Lessing, Hegel, and Schopenhauer, among later thinkers (Levinson, 2005: 3)

Thus the expression beyond visibility could essentially bring us close to the question of what is aesthetic property. It could be argued then that when discerning out properties, it essentially has to do something with perceptual or observable properties. Some direct experiences of relevant value of the objects that can be noted as aesthetically evocative. What could be considered as relevant value is debatable. But few things that become obvious are: a symbolic character beyond the apparent, inducement of pleasure or displeasure, inviting imagination for locating it, affording expected taste to discern. Hence the

evocative attribute brings us to the aesthetic experience. And we can pose that the experience opens up mental states involving feelings, perceptions, imagination, memory, reflective reason, mood etc. Levinson summarizes his views thus:

The idea of the aesthetic as marking a distinctively disinterested, objective, distanced, and form-focused manner of perceiving still has currency, but it has detractors as well.... In addition, the qualifier 'aesthetic' is sometimes thought to apply more fundamentally to attitudes or experiences or pleasures or judgements or evaluations or properties, than to modes of perception. Beardsley (1981) characterizes aesthetic experience as involving firmly fixed attention, relative freedom from outside concerns, affect without practical import, exercise of powers of discovery, and integration of the self (Levinson, 2005: 7-8).

Aesthetics as a science of cognizing through senses gained relative significance in my field of research experience. My point of departure for a methodological challenge came with art-centered aesthetics that I found extremely pertinent in my field. Besides, I was aesthetically awakened by the sound, touch, expressions and gestures that I encountered within the schooling space with all its inmates during my ethnographic endeavor. Thus the assigning of meaning became a temporally and spatially determined exercise by the adolescent and gained value through their sensorial perception. Thus it coaxed me to account for the meanings in those terms. In the process there was a constant movement between the sensory and sensibility as I embedded myself in the atmosphere of my field. Here I would like to draw attention to a Japanese term 'ajiwau' that I

borrow from Yuriko Satio (2007) to discuss how the sensory perception is direct, distinctive, heart-felt and critical at the same time. Ajiwau in Japanese has three levels of understanding, first to taste; second to experience or go through; third to appreciate. The sensory feelings of tasting something like happiness or pain is quite explicit here, but appreciation is where the criticality seeps in as it need not be positive evaluation always in terms of appreciation. Thus an emotional surge on seeing something sad is followed by an appreciation/awareness of the essential nature of sadness, taking reflections beyond an affective perception or an emotional expression by no way undermining the substantiality of the former. The flight is away from mere art-centered aesthetics into everyday aesthetic experiences of objects, phenomena, environment and moral expressions. Thus taking us from the plane of sensory experiences to making meaning at the level of epistemological concreteness. In having both passive and active experiences we get certain awareness, insight, realization and understanding that together forms a kind of knowledge, which has a tactile dimension and is aesthetic-experiential in nature.

2.4. Research Design and the Ethnographic Journey

As I began exploring my field of research and conducted a pilot study in the given population of adolescent in Kolkata, I figured out that the category of adolescent was very vaguely defined and often overlapped with childhood and youth. Thus I had to first relook and possibly redefine this category, as the government policies on adolescence was also reflecting this same dilemma. All policies and literature were trying to address the issue of adolescence through

the schooling system. Their programs and intellectual discourses concerned the adolescent in an educational system. Therefore, to do justice in reaching to this category and reflecting upon their social and cultural position I too had to choose my sample from girls and boys (within the age of 13 to 18) going to schools. While dealing with schools as the field of research, I had to be very careful in delineating the field and its scope.

Schools are primarily of three kinds: government, aided and private school. Government schools are run by state or central government, aided schools are funded by government but have private management and private schools are administratively and financially independent, taking no aids from the state. I spread my field across all these types of school. Since my concern was to explore adolescence through the field of extracurricular activities at schools of Kolkata, I had to also consider the temporality and spatiality of my field. This made it necessary to account for activities in practice inside and outside the school premises, whereby extending the schooling process beyond a defined infrastructural space. However, the fact that I was dealing with different kinds of schools and their beyond-the-curriculum processes, I was exposed to multiple sort of settings and schooling processes. The schooling processes where children and adolescents engage with each other, their teachers and other school personnel to live their lives in the process of education has often been neglected by sociologists (Thapan, 2014: 1-4). Thus to see this process live it was important for me to plan a method that does sufficiently addresses these experiences from below. Merely accounting for ideas and narratives from the participants in the process of schooling wouldn't be enough.

I therefore decided to engage in an ethnographic study that could echo the narratives, while building up and being contested through the reflections of the participants in the process. Nevertheless, dealing with varied kinds of school and their execution of extracurricular I was exposed to distinct school histories; varying institutional goals; difference in available infrastructure, linguistic medium, fees charged, teacher qualification and social class of students. This opened up the heterogeneity in the schooling process and coaxed me to trace the divergences and overlaps that were being encountered during these practices. And to account for the above heterogeneity the method of researching or even relooking had to be more layered and nuanced, taking into consideration subtle cues from adolescent behavior and hints of excess in an otherwise structured educational system. It is here that I started to deplore aesthetics as a mode of research in capturing the meaning as seen by the members and participants of the schooling process.

Reflecting upon larger epistemological positions on modern education at the edge of post-industrialization helped me locate my empirical research and verify as well as revise the universals from below, where and when appropriate. It is interesting to note that the cultural reproduction and thereby varied sorts of injunctions being placed to accomplish the former through educational practices mirrored Bourdieu's (1971) concept of "field" and "practice". Thus methodologically I had figured out my field not only through narratives offered by the adolescents and their parents and school authorities, but also transcended to gather cues from the corresponding performative practices. I needed to account for the representational information as manifested during performances and through paintings and poetries crafted by the adolescents.

2.5. Respondents and the Field

As discussed above, I have selected my sample from a population of adolescent girls and boys going to school of various kinds in the region of Kolkata. I have purposively not taken the out-of-school adolescent into my field, as I have considered schooling and extracurricular one of the other variable in locating the adolescent and exploring their position in the larger social context. The number of students was not fixed as to who I would interview or do a case study with. I kept it open as I was also accounting for the responses of the teachers and parents during the ethnographic study in the schools of varied extracurricular programs and events. I reserved my study to ten select schools, where I had decided to conduct an ethnography and observe the activities conducted therein. The ten schools are:

1. Ballygunge Sikhsha Sadan (ballygunge, Kolkata)
2. Beltala Girls High School (Bakul Bagan, Kolkata) – govt.
3. Cathedral Mission High School (Elgin Road, Kolkata) – govt.
4. Kalidhan Institution (kalighat, Kolkata) – govt.
5. National High School (Hazra Road, Kolkata)
6. Nava Nalanda high school (Southern Avenue, Kolkata)
7. Silver Point School (kasba, Kolkata)
8. South Calcutta National School (lansdowne, Kolkata) – govt.
9. St. Anthony's High School (New Market, Kolkata)
10. 1. United Missionary Girls High School (Bhowanipur, kolkata) – govt.

It would be important to mention here that I conducted my ethnographic exercise in these schools only during days when special events were held and during practice hours of the extracurricular activities. Revisits were also made

to these schools on several occasions as a follow up of the activities that I was a participant to. Thus the schools were chosen purposively to keep a uniform representation of varied kinds of school existing in the city and also based on the permission granted by the school authority to attend various activities. However, the sample representing the adolescent was not purposively determined, expect for that they had to be part of the schooling process and presenting themselves at various extracurricular events of the institutions they studied in.

2.6. Methods of research

Since I engaged in an exploratory study of the adolescents through the schooling processes, I was necessarily trying to understand the adolescent category in a larger social setting. It invited me to look into experiences of everyday life of the adolescents, account for home-school nexuses and its bearings on them, collect impressions from memory with regard to activities participated, and their holistic self-assessment in the process of growing and participation as a social agent. In such circumstances merely talking to them over a fixed interview schedule and listed out questions weren't enough. I had to fall back on varied kind of representational sources of information. Thus something that began as interviewing students and teachers, extended into recording gestures, attitudes, sounds, perceptions and imaginations. I was motivated enough to ponder on ways to use these varied sources of information for epistemologically qualifying the discourse on adolescence and schooling. I therefore started to mix methods. From mere interviewing I shifted to ethnographic techniques and innovative

styles for gaining more meaningful expressions of their actions. And at times added up by engaging the adolescents in focused group interviews.

One of the chief reason was to elicit relevant and reliable answers, even if from a very subjective experience. Boys and girls of this age group who hardly articulate in a personal interview, spoke with enhanced articulation when around their peers. There seem be so much that they shared in common, let it be emotions or imagination. The connection that they built with other participants in the process of engaging in extracurricular gave them a voice and impetus to speak their minds. Thus providing an effective and affective way to engage with them in their activities, and help decipher the meaning of their actions in relation to their lives along with them. The sole ambition was to make the meaning-making process collaborative between the researcher and researched. As a researcher, total phenomenological “bracketing” was impossible. Nevertheless, the assumptions, prejudices and preconceived perceptions about adolescence were put aside while accounting for their actions and behavior in the field. A sort of “anthropological destarngement” (Schutz, 1973) was adopted, whereby the unknown was made known by trying to momentarily live the same events, actions and emotions as that of the respondents.

This enabled me to deal with the question of validity as they seem to narrate similar accounts of themselves while engaging in other activities in a different set up and at different location, at times beyond their own school. They could easily move back and forth in their series of experience in and outside the school as they heard their peers reflecting upon the same. Other than the ethnographic and focused group methods, I also employed secondary data like poetries written by the adolescents and their art work as a part of the school activity.

Therefore, pictorial representation and analyzing the relevant content also became an essential part of my method. This further enabled me to account for the reliability of the information handed over during interviews and at times case studies. As I started to engage in their collective, thus intersubjective space, I found many commonsensical, personalized motives, attitudes and desires of adolescent girls and boys that are taken for granted wearing off. Fresh meanings surfaced in an inter-subjective and inter-related construction of their own. Thus, in the collaborative process the presence of an outside researcher was negated, rather an empathetic sounding board was welcomed by the adolescents. I too as a researcher was able to draft some second-stage meaning by encountering the first-stage meanings accomplished by the adolescents in their inter-subjective and negotiated space. This kind of a combined interpretative exercise could possibly not be completely value neutral, as my personal history and socio-cultural location did infuse while seeking validation for some data over others. But I guess, the best that I could do was to move to the next level of interpretation, using other sources of accountable experiences and thereby performing “anthropological estrangement” (Schutz, 1973). In doing so I collected paintings made and, poetries and stories written by the adolescent boys and girls. It often gave out an estranged account of their social and cultural lives from a detached position.

2.7. Ethnography and Aesthetic Engagement

Chanana (2011), Thapan (2014), Erickson (1984) and Giroux (2000) among many others have tried to work on the idea of ‘the field’ in contemporary studies

on education. India scholastic endeavors in education and essentially sociology of education has often been limited towards focusing on policy gaps, inequality of opportunities, constraints and possibilities of programs of the state on education, quantitative analysis of educational opportunities between rural and urban or between genders and religious minorities etc. However, the need for understanding the schooling process from everyday experiences of the participants in that process has been scanty. Thapan (2014) rightly says in this regard:

Understanding access, quality and equity in school education is paramount in any study of schooling in India. However, an understanding of the experience in these settings is essential to a broader analysis of the processes in educational systems within which these and other factors work. Life at school, or what goes on within schools, is thus of overriding significance and it is important to understand.... the students, teachers and other participants, how they engage with the imposed structures in these processes or seek to negotiate, strategize or modify them. The aim is not only to provide 'thick description' of how meaning is produced by variety of actors in school, but also to examine the social and political contexts of such meaning-making and the uses of culture by the actors who engage in schooling processes (Thapan, 2014: 5).

We see an emphasis on paying attention to the agency that comes to exist through rebellion, assertion, negotiation, questioning and even assimilation, in that case, by the participants in the schooling processes.

My methodological deliberations herein take shape and gains further strength to aesthetically weave an ethnographic journey through schools and lives of adolescent embedded in there. Thus I ventured into the field not to dissect it, or live along with it but with a humble desire to plot it from all corners beyond a defined space and its orally produced spatiality by the mere responses of the field mates (i.e. respondents of my research). I rather sought to unravel the creation of schooling culture and more specifically that of the adolescence by tapping all information and counter-information in the form of imagination, cues from memory, literature, ritual excesses and aesthetic expressions of the same. My field thus became temporally and spatially extended beyond the schools and its space bound processes, as the students brought experiences from home and community into the school while they participated in the extracurricular activities of the school. For instances, such activities had strong prevalence of rituals (both secular and religious, often overlapping) which could not be performed detached from the understanding and conditionality nurtured at the level of community or home for the adolescent girl or boy. Thus only through aesthetic appreciation and immersion with such storylines, which lead to relevant gestures, attitudes and expressions among the adolescent, I dared to arrive at a culturally and politically relevant explanation. Marcus (1995) had argued that total interpretation and cultural appropriation of ethnographic detail is not possible, therefore he suggests ethnography to be 'multi-sited'. On this note, my ethnographic engagement unobtrusively orients with the memories and temporally as well as spatially shifting narratives between home-community-school. Like the moral bindings and habitual practices learnt at home, larger cultural representations of the 'popular' picked up at the community level or

through media, interactions in the social media and networking sites, activities and experiences of the non-formal spaces. All of these seem to feed into the experiences at the school and vice-versa. Thus accounting for these historical narratives too become important in understanding the identity formation of the adolescents.

In the schools that I conducted an ethnographic exercise I have tried to connect the subjective interactions with a social reality to arrive at some objective position. The interactions were not merely through language, rather it included cultural codes as transmitted through bodily embodiments while performing some drama, dance or physical activity by adolescents in the schools. They carry personal assumptions, imagination and other materials that they represent through their art or poetic expressions. In this league, I have picked up poetries written by adolescent boys and girls that I would offer as food for thought in chapter 7. Here I would like to mention how the field unfolded itself beyond the “out there” given spatial limits of school structure as I reflected upon these poems written as a part of extracurricular engagement. Each poetry was weaved with notions of reality and the location of the self in the same. A constant dialogue between the individual and the collective forces was the key take away. They almost revealed themselves as “texts” building upon some discourse or contesting some through aesthetic assertions and semiotic conversions. Levi Strauss has made a very significant mention to this regard, he sees poetry as “a reorganization of sensible experience within a semantic system” (Wiseman, 2007: 89-93). Thus poetic creation, after Strauss, can be seen as products of ‘wild’ thinking like myths, rituals or any other classificatory work of art, which converts secondary qualities of any phenomena into a system of signifier. And

these body of signs are surely linked to some facts and ideas that they try to signify. “The formation of the poem reflects in a microcosm the more general processes whereby, according to Levis Strauss, culture is created” (Wiseman, 2007: 92). Therefore, this semiotic journey made by the adolescent in creating meanings of a cultural episode in their lives surely is of great methodological value.

Adolescents as human subjects constitute the objective reality collectively and as an ethnographer I felt the pressing need to give primacy to their mindful engagements, aesthetic expression, creative gestures, meaning-making practices and at times even their discerning silence. Locating the symbolic meaning of the objects that they use and the imageries and metaphors referred to in their linguistic expression became very essential to decode their language of communication, therefore the socio-symbolic perspective. On many occasion I found that what the adolescent said was very important but the non-verbal cues that they transmitted had greater value in asserting the objective position or transgressing it with sufficient agency. Thus giving a hint towards an alternative objective position in making. Thus the baggage of emotions and ideas that the adolescent bring into the school and often transmit through a plethora of physical and mental expressions gets a fair chance of being recorded when engaged into their field aesthetically. The value that these girls and boys assign to their experiences in the schooling process helps them in rendering “understanding explanations” (as proposed by Weber). Nevertheless, it is this value and therefore the meaning assigned by the subject adolescent that helps me as researcher to account for a somewhat objective reality of theirs.

Besides, the school as a built-in space has significant energy being transmitted through its spatial structures, like the long corridors, echoing auditoriums, warm rooms, galloping playgrounds, speaking walls with pictures and quotes of noble men/women and achievers, the festive resonance in the decorated classrooms, ritual space and elevated stage to hold the competitive spirit high. All these have a strong aesthetic reverberation that builds into the meaning making processes. Any ethnographic endeavor without taking part in such aesthetic communication would remain half baked. Paul Wills (2000) has reaffirmed the need for accounting of “lived dynamics” and socio-symbolic perspectives in *The Ethnographic Imagination*. He invites a bold orientation for viewing the social world, emphasizing deep empirical connectedness with the social through aesthetic sensibility. He proposes an urgency in identifying the dialectical exchanges between the social and socio-symbolic patterns. And by doing so he revisits the question of schooling by focusing on everyday culture. However, I would also make a precautionary mention that without what the adolescent girls and boys had said and how their parents confirmed or disagreed to the same these aesthetic immersions would no way be relevant and reliable. Thus no art form or other representational information would have been sufficient to build into the discursive practices unless the parallel narratives had been built by the adolescent respondents and their other social associates in the process of their ‘becoming’ and ‘being’, both at home and school.

2.8. Evaluations: A Slice of the Experiences

I will present two sites from my field of such aesthetic engagement and it incidentally initiates with an art form in performance and installation of a sort. Though it arises from art-centered experience, it moves beyond to accommodate the social and cultural environments through sensory perception. Thus it is direct and distinct, yet often aesthetically arousing both negative (displeasing) and positive (pleasing) feelings. However, these aesthetically polar experience and their equal weightage at the same time ensures the value relevance quotient. Prioritizing the aesthetic experience carefully makes an epistemological position that is neither overwhelmed by the physiological sensation nor by the conceptual knowledge.

Case A: Based on Figure 1

An adolescent boy of class 9 drew a girl trapped in a plastic bottle for a drawing competition where the theme was "denounce the use of plastic". He studies in one of the Government schools of south Calcutta, which has some bare minimum infrastructural support. A small one-storied house with four rooms and five teachers is all that the students bank on. This boy comes from a family consisting of two younger sisters and his father. He had lost his mother when a child. And his father is a sweeper. His drawing left me quite intrigued not only because it was very different than the other drawings that his contemporaries drew, but also because of the detail he tried to capture. It might not have been artistically a perfect picture, but it stood out as a signifier of the larger social and cultural fabric. Firstly, I see a hint of rebel in his endeavor, trying to capture

an image that tries to question the stereotype. Secondly, the female body with its detailed out form signifies his understanding of sexuality. Thirdly, the female being trapped in the bottle makes us aware of his love for life and fear of captivity (the meaning of captivity could be diverse here). Further, if I become a little ambitious, possibly, I could also see a tinge of gender discrimination peeping from his eyes. Lastly, the plastic bottle as a trap comes across as a great innovation from the young mind. Thus, I begin to ponder as I see the crisis in his eyes and feel his feelings through his numbness and docile existence in the given economic and social set up. On a rare occasion at the school he has poured his imagination to uphold possibly his experiences of life, where otherwise he is offered lessons in arithmetic and language which he doesn't fair well mostly. On seeing me peer through his life in a moment's activity, he adds to my experience by passing on information about his home and three sisters who do not go to school unlike him. However, his expression of pathos in the painting goes mostly unnoticed by the structural demands of the institution. The prescribed theme of the art competition and to great extend the content of the art form made obvious the conditions of this sole and lone boy. The school was only following mandates handed down by the hierarchical orders of the state and its welfarist claims. Teachers were nurtured into believing the helplessness of theirs in being a mere agent who could do nothing more than accommodating the process of reproduction of the boy's roles and possibly occupational status in the social set up. But what about his cultural journey in this life? Doesn't he have the necessary sense and sensibilities which he could capitalize and bring about some changes in his life and surrounding?

Case B: Based on Figure 4

‘He tried to make peace outside, with war inside his mind’ that was the theme of the "badan-sobha-chitra" (face painting competition) at one of the schools. Several pairs of students were participating in this event, and the most striking feature apart from their artistic display was the ease with which these adolescent girls and boys touched each other. They were totally comfortable in each other’s close proximity. Moreover, they were dedicated in their offering of themselves while the other painted their faces. I could also see an urge to beautify the other and therefore a sense of care and pamper persisting in the act. They took good care so that the other doesn't feel restless or tired posing too long, and offered them water at regular intervals. They whispered to each other and exchanged happy glances while they played along. The bodily contact surely went beyond sexual understanding and urges, but definitely not in absence of the realization of the same. One of the girl whose face was being painted with an image of a beautiful girl on fire by a boy from the same grade, said to the boy softly and with a nudge as teachers and parents stood overlooking their work, “no one has ever admired us together with such appreciation and uncontested approval”. The smile in return that the boy offered had a profound sense of joy and victory. In an audience full of contestations and celebrations of human bonding, these two seem to have twined up to create a space of their own and declare their fondness and companionship. They reinstated my understanding as they mentioned how they have been friends for last 7 years and neighbors too. The boy said, “She is my model-canvas”. However, interestingly enough, the symbolic representation of peace and war on the others body gave rise to a parallel feud of similar kind

within their minds. The mandatory post-puberty days of avoidance of the opposite sex that necessarily entailed construction of gender identities and learning sexual gestures thereby, could be possibly pulled down here. Thus finding new and more collaborative avenues to rediscover the other sex and learn non-stereotypical gender roles. The discovery of one's boyhood vs girlhood and then dropping those learnings after a point to rediscover and relearn in such ways possibly is followed up by few other significant corollaries. Such as care, sense of equality and power of consent. The established ideas of masculinity or femininity is bracketed out, making way for new interpretation and contextualization of the same.

In both the occasions mentioned above, I have been taken over by the emotive and sensory cues that have helped me delve deeper to appreciate the happenings. Therefore, I was enabled to aesthetically experience the journey of the adolescent along with them and drop the conceptually given understanding on both occasion. The physiological senses that have been awakened in both occasions, ironically, did not lead to an aesthetically pleasing experience simultaneously. The picture A has brought to surface the displeasures of suffering, pain and systemic denial to the fore. Thus aesthetically producing a not very pleasing and positive experience, but conceptually it fits to the order of things perfectly. This gap is what initiates a new debate and helps relook the element of value in the field bracketing out the objective knowledge about education and its emancipatory promises. Picture B, on the other hand, generates a pleasing and positive aesthetic experience, conceptually negating the sacrosanct and moral character of a schooling process and its demands for a

more controlled space as far as its responsibilities of training and taming the adolescent is concerned.

The stories thus emerging after a deep hunt into the conscious and unconscious imaginings of the adolescent shows us the significance of contextualizing the lives of adolescent in their imaginative space. And then relating them to the given socio-cultural impingements. In fact, it is through these values and meaning-making processes that the larger canvas of social reality is weaved by the researcher along with the researched, who are no way mere objects or subjects of the study. Both these pictures are provided later in chapter 4 (fig 1.) and chapter 7 (fig. 4), respectively to make a more detailed analysis with relevance to becoming an adolescence in the field of extracurricular.

2.9. Summary Observations

The intersubjective position enjoyed through aesthetic association erodes the power dynamics between the knower and known to some extent. The adolescents built their own narratives while feeding me with the same and enriching my aesthetic experience. Recognizing the crossbreeding interactions in a social space having its own rhythm within hierarchical structures and politico-cultural control might be an interesting welcome for a methodological leap. Since schooling processes entails experiences from community and family, any research cannot be disengaged from the same by confining one's field to the school space. In such situations methods need to be appropriate enough to account for cross-sectional accounts by drawing upon memories, imagination and aesthetic expressions that echo a cultural continuity. Besides,

the Adolescent often transmit information through a plethora of physical and mental expressions, which gets recorded when engaged with the field aesthetically. Thus value that these girls and boys assign to their experiences in the schooling process helps them in rendering “understanding explanations” (as proposed by Weber). Though the promises of validity do not get fully addressed in this interplay of subjects and objects (both the researcher and researched) in the field, but some sort of collaborative attempts at meaning making is surely assured. The ethical consideration of peer influences in a focused group interview is also not ruled out. But attempts have been made to cross check at every point with secondary sources of information and historical documents. Besides, tapping the aesthetic sensibility has acted as a strong motivating factor to question the validity of one objective position over another possible one, peeping through subjective expression and experiences. Therefore, moving between the conceptual theoretical assumptions and absolute physiological sensations, aesthetically-engaged ethnography possibly draws out a path to do research in a more responsive way.

Chapter 3

Becoming an Adolescent in Bengal

Age and life cycle research found a relatively delayed entry in sociology around the middle of twentieth century with industrialization wrapping up society from all corners. Universal agreement on the nature of adolescence necessarily marks the transition from childhood to adulthood. At times it's a phase, so prolonged by the social and economic forces to monitor the entry of potential labor force into the market. Marked by a period of transition in body and mind, the adolescent is necessarily posed with contrasting values and beliefs while conducting themselves in the social. Emile Durkheim in his famous work 'Moral education' (1925) mentions of the second phase of childhood where one confronts a kind of 'normlessness' and requires to instill a sense of discipline, while retaining the individual will and autonomy in meeting the collective interest. Western world, therefore, purposively identify this age group (10-19 years) as one of "stress and storm" (Hall, 1904). However, there cannot and mustn't be a singular construct of adolescence, as the self during these years draw upon varied and intersecting 'lifeworlds', keeping in tune with the time and space considerations. Thus in this chapter an attempt will be made to contextualize the idea of adolescence in Bengal, if not reconstruct it in systemic interlocution. With the onset of puberty, the lifeworld that produces experiences with objects, events and emotions of everyday can be shared between two selves and several lifeworlds. Therefore, posing a challenge to understand how the

adolescent travels across the lifeworlds of neighborhood, family, and friends to arrive at a culture which both liberates and confines a self in terms of language, formal education practices, sexual practices, leisurely engagements and material aspirations. In trying to locate the self at the crossroads of several lifeworlds, I shall re-read the character of “Topshe” from “*Feluda*”, the famous detective novel of Satyajit Ray. Besides, to make the journey of the concept more meaningful in last 20 years I would review a film named *Open-tee-bioscope* produced in 2015. This will bring forth the change in the construction of adolescence for Bengalis in their popular culture and their ideological and moral negotiations. Besides, mention shall be made of the recent government policies and programs with relevance to adolescence.

3.1. The Adolescence Universal

The history of adolescence study traces back to the 1920s, though not always under the same banner or a fixed age category and location. Anthropologist, Margaret Mead had journeyed to the South Pacific territory of American Samoa to discover whether adolescence was universally traumatic and stressful time due to biological factors or the experience of adolescence depended on one's cultural upbringing. After spending about nine months observing and interviewing Samoans, as well as administering psychological tests, Mead concluded that adolescence was not a stressful time for girls in Samoa because Samoan cultural patterns were very different from those in the United States. Her findings were published in *Coming of Age in Samoa* (1928) with vivid description of Samoan adolescent life and two dedicated chapters suggestive of

implications for child rearing in the United States. Thus, there was a larger problematic concerning the nature of adolescence in modern societies in relation to the primitive. There were also contentions over a natural transition from adolescence to adulthood. Thus, the role expectations and corresponding experiences of childhood, adolescence and youth in modern societies “do not constitute a part of a fully institutionalized and organized series of age groups” (Eisenstadt 1965: 41).

However, with secondary education becoming an institutionalized mass experience, adolescence found a definition within an age category in relation to years of secondary schooling, and saw an emphasis of their removal from the labor market and prolonged social dependency. Another important thing happened as educational system started to segregate according to the age of students: while primary and secondary education drew distinction between childhood and adolescence, it blurred the tendencies of overlap in actions and behavior of boys and girls during the liminal times as experienced across childhood-adolescence-youth. We find Durkheim referring to the second period of childhood as the critical moment in the formation of moral character and Parson’s referring to youth as confronting relatively similar complex ideas and sentiments that under-grid the notions of morality.

.... if, beyond this second period of childhood-i.e., beyond school age-the foundations of morality have not been laid, they never will be. From this point on, all one can do is to complete the job already begun, refining sensibilities and giving them some intellectual content, i.e., informing them increasingly with intelligence. But the groundwork must

have been laid. So we can appropriately fix our attention above all on this stage of development. Moreover, precisely because it is an intermediate stage, what we shall say may be readily applied, *mutatis mutandis*, to the preceding and following stages. (Durkheim, 1925:18)

Thus the understanding of adolescence would remain incomplete without understanding these overlaps and fluidity traced in their actions across later childhood, adolescence and youth. ‘The period of youth in our society is one of considerable strain and insecurity ... There is reason to believe that the youth culture has important sensitive functions in easing the transition from the security of childhood in the family of orientation to that of full adult in marriage and occupational status.’ (Parsons, 1972: 145-6)

In an influential article ‘Age and sex in the social structure of the US’, Talcott Parsons discusses about how “youth culture” is idealized by the adults to express the elements of insecurity and stress in their adult roles. Therefore, justifying a need for break from the difficult times of adulthood into practicing a more frivolous lifestyle and giving rise to a corresponding cultural climate. Twenty years later, Parsons revisited the topic in his article ‘Youth in the context of American society’ (1963, 1961). Focusing on middle-class boys and girls he argued that the development of such specific age groups was an attempt to crystallize the idea of an autonomous “interclass culture” based on hedonist consumption. Access to minimal “leisure time” was seen as means of ruling out social differences. Thus a “new leisure class” emerged with the youth defining its boundaries in terms of their distinct cultural practices and social needs.

Adolescence gradually becomes an important category or group to reconstruct and the driving force in asserting class location and its inter-class relations.

3.2. Adolescence in Policies and Programs

Here I would like to make a passing mention of how Durjati Prasad Mukerji opines about the adolescent in his book *The Problems of Indian Youth* (1946).

DP sees the adolescent/youth to be under subjugation and control of the adults. He sees a section, necessarily the students, to be the ward of the family and thus guided by them in all ways and measures. The guidance is overwhelming, as DP says that construction of adolescent students revolves around the crisis associated to their sex-urge. Students have been represented across the social fabric, which includes literature (novels, music, painting, cinema and other forms), as those that need to be tamed and fed with substitute of feelings to organize their basic urges. But DP questions this attitude and perceives the need for questioning and rethinking of this position by the adolescent/youth themselves. However, the compulsions to guide the adolescent may have transformed in the last two decades, but there's no doubt that it has found fresh reasons to mould them and often through initiatives of care. These care drives and corresponding inventiveness are surely not free of the politics of subversion of total freedom by the state at large and family in everyday microcosm. A more detailed and relevant discussion on this care and nurturing practices with regard the adolescent shall be accomplished in chapter 7. But here I would like to quickly flag the important government programs for adolescent to give a feel of the social concern that looms large. Government programs in India for adolescent care have typically focused on areas of health and education through

Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS), “Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan” and the National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) among others. One such significant program for addressing adolescent health issues, named “Rashtriya Kishor Swasthya Karyakram” (RKSK) was launched in 2014. The program aims to holistically approach the health problems of adolescents across the nation and in turn ensure their development. Linkages are built between the teachers, peer educators (representative of adolescent students), and other service providers (such as, Anganwadi Workers—AWWs, Accredited Social Health Activists—ASHAs, Lady Councilors and Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan—NYKS—volunteers) so that varied concerns of adolescence can be carefully integrated into a single-target program with innumerable collateral issues to be pulled into its ambit. The proposed program approaches the adolescent through education system and peer-influence mechanisms. Problems relating to adolescents’ nutrition level, sexual practices, reproductive health, mental health, substance abuse and violence remain the prime concern. Government of India’s Rajiv Gandhi Scheme for Empowerment of Adolescent Girls: SABLA (known as SABLA thereafter) was floated in October 2010. As the name suggests, the program sought to address the developmental proceedings of 11-18 year-old girls, both in and out of school. The comprehensive services on offer were more or less the same, including life skill training, health and nutritional care, sexual and reproductive health measures, provisions for formal and non-formal education to out-of-school adolescent girls, but creating opportunities for vocational training for girls above the age of 16 found significant entry here. Other infrastructural bodies of the government looped into this program were the ICDS and National Social Development Program (NSDP) of the Ministry

of Labor, which were already engaged in building capacities on similar lines. A study done by the International Center for Research on Women (ICRW) in 2013 on Government programs targeting the adolescent girls pointed out that the SABLA initiative surely acted as a common platform for coordinating and adopting synchronous measures nationwide to reach out to the needs of adolescent girls and address the existing gaps. However, the ICRW research showed that SABLA's rationale for the Adolescent girls' program hovered around protect girls from early and unwanted pregnancy more than developing livelihood alternatives that could help girls construct their identities beyond the roles of future wives and mothers. At the onset of puberty girls turn to increasingly and closely identifying themselves in terms of their sexuality. And during such juncture elders from the family and community become apprehensive about adolescent girls turning to pre-marital sexual activity. Thus the prime focus of the parental and therefore social control shifts towards maintaining the sexual chastity of girls, resulting in restrictions around their mobility and often educational opportunities. In these conditions the Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRHR) programs often deeply engage with Adolescence as it guarantees an entry point whereby interventions for changing attitudes of the girls towards sexuality can be assured and positive practices regarding the same can be inculcated from an early age. Doing so, on the other hand, the emphasis on rolling out livelihood and vocational training takes a back seat. Nevertheless, attempts are on its way to realign sexual health initiatives with livelihood-building components for the adolescent girls. I would like to cite from the Report prepared ICRW in 2013 on this issue:

“Our research showed that one of the main reasons for including the livelihood components in SRHR programs is to meet the growing demand emerging from within the communities, both from adults (mainly parents of adolescent program participants) and/or adolescents themselves. Adults and adolescent girls alike perceive livelihood activities, especially skill development, as helpful in enabling girls to get jobs in the future. The addition of livelihood elements, especially skills training with its potential for income generation, incentivized girls’ overall participation in SRHR programs, especially where the programs did not have a long presence in the communities where the interventions are implemented. Many adults consider sexual and reproductive health programs for girls as culturally inappropriate and threatening to core social values. Integrating sexual and reproductive health with livelihood skills training was more acceptable as it was perceived as a more neutral platform for engaging girls.” (Nanda et. al., 2013: 20-21)

The pressing livelihood needs seem to be covertly related to most prominent concerns and therefore the corresponding care initiatives articulated through these programs. Livelihood component in the training programs in other words is seen essential and besotted with the hope of raising self-esteem of adolescent girls, specifically with regard to one’s body, health and well-being. This in turn unwittingly could plant the desire for economic independence among adolescent girls. In a not so similar league, but with some holistic purpose in mind the West Bengal Government introduced it “Kanyashree Prakalpa” in 2013, whereby it would make conditional cash transfer (CCT) to adolescent

girls for continuing their education at least up to the secondary level and finally a one-time cash amount of 25,000 rupees be made at the age of 18. All records of the beneficiaries of the scheme is collected from the schools, as the aim remains to reduce school drop-out levels among girls and defer under-age marriages, ensuring school attendance as a necessary precondition for availing CCT scheme. Thus the “Kanyashree” program ultimately works with an objective to provide some sort of economic resilience, which in turn would help mitigate the multivariate health and social plights circumscribing the adolescent girls and to-be-women of tomorrow. However, none of these programs or schemes are free of their political ambitions, thereby the gaps in its formulation, execution and success persists. But highlighting these programs become necessary herein for reflecting the larger social concerns based on which these policies and programs get floated. We see in all these programs the ideas of sexual excesses in adolescence, and the need to taper them, strongly percolating over time. Though there’s also attempts of redressing them to find safer outlets and not blindly applying the stigmatization and therefore sequestration measures as previously used. Thus having built the backdrop both universally and specifically, I would plunge back into the literature again to locate the urban adolescent in Bengal, sketching a social history of them with regards to popular fictional adolescent character of ‘Topse’ who almost came alive in every Bengali household in 1970’s and thereafter. This shall help build upon the popular imagination of adolescence in urban Kolkata and then reflect on the contemporary lingering of the same juxtaposed with the reimagining at a different epoch in time.

3.3. The Particular ‘Boy’ and his ‘Boyhood’

Trying to transport the idea of adolescence to a culture and social placenta that manifests hybrids of several kinds, primarily drawing upon post-colonialism, nationalism and urbanization; it becomes necessary to delve into the more immediate experiences of the adolescent self in relation to their lifeworld. Experiences that would talk of lived moments and its meaningful association to one’s life in its contemporariness as well as through reflections of others in the larger cosmos of the lifeworld. To interpret the meaning of experiences for a self, I therefore see a need to account for the other experiences across parallel lifeworlds. To discuss these experiences and make sense of the consciousness embedded in our “natural attitude” I have tried to draw upon the experiences of the adolescent from three vantage points in relation to the character of Topse in Satyajit Ray’s detective *Feluda* series. Firstly, the author’s social and political experiences of everyday being an important precondition for determining the narrative of a boy, as much as the need to create an ideal-typical construction for the masses. Secondly, the character himself voicing a journey towards such an imagined ideal of adolescence against the backdrop of time and space, as constructed by the author. However, the journey often leads to moments of dissent, which the author consciously or unconsciously misses out with a larger literary promise in mind. But the author surely portrays an alternate self that isn’t always confined to the structures of the lifeworld experiences. Rather, there are subtle adaptations of the self in the image of “Topse” to contrast the given life of an adolescent, thereby confronting the systemic challenges. Thirdly, the reader, or the researcher in this case, who juxtaposes the experiences of the author and the fictitious character, with his/her experiences from a plurality of

lifeworlds. Thus, taking the liberty to merge the author with the fictitious character in terms of their reflection upon the same lifeworld, I will try to understand adolescence from necessarily two timeframes and social dispositions, namely, the author/Topse and the reader.

Inspired by the Husserlian motivation to be aware of the sensibilities of everyday life and revive the dependence of science on the human sphere, one needs to turn from totalizing conceptual framework to self-evident experiences of the lifeworlds. There are certain things, opinions and valuations which appear “self-evident,” commanding an immediate understanding as a result of our habitual use of them. Usually we are so entangled in them that questioning them traps us into their own dynamics, leading to trivialization of the experience in focus. Therefore, it becomes necessary to return to our consciousness, the ‘unreflected’ presuppositions against the background of time, context and the corresponding sensibilities arising therein. The engagement with the “boyhood” is laden with several experiences across plurality of lifeworlds and therefore coaxes us to suspend the “natural attitude” garnered over time without sapping off the naturalness of the experience regarding the same. Husserl was dissatisfied with the modern ways of doing philosophy, common philosophical problems, themes or tropes. He wanted a new kind of self-reflection attentive to human historicity, approaching the history of philosophy from a different point of view. Thus dismantling the external facts to find the motivation in history of the “self-conscious subjectivity”. Therefore, the conditions making objectivity possible are to be understood in terms of “functioning subjectivity”, i.e. the collective and anonymous intentionality the self absorbs from its socio-cultural

context to arrive at an objective notion of the object. In this context, we can refer to what Husserl has said many years back:

The total intentional accomplishment ... of the subjectivity in question ... is not that of the isolated subject. We are dealing, rather, with the entire intersubjectivity which is brought together in the accomplishment – and here the concepts of “what is,” ... etc., are repeatedly relativized.... All the levels and strata through which the syntheses are interwoven, intentionally overlapping as they are from subject to subject, form a universal unity of synthesis.... In this regard we speak of the “intersubjective constitution” of the world ...; through this constitution, if we systematically uncover it, the world as it is for us becomes understandable as a structure of meaning formed out of elementary intentionalities. The being of these intentionalities themselves is nothing but one meaning-formation operating together with another, “constituting” new meaning through synthesis (Husserl, 1970: 167-68).

Thus, we can say that the consciousness of the self accommodates much of the unconscious in the multiple selves it plays out. It also adopts the other’s consciousness of self from the lifeworld and redefines the pure essence of a being, in its everydayness as well as through historically reiterated structures. Ray with such conscious as well as anonymous intentionalities recreates an adolescent in his imagination of “Topse”, having a historical bearing upon readers while they negotiate with their self and the other in a new context.

The boundaries, therefore, drawn by age, gender and status to locate the adolescence need to be removed and freshly perceived with new spatial and

temporal urgencies informing its enquiry. It should draw upon experiences gathered from the journey they make socially and biologically. Crossing of liminality becomes more than a single-day event in their lives, rich in a body of collective and individualized life experiences with multiplicity of intentions, both conscious and anonymous. The common notions of “chele bela”, “koishore”, “boyoshondhikal” all need to be attended to for re-examining why at all they became so self-evident in understanding the roles assigned for conducting life. Rather than obligating oneself to a theoretically non-ambiguous description and controlling the scope for interpretation, the urge would be to look into literature. As literature defines itself as an art and does not seek to tell us anything we don’t know from our lifeworld. The character of Topse herein exists on the same ground as does our lifeworld understanding of adolescence and experiences of it in totality of its structuring elements. The reader can access the deeply-anchored, yet unreflected presuppositions through such a literary creation, while matching a concrete description with his or her conscious and unconscious experiences. The reader thus moves to the position of the observer, creating an artificial distance. This enables the reader to look at lifeworlds, from outside, with his/her self-evidences and unassuming attitude.

3.3.1. From the Author’s Lifeworld

Satyajit Ray’s private eye Feluda can be taken a step beyond a mere creative impulse. A close look into the cultural and social conditions that shaped the author helps us find reflections of the same in his character of “Topse”. It was around 1960s that Ray had taken up the responsibility to revive *Sandesh*, his

grandfather Upendra Kishore's much acclaimed children's magazine. *Sandesh* often found its audience in upper middleclass Bengali children, mostly groomed in western style missionary education. *Sandesh* and other contemporary literary works of then like Sudhir Sarkar's *Mouchak* (started publication in 1920) and Hemen Ray's *Rangmashal* (1937) for the young had already begun projecting the child as a subject to be nurtured for the sake of modernity. The predominance of the boy in these texts and mention of the girl only to support and reinstate the male childhood was quite evident. The task of producing entertainment along with tender recipes of grooming the young minds with ideals of nationalism, urbanism and cosmopolitanism was soon taken up by Ray's father, Sukumar Ray (1887-1923). But his early death left the author without a father as early as at the age of three. He grew in a single parent household where his love for art and cinema drew inspirations strongly from the western world. After attaining a degree in economics from Presidency College in 1939, he abandoned any further formal education and decided to become a commercial artist. However, on much insistence of his mother he went to Vishwa Bharati at Shantiniketan and with much reluctance acquired training in Indian art. Soon he joined the Signet Press and started working on children's novel and his venture into reviving *Sandesh* materialized.

The bastion for creating an ideal child image through succulent literary pieces was passed on to the much deserving Satyajit Ray. And much justice was done in the first *Feluda* story itself, appearing in 1965 on the pages of *Sandesh*. The two prime characters of the story were Pradosh Mitter, the private investigator and his fourteen-year-old cousin Tapes Mitter. Thus, conscious and unconscious lifeworld experiences of the author produced the finest image of

an adolescent boy in “Topse”, who becomes the narrator of the author’s fictional genius. We as readers find the character of “Topse” embodied with hints of the varied life experiences of Ray (in terms of his urban ethics, idea of work and leisure, sense of collective right and moral responsibility, limits of deviance), if not painted in its overtones. Ray had possibly experienced the ambiguity of the times after the Indo-China war in 1962, a massive food shortage and a renewed focus on NCC (National Cadet Corps) thereafter. Such a social milieu produced a battery of mutual understandings within the lifeworld to deal with a ‘not-so-old’ and ‘not-so-young’ a boy in the uncertain times. Besides, the journey of the literary magazine and the commitment of the Ray family towards understanding the child and adolescent had to take a new flight with Satyajit Ray’s *Feluda* and it was no less rewarding an engagement to shoulder the responsibility of reproducing values for the young.

3.3.2. Rethinking ‘Topse’, the adolescent boy

Ray’s intended world of the adolescent was carefully crafted in keeping with an emerging new nation and pressing demands of colonialism for an independent, yet tutored urban boy. “Topse” appears to have mastered his anxieties from childhood but is still dependent on adult prescriptions for conducting himself in his everyday endeavors, as handed down from lifeworld of engaging beliefs and values of the concerned adult. “Feluda” is the daring, strong and affable detective cousin of “Topse”, who turns out to be almost a role-model for the young boy. The necessary training and discipline for the young remains a constant in the interpretations of all Ray’s formulations. “Topse” being the

critical vantage point narrates the stories of daring adventure, ensuring awe and fantasy as an integral part of his growing up. The author's preoccupation with keeping the adolescent mind free of any violence or sex was accomplished with "Topse" narrating his experiences under the tutelage of "Feluda". The social in making was more accommodating of the innocence and moral uprightness of the adolescence in contrast to the experimental tendencies of the age that still remained at the "horizon" of the ever-exceeding society.

The vulnerability of the young boy wasn't ruled out and therefore even in the absence of an immediate family or any overt mention of institutionalized schooling system throughout in the narration, the role of the elder cousin remained exigent. However, the trust in the extended family and its members become pronounced in "Topse's" growing up along with "Feluda". Thus, the adolescence remained an important time for learning and relearning the emotional expressions and making of social bonds. Contrastingly, the truth-seeking adolescent boy had also been upheld, compromising the comforts of a family as well as bypassing the lanes of sexuality and self-discovery in the lone moments of one's household. "Topse" was made to travel places for his palpable fondness of adventure, carefully calibrating the dose of crime that he would be allowed to handle within the ever-transforming moral edifice. In fact, "Topse" would be denied access to things and sights to reproduce the innocence of a child in the adolescent. Thus, the negotiations between the sexually innocent child and physically able young boy continued. Wherever little dissent was accommodated, was under the mask of humor. For instance, while making "Laal Mohan babu" the butt of his jokes, "Feluda" often roped in "Topse" and ridiculed his naivety and coaxed "Topse" to outsmart him in the much-

sanctioned spirit of sarcasm and humor. But nothing was permitted that could alter the adolescent gaze. The elder cousin “Feluda” came across as an ageless hero, old enough to be more than a friend but not too old to play the authoritarian father. This hinted at the family structure of the urban Bengal in those times, where the father was too old to enjoy much emotional proximity to his children. The adolescent boy often found company in elder cousins turned peers of the extended family, resonating the values of sibling love and rivalry.

However, in the absence of family the adolescence is casted in a romantic candor of a trustworthy friend, secured with commitment and high regards for basic human values. Several stories (*The Suitcase*, *The Mystery of Royal Bengal*, *The Elephant God*, *A Calcutta Cemetery*, *Murder by the Sea*) reveals how the detective cases were taken up to serve a generation of older clientele suffering in times of social and demographic rupture. These men were mostly lacking the familial support and were posed with precarious times of class dislocation and loss of their social position. They were the once influential custodians of rich artefacts and heritage sites, who were being robbed off their ancestral moorings in the face of changing politico-economic policies. Acquainting the adolescent to these changes and sensitizing him to the trans-historical phenomena of ‘status’ in contrast to the historical ‘class’ makes the boy predisposed to the ever increasing “precarity” of the market. Thus, the return to the familial concerns and finding a haven in home also presupposes the growth of adolescent into a responsible adult with high regards for humanitarianism (the celebrated ideal of the middle classes of the post-independence and pre-globalization era).

Moreover, Ray's residence in Bishop Lefroy Road, away from the neighborhoods of North Calcutta—the alleys that housed the intellectuals of the time and the exceeding margins of the city on its south to accommodate recent immigrants gave way to some collective notions of neighborhood and the city. These were too reflected in Ray's idea of the young and his everyday experiences of the "para". The neighborhood and its experiences lay at the margins while creating an adolescent lifeworld primarily growing from a metropolitan landscape. The shrinking experiences of the neighborhood in an age of fragmented community and changing structure of family left the adolescence with a new understanding of free time, peers and hence friendship. The extended family gradually being replaced by the nuclear structure, and thereby, the next-door friend being substituted by 'friend-like' bonding with immediate family members (generally the father-son or the mother-daughter proximity) or no friends at all. Thus, the adolescent self is seen traversing the limits of the lifeworld as that of the author and presenting himself in such capacity that he can conduct himself meaningfully in plurality of life experiences, with a promise to accommodate to its ever-changing nature.

3.4. The Bengali Adolescent: Continuity and Change

Having spoken in some length of the lifeworld experiences and its role in creating a sense of continuity for the adolescent, one must address the precariousness that it poses. There have been a few distinct reflections from the lifeworld of Ray's and thereby his created boy, and some that can be seen to have bearing even at the turn of the century. One of them being his reluctance

in making an abated mention of the woman and cleansing of all possible hints towards sexuality in the narration of an adolescent boy. Such an act of sanitizing speaks of the values and beliefs of his time. The forceful abdication of the female subject, except older women and female actors in few of the stories (such as, *The Bandits of Bombay*, *Triumph at Darjeeling*, *Murder at Kailash*) where they have been nominal and incidental to the plot. With publication of few of his Feluda stories in “*Desh*” (the quintessential Bengali magazine for the adult middleclass reader), this discomfort with women in stories crafted for the young became apparent, as the adult readers demanded for the same. Thus, we see that the author and the reader both were fine with a throbbing presence of women and sexuality in the stories of the adult, while maintaining silence about the other sex in the lives of adolescents. In an interview for a woman’s magazine, Ray said:

Well yes, maybe this is unconsciously a hereditary incidence, because my father and my grandfather also did not have girls in their stories.... The problem is if there is a young woman there might be a clash with “Topse”. Or her relation with Topse might give rise to certain complications. It’s a structural problem (Sananda, 1986: 27).

This need for keeping the girl at bay is possibly a conscious negotiation between the several roles of a woman to only use her agency so far as it upholds the boy, in terms of a nurturer and protector of the latter mostly. Since any lifeworld is intergenerational and cannot be cut off from its preceding or following generations, the continuity of the values and consequent experiences become quite evident. This discomfort in locating the boy in proximity to the girl and vice versa still continues. To shed light upon this I would like to make reference

to the movie *Open-tee-Bioscope*, directed by Anindya Chatterjee in 2015. The adolescent boy named “Foara” (meaning a water spring) is found stealing moments to peep into the alleys of prostitution on one hand and romancing a girl next door on the other. This polarity in locating the girl and thereby referring to the dynamics of teenage sexuality is no way bereft of the anxieties produced in the lifeworld of both the young and the adult, necessarily the parent or custodian of the moral makeup of the adolescent. However, the adolescent is at the brim of both these lifeworlds and so are the adult parents, facing the precariousness of the intersecting values and beliefs. The adolescent boy in the movie even throws up an image of a boy who uses a language, fused with slangs having sexual inundations, to become more acceptable among his peers. Thus, the anxieties that stopped Ray from making women visible still gets reproduced, both with regards to time and age, making the precarious nature of lifeworld explicable. The ethical questions posed to the parent as a protector of the ‘yet-to-be-adult’ on one level and as a human emancipist on the other often lead to contentions across lifeworlds. Whether to look for the father or the propagator, at times throw crisis in everyday lives of the young.

The changes of body and mind in adolescence create the urgency for governing and gaining control of them as a generation and hold back their entry into workforce. One of the prevalent beliefs is to condition the young by testing them in situations that elicit valor and respect for order (Hall, 1904: 1, 321). But these situations themselves were not to provide gainful employment or make money solely. Ray possibly had a similar reflection and thus his young “Topse” appears taking great pride in being a close associate to a fierce and discerning detective. The idea of leisure and work seem to get quite muddled up for adolescents as

they engage in series of tasks across school, home and neighborhood that are not strictly work in the intrinsic value of the term. However, leisure for adolescence has often been understood as a time for “recreation” of the self to move into more fruitful employment and not leisure as a concept outside of time (DeGrazia, 1962). The training offered to “Topse” is an obvious manifestation of the cultural consensus around grooming the adolescent for work and the demands of labour.

The challenges of grooming and utilization of the free time in everyday experiences have always been fueled by the urgency to find employment. This sense of precariousness across lifeworlds regarding work and leisurely tasks and to finally prepare oneself for monetarily gainful work has been a constant among the urban middle classes. The Author himself has revealed such anxieties through his self-appointed private detective Mr. Pradosh Mitter, who with his entrepreneurial excellence dares to flout the need of a full-time job, when West Bengal and its middle class had been seen hankering for a secured government job. He opens up the challenge of self-employment in an age of capitalist appropriation of labor. The change that hereby becomes self-evident is a serious pondering over alternative work in the face of globalization and recent neo-liberal policies. On deeper introspection, we find an alternative pattern of disciplining in the grooming of “Topse” into a detective, trying to harness the innate tendencies of critical thinking and spirit of justice in the young boy. As there is a mention of not following the socially beaten path, there is also a parallel creation of a new career goal that necessarily fosters new kind of negotiation between the individual will, autonomy and the disciplined self. Durkheim had transpired ideas regarding such inculcation of spirit of

resignation and finding alternate, legitimate ambitions, proposing contradictory social principles to generate happiness.

Without trying to hide the injustices of the world— injustices that always exist— we must make the child appreciate that he cannot rely for happiness upon unlimited power, knowledge, or wealth; but that it can be found in very diverse situations, that each of us has his sorrows as well as his joys, that the important thing is to discover a goal compatible with ones abilities, one which allows him to realize his nature without seeking to surpass it in some manner, thrusting it violently and artificially beyond its natural limits. (Durkheim, 1925: 3, 49-50)

Again, going back to the scripts of *Open-tee-Bioscope* (2006) we encounter a strong passion in the young boy for pursuing the game of football. The neighborhood and the adolescent sets dreams upon a trophy that has a symbolic value beyond just winning a match. It's fused with ideas of pride, self-identity and upholding the lineage of a family of sportsman (father of "Foara" being a state-level footballer). The mother too, with her lifeworld of anxieties, remains divided between sending her adolescent boy to the hostel with a promise of good training followed by a more secure career and nurturing the young boy's intrinsic motivation for an alternative career. Thus, adolescence is seen jostling between selves that prepare for an adult life of work security on one hand and fragmented labor on the other.

3.5. Summary Observations

This reading of literary texts comes close to understanding how adolescence ‘comes into being’ in urban Bengal, defying the strict definitions offered by age and time. Adolescence appears to be a more fluid idea transgressing borders to acquire experiences of youth and adulthood, and regain the childlike practices, simultaneously, being unfixed in history and evolving with everyday life experiences. But there are a few predominant observations that I would like to offer: firstly, a sense of vulnerability among the adolescent and therefore a justification of their dependence on other adults that gets reflected throughout from literature, state policies and programs to popular imagination. Secondly, this dependence and a tumultuous social experience being confronted with an ever exceeding individual will to assert one’s self. Thirdly, an overarching sense of morality constantly finding new ways of training and disciplining with changing time and space. However, the understanding I propose here is completely drawn from texts and other resources that echoes the urban middleclass phenomena, as lifeworld experiences of the rural were beyond the present purview. Hence the analyses and interpretations are heavily fed by the middleclass practices and ideals, which are again not very homogenous. However, to account for the non-middle class assertion and negotiations with regard to adolescence an engaging ethnography has been done that shall be built in the following chapters. But one needs to mention that the non-middle class experiences cannot be understood in total segregation of the middle classes in a society that offers formal and universal education. Besides, Adolescence has purposively been understood in terms of the boy and his boyhood and whatever slight reference of the feminine is made, is in the best interest to reinforce the

study of the boy in liminality. Thus, a serious revisiting of adolescence from the standpoint of the girls remains open beyond this popular fictional construction of “Topshe”, which has been taken care of at length as informed by the programs and other secondary data mentioned in the beginning of the chapter and accounts gathered through ethnographic fieldwork.

Chapter 4

Life Skill Lessons and Cultural Reproduction: Government Initiatives

Schools have always been both repository and preserver of culture. It is an institution that reserves sacred value for culture and thus reproduces it to accommodate other structural demands of the society. Culture builds like an edifice upon categories like class, gender, ethnicity and race, but often transforms into a practice that need not always reflect these categories in its complete distinctiveness. Education system in a multicultural and globalized world is quite illustrative of such overlaps and intersections, inviting negotiations and therefore training that ensures continuity while keeping the promise of change alive. Life-skill and personal grooming have always been on the cards for adding utility quotient to education, whether by coercion to adopt given ideals of health, hygiene and cleanliness or making distinctions of esteemed lifestyles. At such crossroads, the pupils from the lower income group of an urban space are seen lacking the required “cultural capital” to survive a life of dignity in the cities. With such ideological misgivings and political ploy, often the state and its educator battalion run the mission of transforming them so that they drop their indigenous cultural moorings and slip into a “cultured” lifestyle that befits the larger imagination of the former’s growth. Thus, the chapter attempts to interrogate such an educational regime by reading through all the extra-curricular programs of the Government schools in Kolkata, raising questions on purpose of learning, conscious raising and “conscientization” (Freire, 1971) among the adolescent students. These government schools carry

out recommended extracurricular activities (ECA) like art, music and sports, as per the state order. Special days like Independence Day, Republic Day, Rabindra Jayanti and Teachers Day is also celebrated ritualistically. These I have studied in another chapter. However, here I would like to draw attention to other government organised and sponsored activities beyond the routinized classroom ECA at schools.

4.1. Larger Initiatives for Life Skill Training

World Health Organization defines life skill as the abilities for adaptive and positive behaviors that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demand and changes in everyday life. In various policies and programs Life skill is divided into three broad sections, namely: thinking skills, social skills and negotiating skills. The idea is to instill habits of problem solving, critical thinking, exercising choice and making informed decisions, and building positive social relations among adolescents. Life skill training thus occupied school programs for long, but found structured formulations in the shape of policies and programs with the advent of formal modern education. Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan” (NYKS), an autonomous body under the Ministry of Skill Development, Entrepreneurship, Youth Affairs and Sports, Government of India had sanctioned 1,42,95,600 rupees for a week-long life skill training camp for the year 2019-2020. The aim of life skill training camps was to provide opportunities for reinforcing positive behavior and gaining further skills to enable adolescents to cope with risky behaviors. NYKS basically wanted adolescents to develop competence in sexual and reproductive health and sought

to do it through training interventions by specialized personnel in hard-to-reach areas. They wanted to conduct these specialized camps with the vision of approaching the adolescent and youth through their social networks.

The plan was to organize activities to inculcate essential life skills and develop responsible attitudes towards oneself and society. Issues such as HIV, substance abuse, violence, gender discrimination and moral conduct were to be addressed in these camps with specialist-trainee support. The objectives ranged from identifying harmful facets of gender stereotyping, conducting everyday cleanliness activities, imparting lessons on the need for good family health and hygiene to morally fulfilling performances. The camps would invite students within the age group of 10-19 and have 7 day long non-residential sessions. The ways of imparting training also appeared quite multivariate and pedagogically inspiring. Techniques for the training included lecture sessions by subject specialists, situational analysis in community-based activities, storytelling and discussions, lessons through local parable and myths, question box technique, demonstrative Methods of audio-visual and drama, creative engagements through art and craft, viewing inspirational movies collectively, and case studies. The training schedule, interestingly, mentioned the need for introduction of various national flagship programs such as— “Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojna”, “Swachh Bharat Mission”, “Nirmal Bharat Abhiyan” and “Shramdaan” among others. Youth clubs/ teen clubs were to be made among the students and peer coordinated activities were to be conducted thereafter. The goal was set not only to train the adolescents but also to initiate resocialization by drawing in the siblings, especially the girls and women of the families and the parents. Besides, peer-educators from the community shall also be engaged

in training, seeking some kind of extra-socialization via institutional and academy exchange of participants. Thus we see an extensive and quite encompassing training schedule for life skill enhancement. These are surely extra-mural in nature and have quite pervasive impact on the adolescent life, but I would discuss below how similar training is carried out through everyday activities and programs of the government schools of Kolkata.

4.2. Culture of Education and the Moral Responsibility

Education with the spread of modern school system, establishes close ties with the community. Since located in a socio-cultural milieu, catering to a particular geographical limit, the school functions as anything but an autonomous unit. The school as a formal institution too shares a continuous and reciprocal relation with the community, at times almost behaving like a serving body to a large clientele. Such a market orientation that education adopts in modernity to meet socio-economic interest, accommodating political overtones, surfaces in the form of moral injunctions. These admonitions are not always profoundly instructive, rather are very subtly placed to satisfy the larger promise of maintaining social order. However, the school-community relations that existed in the village life, where the immediate neighbourhood and family stood as the guiding force for “*patshalas*”, have travelled a long distance to become a more organized body, operating with greater discreteness and bureaucratic formality. Public relations have made way into school administration at various levels to meet the needs of a culturally more heterogeneous community in cities. Thus, transcending the particularistic community interest of a clustered geographical

identity, schools now seem to grapple with universalizing agendas and fast changing demands of every day. In the process a varied nexus of ties emerges, accommodating and negotiating on several cultural, social and political fronts. Value education and role of moral benefactor undergoes a silent metamorphosis. All key participants in the process of schooling appear to be apprehensive about the identity one carries into and comes out with from this rigorous institutionalizing system. As Jayaram observes: “Both teachers and students generally vary in their background characteristics, and communities differ in terms of the material/monetary support that they can extend to the school and in their value systems. These diversities in the community’s input into school impact it both directly and indirectly, determining the functioning of the school and the outcome of its educational efforts.” (Jayaram, 2019: 50).

The school-community relation in a city is enmeshed with a plethora of sub-counter-relations, which become evident in different categories of schools. Starting from Government public schools, government-aided schools, private schools, international schools, community schools, and missionary schools to municipality schools, all speak of the socio-economic diversity that education accommodates and replenishes in a plural social milieu of urban scape. The location of the school, management authority, primordial affiliations and gender composition become very vital in determining the influence of the community on schools and vice-versa. The association among the teacher-student-parent is quite segmented and formal, mostly indifferent beyond the fulfilment of immediate academic interests. However, in such situations, as Jayaram says, “the community’s interests in school is mediated more by governmental channels rather than by community members per se” (Jayaram, 2019: 52). I

would like to add an observation here, the community that makes inroads into schools holding hands of the government and its policies are no way a complete or organic representation of the former. The community therefore finds a majoritarian, hegemonic and often alienating presence in the school, serving disparate interests and encouraging instilling of values equally discordant at times. The private and public schools behave in contrast on the operational level, though synthetically they may appear in unison as far as imparting community values and bearing the moral responsibility of grooming the adolescent students is concerned. The public schools either seem to tout ideas of community participation and moral grooming under the larger banner of “uniquely Indian values”¹ to echo the need for traditional revivalism, or limit itself to fulfilling the demands and crises faced by the geographically immediate population it serves. Thus, the community here often represents a more preconceived, given and therefore dictating and often a controlling entity, far from being organic and culturally regenerative of the ones being educated. Contrastingly, the private schools accommodate and represent the community in a relatively more relevant fashion, keeping in mind the cultural and social backdrop of the students they pledge to train. Though, the motivation for the private schools remain profit maximization in most cases through display of sensitivity towards community and providing ways for cultural catharsis in the name of value restoration and moral protection. But whatever may the structure and administrative scope of the schools be, an overwhelming majoritarian influence persists. As Jayaram says: “... both in government schools and private grant-in-aid schools there is a discernible majoritarian orientation. While this is understandably a function of the demographic composition of the school

population, it puts the secular ethos under strain and creates an uneasy feeling among the students and teachers belonging to the minority communities” (Jayaram, 2019: 54).

From my research into the schools of the city, I have come to discern that the community-school interlacing invites a relook into the idea of community itself (along with the training it plans keeping pace with the cultural heterogeneity). Communities, as we all know, have moved beyond being a “spatio-temporal” entity to representing and obliging identities based on commonalities of religion, language, caste, race etc.; and often these identities come to exist through imagined commonalities (Anderson, 1938) transpiring beyond physical continuity. Thus, the values/morals that emerge out of and sustain such communities are bound to have overlaps, contestations and discontinuities, all of which necessarily make way into the schools and twig their training manuals of all kinds. In fact, India has been witness to an evolving culture of education that has strongly drawn upon its communities’ social and political appeals as well as predicaments across history.² Such a rich culture of education that has been assimilating into the structures, needs and aspirations of a society from pre- to post-colonial times; necessarily rendered functions to fulfil moral and ideological obligations through varied channels. Thus, moral or value education found fresh orientation and content at several epochs in time keeping in tune with the fast-changing social fabric and corresponding shift in ideals. Several kinds of lessons, from spiritual awakening in ancient religious education, nationalist aspirations in times of nation building, sharpening of etiquettes for western colonizers to lifestyle coaching for industrial and then globalized society have found relevance under the rubric of moral and value education. It

should not be missed, thereby, that there were always underlying purposes for such lessons. But these purposes never made overt display of supremacy of one utilitarian goal over the other, rather mechanisms were explored to convert few to satisfy the ideals of another dominant few.

As Pathak says, after Durkheim, “Schools instil a sense of morality into children. But what is morality? Durkheim made two points. First, the function of morality is ‘to determine conduct, to fix it, to eliminate the individual arbitrariness’ (Durkheim, 1961: 27). This means regularity. ‘Morality’, wrote Durkheim, ‘presupposes a certain capacity for behaving similarly under like circumstances, and consequently it implies a certain ability to develop habits, a certain need for regularity’ (Durkheim, 1961: 27). Second, morality implies ‘the idea of authority’. Moral authority is qualitatively different. One must obey moral command out of respect for it and for this reason only. In a way, according to Durkheim ‘morality is a system of commandments’ (Durkheim, 1961: 31).” Thus, with reference to case studies from my field of research, I pledge to explore the several layers in training programs offered to the adolescent students in the city of Kolkata under the plethora of life skill lessons via extra-mural (beyond classroom) activities at schools. Here I would be highlighting the organized activities in which students of government schools participate, those of who mostly represent a specific socio-economic class. It will help explore the ideas and ideals that come to exist and circumscribe the larger universalizing notions of morality and, thereby, also locate the fissures within that notion, the breakaway points, the negotiations for subjective moral existences and the hegemony of a collective conscience.

4.3. Into the Everyday Terrains of Schooling

The state government schools of Kolkata were observing a week long program on the theme “Nirmal vidalaya sapthya udyapan”. The schools under ward 17 of Kolkata municipality had organized several activities beyond their curriculum to generate awareness about environmental protection and cleanliness. The themes included: renouncing the use of plastic, saving water, Dengue and water-borne disease awareness, open defecation, cleanliness in cooking, use of dustbins, planting of trees and doing of one’s household and everyday chores. All these themes in a city-based public school, if you observe very closely, is indicative of the social and cultural practices that circumscribe the lives of the people mostly belonging to the lower socio-economic class. However, we can’t really say that the environmental protection or cleanliness and saving of water are issues that only impinge upon the lives of the economically backward but the habits of open defecation, cleanliness of the surrounding and control of water-borne diseases necessarily affect the lives of the poor much more. As they dwell in houses and localities that lack proper sanitation and hygiene facilities and are also seen to be lacking adequate knowledge about the resultant health hazards in an urban space.

4.3.1. Event I — Road Rally

One of the events was a road rally where seven government schools participated. They had all assembled at Northern Park near Jagu Babu Bazar and were to walk down a distance of 3 kilometers up to Paddapukur Road canvassing with posters that they had made on the above-mentioned issues. All necessary

arrangements for the march were made by the local councilor. The posters had slogans such as: “slow the flow, save H₂O”, “bajar kori tholi haatey, plastic barjan hobe tate” (use bags for shopping, denounce plastic), “tubewell or pump tap, water must be clean for us”, “vidyalaya moder bari, takey mora porishkar kori” (school is our home, thus we keep it clean), “Beware of all types of pollution”. Besides these posters, students also decorated a scooter of a teacher like a tabloid into a forest, narrating the importance of rain forests and trees specifically to arrest environmental damages. Two very interesting poster slogans read: first, “barjo noito barjoniyo, Jodi rakhi susthaney. Jotha sthaney moila feli, prithok kori sabdhane” (waste is not wasteful, if kept in right place. If only we dispose of waste rightly, segregating them carefully). Second, “mid-day meal er khawar dawar rakhte hobe porishkar” (mid-day meal food needs to be cooked in a clean and hygienic way). These both slogans if read deeply hint at finer understanding of waste and its scientific processing and goes beyond the mere logic of adopting habitual changes in personal grooming for health and cleanliness. The slogans also highlight the government provision for free meals at school and how it should nurture not only quality eating habits, i.e., the diet issues, but also its preparation by cooks who must not compromise on hygiene. Contrasting to the above preceding slogans emphasizing on the scientific and technical conditions for understanding health and hygiene, there were slogans like, “totto noi, golpo noi, chai roger pratikar. Dhangsho hok sob jibanu, stabdo hok hahakar” (no theories or stories of hope! We need cure of diseases through proper control of viruses and bacteria so that the suffering lot can be saved); “jol jombe rashi rashi, thakte hobe jol nikashi” (water logging needs to be addressed with proper drainage system) and “khabar er agey,

soucher por, haath duti porishkar kor” (before eating and after defecation wash your hands). Thus weaving all these slogans together, a pattern can be seen in the narrative built: firstly, they are all in active voice, as if the adolescent girls and boys are taking a pledge while carrying these banners and posters, echoing their responsibilities for caring about their own health as much as of becoming responsible residents in an urban space. Secondly, there is also a kind of appeal in the slogans, demanding for privileges to ensure a healthier and protected life for them. However, on talking to the students who were carrying those posters, I discovered that most of the slogans were written by the teachers or copied from pamphlets and notices handed down by the “*sikhha bondhu*” (the government appointed conduit between the office of secondary education and the government schools). One of the students, Bijay Dalui, residing in the Peyara Bagan slums of Kolkata, on being asked about his interest and motivation for participation in such rallies and programs, replied that he participates as the teacher asks them to and all his classmates and friends are part of it. He mentioned that it comes like a break from the regular monotonous classes, where mostly he fails to follow everything. The boy studies in class X and his father is an employee at the petrol pump, while mother works as a domestic help. He has two other siblings and resides in a single room house with the kitchen in the common space being shared with other residents. They share a common toilet with four other families and every morning he needs to fetch the household water from the nearby public water supply tap to be stored for the day’s use. When I mentioned that these programs and rallies asks all to avoid storage of water for long and management of diseases spreading because of unclean and unhygienic conditions in the households and neighborhood. He

said, “My mother sweeps the house every day, but if we do not store water then we cannot cook and take bath. As the latrine is common, no one bothers to clean it and for bathing we mostly use the common space closer to the public tap, whereas my mother and sister takes bath next to our kitchen using the stored water.” Another student, Rohan Mallick, residing next to Landsdowne market area in south Kolkata, offered a similar response for participating in these events. He said that teachers generally tapped him to make the posters and copy the slogans written on the boards. He along with few of his friends carried out the task with much enthusiasm. He is elated to meet other students from different schools during these rallies and feels proud when people on the streets stop to watch them march holding these banners and posters high. On asking him what message he draws from these programs or how he finds them relevant. He says, “I know we should keep our surrounding clean and drink clean water. Therefore, we always carry our drinking water from the tube wells nearby. Since we stay near the vegetable market, at the days end all the rubbish is kept next to our houses and throughout the day people use the space for urinating, at times even the passer-by. Last year I was detected with malaria and could not sit for my exams in the month of July. My father who works with the Kolkata Municipal Corporation (KMC) as a sweeper is responsible for collecting waste in the adjacent areas, thus we have to stay in this location.” There were other boys too who shared their feeling of enjoyment gained from participating in such events and road shows. It’s like a day out, almost going out for picnic, and are offered food packets too after the end of the event.

A girl from the United Missionary School spoke slightly differently. Chandrima Basak of class XII, resident of Kudghat in south Kolkata, said that her teachers

guide them throughout for preparing these posters and writing these slogans. She also reiterated that she has learnt about these health issues from her physical science course at school. She says, “I know that water borne and air borne diseases can harm us. But at our house we have proper water supply and do not store water. We have proper toilets and keep them clean.” On being asked what she learns from these rallies and how she feels participating in them, she added, “I enjoy working together with my friends and walking down the streets while others flock to see us. It makes me feel as if I am doing something important and teaching others about essential ways of good living. I also feel that I should tell people who are unaware of these problems and impart them with these basic understanding of living a healthy life. Cleanliness is something that many people who live in shoddy houses never maintain. Few of my classmates are also very unclean and wear shabby as well as dirty clothes. They carry food that looks bad and we do not like to share our things or food with them.” Another girl, Debosmita Das, residing at Sambhunath Pandit Street of Kolkata, says: “I have seen many such posters and slogans on the walls of the hospital next door. Those posters mention the harmful effects of smoking and how one can catch life threatening diseases if unaware. But the house where we live in is full of mosquitos. We use mosquito nets but keeping the surroundings clean always is not possible. My father is a taxi driver and often sleeps in the taxi itself, though we sleep under the net. I go home and tell people that we should adopt healthy practices to avoid falling sick. I stay in a small single room with my three sisters and mother, and use the public toilet whenever there isn’t water in the servant’s toilet in the outhouse. However, I wash my hands after defecation and before eating and tell others to do the same.”

In fact, when I entered the schools after the rally ended, I found government issued hoardings on hazards of smoking and Dengue awareness. Interestingly, the region and the streets that they marched through were flanked by high-rise buildings and posh residential apartments, mostly housing people of the upper middle class and middle-class families. On asking one of the onlookers at the rally about his opinion on such a road show, he replied, “it’s nice to see children taking such initiatives and participating in programs that will help them make the city a cleaner place. It will also help them learn how to live a healthy life and become more alert on how to reduce contamination.” One shopkeeper responded, “All this is just a game for these boys and girls, whatever dirt and mess that is there around will remain and diseases will increase because the ones who fall sick are those who are half fed, remaining in margins always. They will never change and continue to spread diseases.”

4.3.2. Event II – Inter-School Quiz Competition

A follow up inter-school quiz competition was organized after the rally at one of the schools to serve two purposes: firstly, advertise the ‘Sukanya’ project for girl child of the West Bengal Government. Secondly, raise consciousness about man’s relation with nature and therefore the importance of conducting oneself in relation to the environment in a city scape. The quiz was held at the United Missionaries Girls High School. All teachers and students from other schools had gathered, with participants representing classes IX and X. The Principal of the school Leena George said that such programs are often conducted in her school as they have better infrastructure and space compared to other government schools. She said, “Though the Diocese of Kolkata, the founding

body of the school aren't very keen on these programs, they feel obliged to extend support to the government for carrying out such awareness generating and training projects for other students from different schools.”

The quiz was to be held in the hall where all the other girls had gathered and placed themselves on the floor. Teachers had chosen the girls who would compete and were brushing up their biology and geography lessons. The quiz master arrived soon along with the local municipality workers and the councillor. The quiz master began the show with a vote of thanks to the school and all the local municipality workers one by one. Most of the questions were about the programs and policies that the present political party in power had formulated. The questions asked included: In West Bengal how many zillas are there? Which age group of girls are eligible for “Kanyashree”⁵ scholarships? What is “Rupashree Prakalpa”? When was “Kanyashree Prakalpa” launched? Which international prize did “Kanyashree” project receive? During marriage of girls, which program of West Bengal Government offers a gift of 25000 rupees? Who is the chief minister of West Bengal Government? Who is the Governor of West Bengal? What is the cultural capital of India? What is child marriage? All these questions pronouncedly tried to make the adolescent girls aware of the supportive measures that the government had brought into force to apparently improve their life chances. However, the fact that their position in the society and limited opportunities for emancipation were being reinstated through several such questions, remained silent. Other questions asked were: when is World Health Day celebrated? Which mosquito causes Malaria? Dengue is caused by which Mosquito? Name two Vector borne diseases? When is International Environment Day celebrated? What is the full form of WHO? To

these questions hardly any of the girls could reply. In fact, they asked the meaning of vector borne diseases and World Health Organization and United Nations. The girls had a profound sense of loss and anxiety on their faces when these questions were asked. To add to their sense of alienation came few more questions, like, who wrote Kaka Babu's *firisti*? ⁶ Whose creation is Professor Shanku? Who wrote "*Nonte Fonte*"? ⁷ All these dealt with popular Bengali fiction mostly written for the adolescent girls and boys. Finally, when the councilor saw that the girls participating from all the three schools had hardly scored any points, he intervened and said that he would ask three questions to each team and each question would carry 50 points. He sang verses from three patriotic songs and asked them to identify the chorus. He sang songs like, 'Godi mei khelti hai jiski hazaron naddiyaan....' and 'aguner Parashmoni chowao praney....' The quiz master was being guided and often interrupted by the councilor every now and then, doctoring the questions being asked and correcting his ways for conducting the entire event.

4.3.3. Event III – Sit and Draw Competition

In the week long program on social awareness, the secondary board of education had also organized a sit-and-draw competition on environmental problems and cleanliness issues. On a visit to one of the schools to observe the same I found that boys from class VII to class X were given a topic to express their ideas through visual representation. The topic was: "let's pledge to make our schools plastic free". The teacher who took me across the school, briefed me on how the students had no regular and formal training in art and whatever they were sketching were either shown to them by their respective teachers or it was

mostly spontaneous. He also mentioned that there are no dedicated art class or any trained teacher to groom them. However, to comply with the government orders, the teachers briefed them and would send only a few of the drawings to the secondary school office, as this compliance is linked with funding. Upon my survey through all the art produced by the adolescent boys, I found somewhat a close replication in all. Most of the boys had drawn out their school premises with students cleaning the surrounding with brooms and planting trees. There were a few drawings that showed the earth on fire and a few representing the weeping trees. All stood very close to the given theme and almost unquestionably adhered to the instructions handed down by the teacher.

When I asked these boys about how they feel about engaging in this representing act, most of them expressed their exuberance in a collective voice. Manoj Mandal, who lives in a home for poor children at Monohor Pukur road, tells me that he and all his other friends collectively make these drawings. He added: “We look at each other’s drawing and at times make fun and at times get ideas to draw. There is great fun as we do not have any restrictions and we are appreciated for whatever we make. All our drawings are put up on the walls and the best one is awarded.” Asked what exactly he was trying to show through his drawing, Manoj Mandal said, that he had drawn all his friends cleaning the school premises, while he sat watching them. Samiran Haldar, another boy from the same orphan home, tells me that he has drawn the school building and himself, sweeping the school. An astounding revelation came from Sandeep Haldar’s painting, student of class IX, when he explained to me that he had drawn his mother in the picture sweeping the floor. On further enquiry, I got to know that he stays in the same home for poor and his mother works in that home

as a help. When I asked what his father did, other boys replied spontaneously that his father had fled away leaving him and his mother alone. However, the most remarkable drawing was by a boy who came from a family consisting of two younger sisters and his father. He had lost his mother when a child. His father is a sweeper in the community adjacent to the school. His drawing left me quite intrigued not only because it was very different than the other drawings that his contemporaries drew, but also because of the details he tried to capture. It might not be aesthetically or artistically a perfect picture, but it stands out as a signifier of the larger social and cultural fabric. He had drawn a plastic water bottle of 'Bisleri' with a young girl trapped inside. Firstly, the female body signified his fair understanding of a sexualized body, as it represented a full-grown woman body. Secondly, the female being trapped in the bottle hinted at his sense of human captivity (the meaning of captivity could be diverse here) and his sense of freedom. On being asked why he drew the picture, he replied: "I have drawn how the girl is trapped in this plastic bottle and would soon die." thus, if I became a little ambitious, possibly, and also saw a tinge of gender discrimination peeping from his eyes. Lastly, the plastic bottle as a trap came across as a great innovation from the young mind.

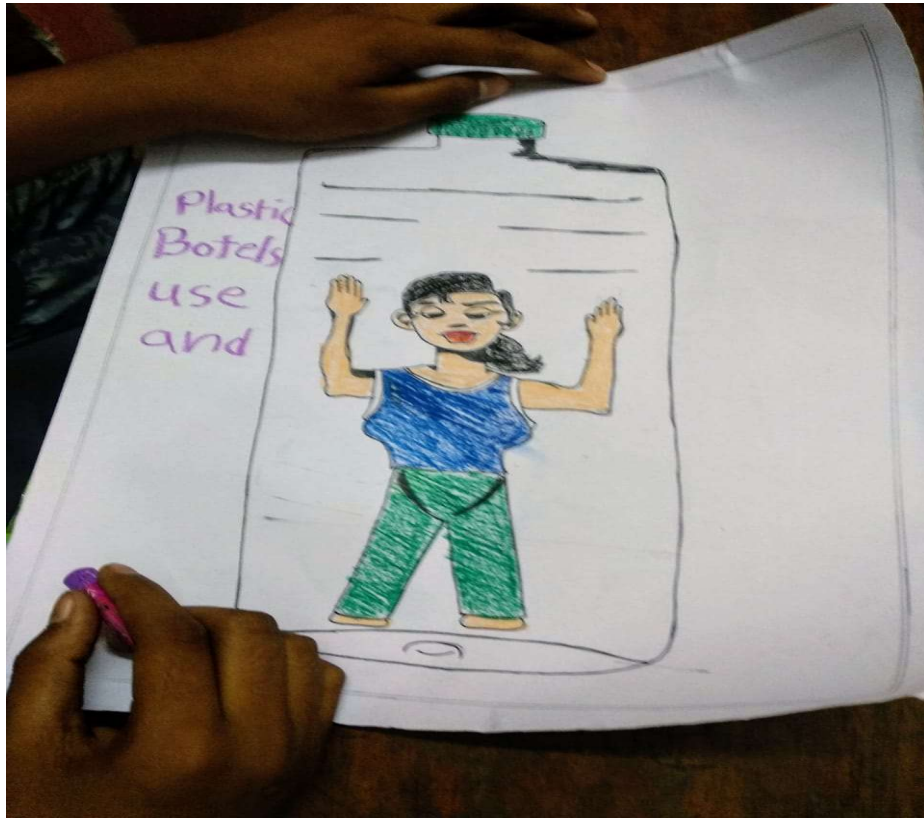


Fig1. Source: from the art competition at South Calcutta National School for boys

4.4.Schooled into an ‘Imagined’ Right

Taking the debate on morality, patterning of human conduct under an authoritative guidance, and lifestyle coaching further, a very throbbing and palpable empirical experience from the field helps add nuanced explanation for its adoption. There is naivety in considering that the awareness imparted on a desired healthy life and emphasis of its higher cultural value shall always go down absolutely as planned, without any dissent. In all the above occasions, there were contradictions in what was being idealized and taught, and the socio-cultural context of the students expected to learn and practice them in their everyday lives. As Jayaram says: “A person can go through the whole process

of schooling without really understanding a single idea in the sense of integrating it with his pre-existing experiences. This commonly happens to those whose native experiences and culture are not the same as those of the educated and the dominant classes who construct and impart their curriculum” (Jayaram, 2019: 149). Thus, there is a persistence towards handing down a manual of etiquettes for sanitizing a particular category of students who come from the fringes of the cities, where the hygiene and health standards are hugely compromised, thus feared as possible contaminators in an otherwise clean and artificially decorated city. In these cases, the dominant and popular ideas of being “cultured” are brought into the folds of grooming/lifestyle practices and the ones groomed are made to internalize the legitimacy of the desired lifestyle, even if materially and technically they are difficult to adopt. The universal and hegemonic value system is at times contested silently by the ethical underpinnings in particularistic experiences. But like any moral force, a consensus is built to justify an action in interest of some, compromising the others lower in the order of power (in terms of economy and polity). As Roy says: “Bourgeois democracies of the third world are structurally iniquitous and exploitative. Despite enjoying some degree of autonomy, the state primarily furthers bourgeois interests by encouraging production and consumption and controlling distribution. There is always a tendency to orient social institutions and organizations, ideas and ideologies in this direction. The process of subjugation is followed by a process of stigmatization. Years of dominance gives way to a set of stereotyped ideas about them, through a complex process of othering, distancing and stigmatizing. Once formed, such ideas become part of the ruling class ideology and are then reproduced time and again in their

treatment of the subordinate classes, particularly the poor.” (Roy, 1993: 2677). Hence the far-reaching ideologies and fragmented ideas about the “subjugated other” makes its way through different medium into the social space, and one of the medium surely happens to be the education system. It is the educational bodies that collaborates with the state and community at large to carry out the herculean task of nurturing and transforming selves to fit into “given” order of things.

4.5. The Collaborators in Performing Humanitarianism

The task of percolating the “universal” values/morals across the mass, undermining the infrastructural handicaps, is executed by a very strong systemic structure and its several agencies. When violent, repressive ways of control appear as counterproductive, the systemic measures for indoctrination seem to be more acceptable in “gentling the masses” (Jayaram, 2015: 150). In the content design to execution of slogan writing, poster making, quizzing to instructions for a sit-and-draw competition, we find a training being imparted that is necessarily top down. The problems and issues addressed are those that are perceived to be circumscribing the lives of the adolescent students coming from a specific class location. Thus the “banking system”³ of education enables the pedagogue to see the students and the community they represent as “containers” necessary to be filled up and deposited with the “others” understanding of their situation and paradoxes. All these adolescent minds are coaxed to think of their location and responsibilities in a particular given way from an impressionable age. “The teachers think, and the students are thought

about. The teacher acts and the students have the illusion of acting through the action of the teacher..." (Freire, 1971: 73). Thus, a narrative is built about the diseases that they are more susceptible to because of their improper health and hygiene practices with a pronounced prescription about how to address it. In doing so, a subtle consciousness is aroused regarding "the need of them to be 'integrated', 'incorporated' into the healthy society that they have forsaken" (Freire, 1971: 74). They become gradually agents to transpire the consciousness raised in them to their fellow community members about their susceptibility to be defiling bodies. Hence the entire pursuit of these activities being geared towards a humanitarian goal misses out on the humanist functions that education promises to entrust. There seems to be strong absence of a dialogical exchange even in these activities beyond the curriculum, rather the effort remains to make these adolescent girls and boys more "human" as per the understanding of the powerful/oppressing class in an urban scape. Hence transforming them into objects that need to be guided and cared for while leaving them with a sense of permanence of their trying life conditions, lurching for an unachievable change ever after. Thus, interest lies in "changing the consciousness of the oppressed, not the situation which oppresses them" (Freire, 1971: 74). However, the education system remains fraught with over-ambitious humanitarian agenda, under the garb of which mechanisms to configure the good society for few goes on. In a similar strain, Roy says: "The dialectical relationship between the dominant and dependent classes in the 'urban' is not confined to material deprivation only. It is extended to engulf the ideas and ideologies of the classes which often influence class relations at the social level." In light of such a relationship, the wards of the dependent (mostly

perceived of socio-economic dependence that extends into a cultural-moral one) in the cities are wrapped with humanitarian services, which come across as nothing more than momentary thrills of ideological somersaults.

4.6. The Populist Leader and Welfare Goals

We have observed that the community has always been a big stake holder in influencing policies and guiding possibly all discourses on education. Multivariate motivations when get entrenched into such an organized effort, the outcomes are more than singular and univocal. However, a mediating state never fails to exploit the situation and foster fresh ways to further the community ambition, while espousing the larger political goals. In such attempts, the *National Policy on Education* (1986) recommended empowering of communities for management of schools, whereby the state and its local machineries along with the community would act as partners to provide necessary services. Thus, paving path for community participation of a very deep and complex kind. Anjali Noronha has mentioned about two kinds of community involvement: 1. Spontaneous engagement emerging from community partners and parents in education. 2. Political involvement. She further says, political involvement is extended in the following ways: “(a) playing a watchdog role, supervising and keeping an eye on teachers; (b) controlling the use of resources and their deployment; (c) raising issues for larger educational change; or (d) influencing the curriculum and the way it is implemented” (Noronha, 2003: 100). I suggest a more pronounced interchange can be seen between political players and educational advocates, as they take up community needs and try addressing them through several other programs

beyond the curriculum. It happens to be quite a flexible space that can be exploited to its hilt to accommodate local, cultural and social uniqueness. The involvement of the local councilor in the activities starting from funding the rally to conducting the quiz to promote the government policies and products for a particular community through “non-voting adolescent” category of citizen speaks volumes about how popular leaders operate. In fact, the rally and sloganeering around his constituency is carried out with an ambition to demonstrate the “welfarist” gestures and in turn construct/reproduce an identity for a class of people in the society. Through manipulation of the situation and inviting action on the part of the ones infested with varied social and environmental hazards, the councillor asserts the idea of struggle. Though he makes these students aware about their responsibilities and perceived actions for their emancipation, the reflection is completely beyond their access. They are turned into a “massified”⁴ lot working to turn around their fate with ideological conditions handed down to them from above. These adolescent minds are made to believe that their conditions are fatal and it is through their effort that situations can be improved and the welfare state is the only means to help them achieve something, but never ensure any total dislocation in their positions. Thus, impinging upon their ideas of liberation and building upon their demands for dependency to survive in stifled life chances. “The leader restricts himself to paternalism and welfare activities, although there may be occasional divergences between him and group of oligarchies whose interests have been touched, deep differences are rare. This is because welfare programs as instruments of manipulation ultimately serve the end of conquest. They act as an anaesthetic, distracting the oppressed from the true causes of their problems

and from the concrete solution of these problems.” (Freire, 1971: 152). The educational imperatives and the spirit of the adolescent are used to propagate the ideals of living in an urban space under the garb of investment in the young to change the future of their lot. Thus, the false sense of generosity and the culture of care permeated fulfils the demonstrative goals of the powerful, while maintaining the status quo. This is a very ubiquitous practice in government schools, imparting value education oriented towards domesticating younger generations of a particular class, impairing critical thinking, enforce conformity and thus produce “intellectual emasculation” (Jayaram, 2015) for easy acceptance of the logic of the system.

4.7. Cultural Discrimination and Possibilities of Assertion

From the responses received at the schools, a stark contrast in ideas about the rally and hygiene lessons were noticed between the relatively affluent girls and boys from slums. It unravelled how the metropolitan city thrives on a popular perception of untidy settlements in poor neighbourhood, and conceives of a public space divided into contaminating and non-contaminating zones. Both the girls explicitly mention about their role in conveying the ideas about health and hygiene practices to the others who come from the slums. In the schools, “within the structures of domination they come to function largely as agencies which prepare the invaders of the future” (Freire, 1971: 154). These deep-seated ideas about cleanliness and environment protection find fresh vigor with the “middle-classes community” sprawling over cities in “gate-community” apartments. Middle-class promoted and practiced notions of safety, cleanliness, hygiene and environmental protection, and conversations around them have helped them

assert their rights and privileges as citizens of a demarcated geographical unit. In doing so, the civil society and often activists who mostly hail from the middle classes, create a public discourse about community interest that lack representation of voices from the poor, dirty and therefore “contaminating” category. Amita Baviskar in this parlance has discussed how “bourgeois environmentalism” as an ideology shapes the popular understanding and a culture of reproducing a spatial order in the interest of few. I see a similar spirit of eschewed environmentalism and contingent life skills being honed at these schools, possibly to fulfil the larger interest of a community that is itself segregated in all its drive towards urbanity. Baviskar has delved into it deep and made hints to a process of value reproduction playing along the finer demands of a power nexus. Thus she says, “As a hegemonic ideal, the discourse of ‘public interest’ reaches out to and may be embraced by those it excludes. Yet the project of urban cleansing remains incomplete and its success uncertain” (Baviskar, 2011: 393).

Moving beyond the health and hygiene agenda, the questions asked at the quiz about age-old popular fictions and the adolescents’ unacquaintance with most names cast a shadow on their minds, creating a sense of alienation from the cultural life of the “other” and therefore a sense of lacking in their own. The instructions for drawing given at the sit-and-draw competition hints at the assumed passivity of the adolescent boys, impaired of much creative thinking. However, while the stereotyping continues, art seems to come as a game changer on several occasions in my field of observation. Though there isn’t any denying that art helps adolescents learn the culture given out to them and construct “selves” around it, art holds out and nurtures possibilities in

aberration. Art offers endless opportunities for imaginative mind, creates new ways of resistance and carves out fresh dimensions in a renewed existence for future. Art is for young people an especially valuable means of promoting the reflexive project of creating self (Giddens, 1991). The painting of the girl being trapped in the plastic bottle and the other boy representing his mother sweeping the floor are revelations of a 'narrative identity' in making that produces and reproduces the experiences of the world along with injunctions issued throughout the biographical sketch of one's life history. Thus, opening up closed spaces and lending insights into lived experiences, paradoxes and accommodations, make scope for some true reflection vis-à-vis the unreflective actions meted out under the guidance of prescriptive social sanction. Adolescent's visual language can mediate their opinions, feelings and ideas. In that light, artefacts, which are the results of encounters between them and their intentions, can be taken as symbols of communication used to deliver messages from one person to another and the society at large. Apart from another person being the viewer, the artist him- herself can also be the one responding to her own work while in performance and even upon completion. A dialogue with the intended self, the desired self and deviant self is promoted through art, which could bring to light the contradictions, coalition and contestations with the celebrated therefore dominant ideas of morality.

4.8. Summary Observations

There is naivety in considering that the awareness imparted on a desired lifestyle, health, hygiene and emphasis of its higher cultural value always goes

down as planned, without any dissent. There are always contradictions between the idealized training and the socio-cultural context of the students expected to learn and practice the same in their everyday lives. The ideology of value-oriented education often raises questions about the ethical positions taken for justifying the values to be imparted. Thus, values imparted seek validation by undermining an opposite set of values, guided by several socio-cultural and politico-economic considerations. So, the question as to whose values will qualify and embody the value-education courses in and beyond curriculum remains a pressing and critical at any point in history. As Basil Bernstein says: “how a society selects, classifies, distributes, transmits and evaluates educational knowledge it considers to be public, reflects both the distribution of power and the principles of social control” (Bernstein, 1971: 47). This research into the extra-mural components of education in public schools has tried to delineate the conditions and factors promoting such majoritarian ideologies and thus raising a concomitant consciousness. But the study has its own set of limitations, and hence opportunities for further exploration. Firstly, it has strictly accounted for the government schools and the orientation they have towards training/ indoctrinating the students. A contrast with the privately-owned schools of the city is not something that has been enumerated in equal length here, as on most accounts such state-sponsored programs were absent in the latter. However, the activities at the above-mentioned schools are encumbered by values of a different kind, which I shall elaborate in my thesis at large and more specifically in the next chapter. Secondly, the execution of all the training appears quite gender-neutral throughout, but I beg to differ in this regard. It has later coaxed scholasticism to bring forth the fissures that exist

between genders as far as value training is concerned in chapter 7. The chapter at large has made attempts to posit the majoritarian and universal control over value education even today, standing at the crossroads of neo-liberal economies and liberal democratic political formations. It has also flagged occasions that could hold out possibilities for resistance to a given moral order at the individual level, opening up paths for a journey between the “given” moralities and the “arisen”, thus authenticated, morality from the subjective/subaltern experiences.

Notes

1. Some of the unique values that remain etched in the public memory are ones of tolerance, purity, renunciation, seeking knowledge than power, adherence to duty, loyalty and servitude that draws upon the ancient religious (myths, rituals, texts) tradition of India.
2. Indian education as a formal institution with all its modern qualities was the product of British colonialism. The English — or “modern” — system of education grew on the ruins of ancient indigenous education that had left its imprints in the new system as well. However, this colonial structure of modern Indian education not only survived the struggle for political independence from the same colonizers, but also expanded in leaps and bounds to permeate in newer forms in the post-colonial times. However, national revivalists like Gandhi on one hand with his “Nai Talim” and emancipist like Tagore with his project of “Tapavan” (a

school amidst nature) at Sriniketan did try to made adaptive changes in the modern Indian education so that it prioritizes the then necessary values.

3. Paulo Freire introduces the banking concept of education and says that the teacher is the depositor who sees the students as containers to be filled with “motionless”, “static”, “compartmentalized” and “predictable” narratives on topics that are completely alien to the existential experience of the students. “In the banking concept of education, knowledge is a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those who they consider to know nothing.” (Freire, 1971: 72)
4. Massified are culturally or socially homogeneous categories of individuals; characteristic of a society engaged in mass production for mass consumption in a mass market.
5. Kanyashree Prakalpa (KP), was introduced by Government of West Bengal in 2013 as a unique Conditional Cash Transfer scheme for adolescent girls aged 13-19 years and offers a two-tier scholarship of an annual Rs 500 for continuing education and a one-time payment of Rs 25,000 on completion of 18 years of age. The aim of this scheme is two-fold – to promote secondary education among females and to stop marriage of girls before the official age of 18. (Dutta & Sen, 2020)
6. Kakababu firisti are the tales as narrated by the fictional character Raja Roy Chowdhury created by the author Sunil Gangopadhyay. The series with its adventure stories targeted the children and adolescents. It was first published in 1979 in the Bengali Anandamela magazine. Kakababu

is represented with unmatched mental and physical agility even at the age of 60, as he engages in episodes of crushing down the enemies and repair the ills in the social fabric.

7. Nonte Phonte are two fictional boy character from a famous Bengali comic-strip as crafted by Narayan Debnath. The comic series first appeared in the magazine Kishore Bharati in 1969. The stories in the comic strip hovered around trivial lives of the characters, Nonte, Phonte and Keltuda (school senior of the formers) in their boarding school.

Chapter 5

Extracurricular Activities in Neoliberal Order: Pedagogy and Parenting

While examining the predominant extracurricular activities at the Government-funded schools we found modes of cultural and political training at play. The aim underlying the above was to fulfil the labour-power reproduction function on the one hand and ideological indoctrination on the other. Life skill training as per the central government and the state government policies and program seems to turn into tools for cultural and social reproduction of classes. It's no wonder that the state has always been committed towards carrying the interventional task of providing appropriate education that meets the need of skilled and unskilled work force in a capitalist production system. This kind of state intervention takes a pronounced form in an urban space with promises of not only preparing a labour force but also socially and culturally nurturing faith in the necessity for such reproduction of lives and livelihoods. To perform such tasks in an urban industrial set up, the state creates adequate scope for "collective consumption" (Castells, 1977) and education becomes one of the vital facilities, where both the curriculum and extracurricular are not only maneuvered but also impinged upon with much inventiveness. The idea is to ingrain corresponding cultural and ideological predispositions so that required practices can be provisioned on the production front.

5.1.State and its Role in Education

This remains a very vital task that the state adopts as a mediator between the capitalist production system and the labour force for reproduction of labour in an urban space. Manuel Castells has elaborately discussed this in his *The Urban Question* (1977), where he observes: “the urban seems to me to connote directly the processes relating to labour-power other than in its direct application to the production process... The urban units thus seem to be to the process of reproduction what the companies are to the production process” (Castells, 1977a: 236-7). The state is seen maintaining the structural opposition between the dominant and the dominated class and fulfilling the function of appeasement of the dominated class by providing services such as healthcare and educational facilities to keep the capitalist production system running, mitigating overt contradictions and protests. Castells argues:

The state apparatus not only exercises class domination, but also strives, as far as possible, to regulate the crises of the system in order to preserve it. It is in this sense that it may, sometimes, become reformist. Although reforms are always imposed by the class struggle and, therefore, from outside the state apparatus, they are no less real for that: their aim is to preserve and extend the existing context, thus consolidating the long-term interests of the dominant classes, even if it involves infringing their privileges to some extent in a particular conjuncture. (Castells, 1977a: 208)

Thus we see by creating scope of “collective consumption” through educational endeavors, the state is not only trying to reproduce skills and corresponding

social and cultural edifice to meet the production demand but also camouflaging the fissures in the society, and, in turn, making way for economic growth in the interest of the private sector by bearing the burden of investments in unprofitable areas like public health and education. However, the costs of serving the interest of the capitalist production system and making ideological inroads keeping in mind the electoral politics of a democratic system, the state often encounters a widening gap between its expenditure and revenues. The increasing costs are met with additional taxations, but heavy taxation on profits of the capitalists or on the wages of the people only reduces consumption in the long run (both collective and individual). “Faced with an inflationary spiral and encroaching recession, the state reacts by cutting its level of expenditure and redirecting resources from the support of labour-power to the direct support of the capital. The result is a crisis in the provision of “collective consumption” (Saunders, 1981: 200). Thus the basic problems of inadequate schooling or truly emancipatory education reappears in a new way. The public schools see a dwindling infrastructural support and scanty pedagogic revitalization, if any, in the urban landscape that I studied. The infringing state apparatus now moves towards adopting a compromised role of reproducing cultural ways that firstly serves the interest of the urban space and secondly, fulfill electoral interests. The actual need to provide for the ‘necessary’ educational service to reproduce labour-power is often obliterated. Thus the question of what is necessary also begins to bother us as the production system and the location changes. We see that the extracurricular activities at the public schools are no more designed to prepare the adolescent for their work life, rather are more oriented towards socializing them into a particular class position and therefore making them

passive agents for politically maintaining a structure. Thus the ‘necessary’ is put to serious contestation in terms of changing demands of the production system and the required consumption level to sustain it. So I would move into the private schools here on to elaborate upon this turn from state regulated to free market educational institutions in a neo-liberalized climate.

5.2. Neo-liberalism and Proliferation of Private Education

The transformation in political economy of education could be seen with the shift in the role of the state from being a “collective consumption” booster to one making pathways for “personalized consumption” in a free market, where consumption of ‘goods’ in the form of education becomes the focal point. The receding state-welfare initiatives to accommodate market-profit goals overwhelms the education system as well. The students and more specifically adolescent students in my study appear to have become the most potent consumers of this system. Most appropriate instances are seen in offerings of extracurricular activities of the private schools that cater to the ‘now’ relatively more affluent middle classes in an urban set up. Privatization of school has no doubt been popularized as an initiative towards upgrading the quality of education to exemplary standards and building careers of the young. The promise of generating employability through education has always been the claim of any capitalist order and neoliberalism only seems to extend it further. But the socio-politico-economic conditionality that foster and support the privatization of education has several dimensions to be explored in a democratic state with a mixed economic policy in place. The industrial need for workforce,

the large population with stark contrast in per capita income, consequent variation in choice and notions of growth, parenting as a value associated with securing employability for the wards, and of course the promise of securing one's class location and personal profits seem to be deciding the course of privatization in India.

The emergence of a significant private school sector reflects demands among people that the public education system is unable to meet. Data show that the urban parents are increasingly choosing to send their children to private schools, despite the significant additional expenses private education entails. This demand is spread across the spectrum of socio-economic groups (Pande and Dubey, n. d.). 12 crore students, nearly half of India's school-going children, study in private schools. Aggregate household expenditure on private unaided schooling in the country amounts to Rs. 1.75 lakh crores. Private schooling saw a rapid growth from 9% in 1993 to 35 % in 2017 (Central Square Foundation, 2020). Enrolment in private unaided schools rose most sharply at the turn of this millennium, following the economic liberalization that raised incomes in the early 90s (Venkatanarayanan, 2015). The rise in per-capita income of the parents in the new economic system coaxed them to make choices among schools with varied promises, and corresponding facilities to fulfill them. Private schools in an urban setting, though enmeshed in space crunch, are relatively bigger (in terms of infrastructure and intake of students) than most neighborhood government schools. With higher enrolment of students, the private schools hold better teacher-grade ratios, specialized pedagogic engagement and better accountability. While 81.4% of private schools have at least one teacher per grade, 88% of government schools struggle to match this

provision (U-DISE, 2019). Private schools provide services that attract the parents as they are symbolic of high-standard of education. These schools ensure higher levels of activity for the students and corresponding engagement on the part of the teachers vis-à-vis the lack of involvement and higher teacher absenteeism in the government schools. They also find alternatives to mundane educational practices and include English-medium instruction at early ages, which parents value (Jain, 2018). The attraction that these private schools weave around them to win their customer-cum-parent includes a plethora of cultural and social objects keeping line with globalized culture and a trans-national job market. Extracurricular activities become an essential component in education to match the needs generated by the globalized society. To the parents, such education is considered as a pathway to suitable employment, enhanced life chances, and appropriate status in the community specifically among the middle class. Thus the middle class with a relative rise in their income and corresponding elevation in their class position are ready to lap up the ‘smart-kid’ or ‘all-rounder boy’ image on offer at the private schools. Therefore, there’s no surprise that it has been estimated that total private education spending in India (including on higher education) is 68 billion USD (U.S. Dollar), or 2.5% of India's GDP (*Economist*, 2019)

Long past, the Nehruvian development dreams of an all-encompassing public education, the post liberalization India sees the state often turning a blind eye and endorsing private education with the plea of improving the human capital. The government has split its commitment between providing ‘free’ education to all and making English-educated, skilled human labour for India’s expanding IT and service industry. And for the latter the market often seems to be offering

a good deal, “rather than that by a bureaucracy-ridden, corrupt, inefficient government system.” (Chakravarti, 2013: 42). This disdain for government schools and the contempt for the ‘free’ yet rightful claims of the citizens, having sufficient justification, has converted the middle class into a thriving customer bank for the private education system. (Jeffery et al., 2005) This penetration of private enterprise in education has been quite rapid in the context of economic growth and therefore the rising per capita income. (Chakraborty, 2005; Kumar and George, 2009). The four private schools that I visited for exploring the nuances of privatization at the turn of liberalization brought forth an account of middle class negotiations in terms of parenting, class identity, employability crisis and a new culture for consumption. Interestingly, this culture has been fast gaining its popularity that helps not only promote commodities of education but also sell cultural commodities for sustaining a so-called-rewarding education. Sancho (2015) is right in observing: “The middle-class desire for private schooling is underpinned not only by a need to realize middle class identity through its conspicuous consumption, but also by understanding education as an arena of individual achievement and economic success determined by narrow instrumental concerns of examination success and career choices, for which private schools are better suited” (Sancho, 2015: 30). The race for examination success and career choices seem to have played it out far beyond school curriculum in my case studies, whereby new avenues for alternative choices and therefore job-oriented successes have been put on offer through extra-curricular programs. So we shall analyze further how the promise of good education is being met through these plethora of life-enhancing skills in the private schools of Kolkata.

5.3. The Research Sites

In the city of Kolkata, I visited four private schools for providing an ethnographic account of how the extra-curricular activities are organized within the campus in everyday parlance and on special occasions to commemorate specific days of national or local significance and celebrate religious festivals. I noticed an overwhelming spirit of celebration among the adolescents. In fact, it was almost a replication of the community-level cultural bonanza in a microcosmic space of an educational institution. Almost all flavours of the societal cultural excesses were being reflected in the celebrations of the schools. Amidst all these the adolescent was found juggling between the larger normative structures and micro-familial schooling values. They were seen moving across roles of budding citizens, a son or daughter and a disciplined pupil. So the teachers and parents were too making similar negotiations, as they encountered overlaps in roles while conducting themselves in an educational space infused varied socio-economic and political influences. Thus what appeared as having purely educational purpose to fulfil, proved to have deeper implications and wider interests to serve in its adoption.

5.3.1. Site I – Ballygunge Siksha Sadan

Located in the southern part of Kolkata, a relatively posh locality called Gariahat, this school caters to the girls of middle and upwardly mobile middle class families. There is good representation of ethnic and religious communities in their student population. Firstly, being located adjacent to the Park Circus area (densely populated by the Muslims) the school has relatively higher

number of Muslim students. Secondly, the school is managed and owned by people of the Marwari Samiti, thereby inviting a non-Bengali participation. Registered with West Bengal Board of Secondary Education, the school follows the curriculum of the same and caters to the preferences of the middle class parents. Parents are often stickler about the kind of syllabus and course being taught at the schools and it becomes a deciding criteria while making choices among multitude of schools. However, parents have also expressed how they look for much more than just the curriculum while selecting a school.

This school had a dedicated ECA Department. The school dairy advertised for the same in quite an explicit manner, “The school also offers students a variety of courses and activities under the ECA Department designed to nurture interest in subjects not strictly related to the school syllabus. The classes are conducted by professionals of repute in Kolkata. The courses offered are:

- Creative Dance
- Public Speaking
- Quiz
- Girls Guide
- Pottery & Clay Modeling
- Martial Art
- Western Music (vocal/instrumental)
- Dramatics
- Table Tennis
- Basket Ball
- Chinese, French and German Language
- Skating
- Puppetry
- Swimming
- Chess
- Eastern Music
- Robotics
- Darts

ECA classes are held during:

Zero period (8:15 – 9:15) for Sec. & H.S. classes. Each student of the Secondary Section will attend only one ECA in a session

Attendance in these classes is compulsory as grades will be reflected in the report cards and we expect the child to be genuinely involved in whichever course she has joined. We believe that the child who starts her day with an activity she enjoys, will be a better student during school hours. Throughout the school session, students are encouraged to participate in intra-school and inter-school extracurricular activities and competitions” (The BSS School Dairy, 2019)

Talking to Mrs. Ranja Bhowmick, the dedicated ECA coordinator at the school, I learnt that these activities are dedicated towards building confidence and honing life skills of the adolescent girls, aiming at bringing about a sense of wellbeing and nurturing an appropriate personality befitting the changing times. She said, naming one of her students, “Rukshana, a girl from the Muslim family in the neighbourhood, had challenges coping with the academic demands, she was not doing very well in her language and mathematics classes, but she did extremely well in Western instrumental music and aerobics. Through her participation in these activities she gained immense confidence and gradually it reflected in her academics too, as she started to concentrate and do better in her examination”. She went on to add, “A girl with stammering problem was asked to join the literary club. Anindita (the girl concerned) in those classes started to express herself by writing poetry and beautiful prose. She read them out in front of others at several reading sessions and gradually showed drastic changes in

her expression”. She mentioned of another senior student of class 11 who had lost a year due to her poor performance in academics. She added, “Sohini, was very disappointed after a year loss and more so as her parents had lost complete trust on her. She was asked to confine herself to studies by her parents, as they feared that she would not be able to make up for the year loss. She had to give up her chess and pottery classes and that made her quite withdrawn.” Besides, these specific cases, she went on to discuss how girls who participate in the rowing and swimming classes develop a positive body image in their formative years. The school provides a space to them for some leisure moments in a busy life of classes and tuitions for respective subjects. She added that this activity time comes as a relief to them, whereby they interact with the teachers and other fellow students with better camaraderie. She also drew attention to the fact how extra-hours of activities helped in keeping the girls under strict surveillance, as otherwise they would have been alone without the company of their working parents.

When I started talking to the above mentioned three girls, I got another narrative about their negotiations with parents in relation to engaging in these activities. On being asked about her experience, Ruksana said, “I love to play guitar, I have participated in several inter-school competitions and it’s so exciting to perform in front of a large audience. But my mother was initially not very happy as I used to sing English songs that she found very loud and meaningless. She insisted that I stop doing all this as it was of no use and had also wasted money by buying an expensive guitar. In fact, during the extra classes for music practice at school, it is always my father who drops me and picks me up.” The other two girls had a different narrative to share. Anindita said, “My mother

coaxed me to take up music classes and also wanted me to learn Rabindra sangeet under the tutelage of a personal tutor at home. But I didn't want to do any, I was rather interested to write and read poetry. She had even got me enrolled in the music classes by paying a fees of 1000 rupees per month. I did not attend any of the class."

Sohini, another girl, made rather few startling revelations, saying, "I don't like to study as I am not good in studies. At home, in the evenings when I'm mostly alone, I play chess on the computer. My parents wanted me to learn singing or dancing and had put me into such classes. My cousins and friends were taking up such classes, but I still had no interest. My mother used to take me to these classes and bring me back home while returning from work. She used to tell me how my sisters can sing nicely and I should also try, but I missed being at home when out for these classes."

As I engaged in a focused group interview with these girls and many others, I found three consistent responses throughout. Firstly, the parents were making the choice as to which activity their wards shall take up, often to the extent of fulfilling their unfulfilled desires or at times guided by the choices of their relatives and friends. Secondly, every student saw pursuing any such activity as a time away from their regular curricular-based studies and thus wanted to voice their needs and aspirations through these engagements. Thirdly, most students took the competitions very seriously, both at the inter-school and intra-school, and that helped them find some recognition and thereby gratification. And there can be no denying that the adolescent self is in a dynamic engagement with the social for voicing their uniqueness through such activities of high performative value and tangible achievements.

5.3.2. Site II — CCA Academy

While visiting the above school and many other I found that a special institute exists called CCA (co-curricular activities) academy. The proprietor of the institute, Mr. Rajarshi Giri, told me that his institute offers teachers for training students in various kinds of extracurricular activities. He shared that generally they enter into a contract for providing such services and is paid a fixed amount every month, which is in turn collected in the form of special fees from the students. The remuneration goes up to 50,000 - 60,000 INR for providing classes on an average for a cluster of any six activities. He has 60 ECA teachers working for his institute and covers 23 activities, which he terms as subjects. Each teacher is paid 350 INR per class. According to him, “the teachers under the umbrella of our institute are much better placed, as they get rightly paid and due respect. There is better resource utilization and many young talented people get some part-time job through my institute. They are also not dependent on one school for employment and therefore do not risk losing their jobs.” He complained that “the school management doesn’t have proper coordination with the parents or the students regarding their aptitude for taking up any activity, rather often it’s our institute and dedicated teachers who find out what a girl or a boy is good at and accordingly convince the parents to choose a particular ECA for his child.” He also opined that most parents want their children to learn what other children of their family or known acquaintances are trying their hands at. But they are also often on a look out for an alternative skill that their children can hone so that they can do something out of it later on. He very candidly added that often the cost of carrying out these activities are quite high, especially the cost of buying a music instrument, skating wheels, sports goods

etc. Parents seem to be divided in their response towards spending on these items. Some are not reluctant at all, whereas others make a cautious decision.

5.3.3. Site III — Silver Point School



Figure 2. source: Silver Point School

This is a private school is located in the neighborhoods of Kasba, Kolkata. The school has a big campus of approximately 3039 square meters. Besides the regular extracurricular activities, this school observed a varied kind of events on special occasions and to commemorate specific days. To mention a few, I found a very interesting club in the school named Culinary Club, which had organized a webinar called “Aam Batein” along with the Institute of Advanced Management (IAM) to develop cooking skills and food presentation under the guidance of professional chefs. It seeks to foster interest among the adolescents for making food visually palatable and also to encourage them find pathways in the hospitality industry in near future. The aspect and prospect of joining the courses were discussed along with a complete tour of their different departments. A special type of Mango cake, best known as Mango Gateau, was prepared by Chef Kangkana Phukan of IAM. The catchy name ‘Aam Batein’ (general talk) had another meaning “discussions on mangoes”, the fruit of summers in India. The Culinary Club also held a workshop on food safety with an aim to draw attention and help detect and manage foodborne health risks and other issues of social security. It held

discussions on economic prosperity and agriculture, market access of raw fruits and vegetables, food tourism and sustainable development. It drew attention of the adolescents to how food safety is a shared responsibility and the role of workers who engage at various steps in the process of reaching the food from the farm to the table. Culinary Club observed World Food Safety Day 7th June 2021. Students of Class XII presented a detailed presentation on different aspects of food safety and its relation to mental wellbeing. The program had clinical dietitian, weight management consultant and educator to speak on diabetes, and share their suggestions and advice on various aspects of food, eating habits and lifestyle diseases.



Figure3: fare organised for Tramjatra.
Source: Silver Point School

Besides, the school also has bodies like ‘Heritage Club’, ‘Photography Club’, and ‘Eco Club’ (working in collaboration with the Rotary Club of Kolkata). The heritage club organizes classes on archiving and interestingly conducted a program in collaboration with the Calcutta Tram Users Association (CUTA) to spread the motto of reviving the shrinking services of trams in Kolkata. Students promoted Tram services as a pollution-free and environment-friendly means of transport. Surprisingly, they

engaged in making posters to promote this idea in a motor-savvy city life. The adolescent boys and girls joined with Mr. Roberto, an Australian citizen who has collaborated with CTUA to spread the cause of trams. The students had

something very interesting to say about both the above events. One boy named Sourav Ghosh of class XII said, “Interacting with the chef I came to know that eating and cooking could make me have a career as well, as I am not good in science I do not think I will qualify for engineering or medical. But I feel I can try my hands at cooking and have some scope in hospitality industry. Besides, I enjoy cooking too.” Another girl from Class XI, Priyanka Debnath said, “While organizing for the ‘tramjatra’ exhibition I had taken help from my mother who is a librarian, she got me several books on trams and I was very interested to know the history of Trams in Kolkata. I have keen interest in exploring archival documents and want to study on that in future”. When I interviewed both Sourav’s and Priyanka’s parents, I found some very anxious voices echoing each other. Sourav’s mother said, “We feel much tensed about the future of our son. He is a nice boy and very obedient. But his father says that he is too mediocre a student and shy, thus his getting into a good professional institution is tough as there is so much competition.” She added, “These days the engineering and management schools also ask during the admission for student’s records of participation in extracurricular activities, therefore such activities are of need in the present job market. Sourav might not be able to get through engineering entrance examination, so his father says that we have to explore alternative skill enhancement courses which can provide him a decent employment later.” Priyanka’s mother, on the other hand, said “I feel good that my daughter is participating in these activities, as it helps her get exposure beyond the text book. In the present competitive job market one needs to upgrade oneself in varied skills and information.” But she also contrasted her own views saying, “However, I am also very concerned about her studies and

examinations as it's her vital year in class XI, and she needs to focus more on her academic subjects. A poor score will hamper her opportunities in making suitable career choices."

Silver Point School also organized an inter-school autumn fest at their campus. This is an annual event, where students and teachers have equal participation and extraordinary sense of camaraderie in making the event a success. I had a detailed discussion with Mrs. Piyali Mukherjee (the ECA coordinator teacher) on the relevance of such events. She said, "The school aims at whole-person development of the students and sees these programs as life skill enhancement endeavors. Adolescent boys and girls need windows to express themselves and emotionally feel connected to their social world. Activities and celebrations help them collaborate and connect on varied levels, whether it's with their peers, parents or teachers. The hierarchy or distance between them is minimized through interactions during such fests. We collaborate with them as co-workers in a team. We share more free time with each other and engage in leisurely talk, learning about their personal problems and predicaments. In a classroom we are too busy catering to the demands of curriculum, whereas here we find more time to bond with each of them and get to know their social background therefore their strengths and weaknesses. Besides, it brings about a sense of enjoyment and relaxation from the routinized text-book learning. Many not so vocal or brilliant students seem to perform and deliver remarkably during these times." She then guided me through the school campus to show how different parts of the school were decorated for the occasion and holding out different events simultaneously. The school had been transformed into a different space altogether, as popular festive music was filling the air and the fervor of

celebration epitomized. From the entrance of the school up to the auditorium, both sides of the corridor, were flanked by a good number of stalls selling different items like food, pickle, handicrafts made by the students, and, at times, clothes designed by students, teachers and other NGOs. Students were selling their handcrafted and weaved pieces (calendars, notebooks, cards, pen stands, handkerchiefs, food items etc.). Besides, there were stalls set up by other external agencies, having come to sell for profit. Parents flocked the space in good number, having a look at all the items and often buying a few. Interestingly, students who were selling their handmade products were explaining to the interested buyers how they had made them and often referred, upon probing, about their mother's contribution in the process. I had a conversation with the mother of Sreemoyee Mitra of Class XIII who had prepared a wall hanging using jute and woolen thread, she said, “amra school ey haater kaajey onek selai phorai korechi, kintu akhon meyera school ey gaan ba naach tai besi kore, tobuo eyi dhoroner feley dewa jinis diye notun kichu banano ta besh interesting. Amar egulo korte meyer sathe besh bhaloi laagey. Tarpur exhibition ey jokhon lokey proshongsha kore ba ekta samannyo dam diye kiney naye tokhon khub bhalo lagey. Meyer o self-confidence barey ebong anando hoye” (when I was in school I used to do a lot of stitching and knitting for my ECA, but now students participate mostly in music and dance. However, such activities that engage students in making new products out of waste is quite interesting. I enjoy helping my daughter in making these products as she gains confidence when others appreciate and show eagerness to buy them, even if at a meagre price). Another student, named Sajal Patra of class IX, had organized a monopoly game to be played with numbers and consequently win prizes. Each

one had to quote a price of the objects kept on display by reading the hints laid out for the same. It entailed some quick calculations based on riddles and some commercial skills. He said, “Mathematics is fun and commerce is reality. I love to play out riddles and solve them” Upon being asked who had helped him plan and execute this game, he replied, “my mathematics teacher often in the classroom asks us to solve such riddles and we students play the role of shop keepers and businessmen and do the calculations mentally. She even takes us to the market and food stalls near the school to carry out these fun games. Besides, my father helps me in planning these games which I organize at the school.” Sajal’s father who is a banker, said, “My son is very restless by nature, he cannot concentrate for long. But when I ask him to play these games he shows exemplary skill and motivation. I believe, such engaging activities help him in finding real life experiences and knowledge about the commercial activities. His interaction with the audience and participants of the game gives him an opportunity to display what he has learnt; he gets rewarded and recognizes his gaps too through feedbacks. The entire process boosts his self-confidence and he can connect to the subject more meaningfully. Since I expect him to have a career in commerce, it is a good way to start.”

From the exhibition rooms I then walked into the auditorium where the cultural programs and different kinds of competitions were being held. The auditorium looked vibrant with posters, other decorative items made by the students and photographs clicked by them. They had clicked those pictures as part of a photographic competition that the Photography Club of the school had organized. The photographs ranged from historical monuments, places of significance in the city to photographs capturing the street life of Kolkata. Each

photograph had a short write up along with it, describing the visuals aesthetically. One photograph showing two children of the slums by the streets of Ballygunge Phari, had a very interesting story to narrate. It reads: “two boys dirty and unwashed by the streets tells us about the poor and their lives in the city of Kolkata. They live in the slums of Ballygunge in the heart of the city and occupy a very dingy and shoddy settlement. In spite of all the hardships of having to cope with poverty and living in unhygienic, unhealthy conditions they find reason to gleam in happiness”. This photo essay hints at the perception of the adolescent students from the middle income group about the life of slums in their neighborhoods. The idea of poverty and the concomitant sense of lack of hygiene in the slums is something very apparent here.

There were other photographs and photo essays put up on nature and changing urban life. Another significant photograph was of a construction site flanked by a built-in environmental park. The contrast between the barren and demolished sites, and the lush green park represented the environmental transition of the cityscape. The photo essay along with it read, “The city sees high rises and the landscape transforms into a paradise of scintillating lights. However, the natural greenery is now a rare sight. Everything green seems to be engulfed with the dazzle of bright lights and artificial color. Trees are felled to make roadways and flyovers, whereas the far reaching bountiful meadows are now fast disappearing”. This description of the urban scape highlights the adolescent’s awe with the infrastructural development of the city and at the same time their apologetic recognition of the vanishing greenery. From what was elucidated in the previous chapter, a stark contrast can be seen, in the conception of environmental awareness and concern as projected and promoted, between the

public schools (catering to low or lower-middle income group adolescents mostly) and private schools (catering to middle or upwardly-mobile middle income group adolescents). The orientation towards environment and environmental changes is perceived as an urban crisis and an inevitable outcome of development. Whereas, the concern in public schools is more proactive and guided towards training them in taking initiative to bring about changes in their habits to manage the rapid environmental changes along with the other correlated hygiene and sanitation concerns.

As I was glancing through these photographs, the stage was set for the day's main attraction, namely, the cultural program. The programs began with a devotional song in praise of Goddess Durga, as the festival around Durga Puja and Dusshera was the prime focus in this autumn fest. A girl from class XI performed the Durga vandana and displayed the demise of Ashura in the hands of Durga through a dance recital. It was followed by a speech on women power and her omnipotence in removing darkness and all evils to spread light and healing the world, thereby glorifying the female energy and asking young girls to locate this force within themselves. It was indeed a very emotionally invigorating sight to watch parents, teachers and students' evocative expressions at this ritualistic enactment of an age old myth and folklore. The popular belief and rhetoric seemed to fill the hearts with hope and minds with pleasant imagination of 'women power'. The inter-school competition was carried thereon, one after the other, ranging from dance, music recital to theatrics. All these events were carried out under the supervision of the teachers and students, who took turns in comparing throughout the program.

While comparing the use of words and throw of speech of both the teacher and student seem to blend. As the student says, “Apna time ayega, ayega nahi re... aa gaya hai” (a popular catchy line from the Bollywood blockbuster movie, *Gully Boy* released in 2018, which means we shall prove our worth when the time is right for us), the teacher being the other comparer on stage says, “Gana nahi to Rap music hi chalega” (If you can’t sing then rapping will do). Then before inviting the competitors on stage for their dance recitals, the teacher shares an Urdu poetry and addresses the audience by saying, “abhi to picture baki hai mere doston” (the movie/show is yet not over). To match this remark, the student adds, “So come set the stage on fire”. The dance performances were mostly fusion of classical Indian and Western. The music played too was mostly the Bollywood hit numbers. One of the outstanding events following the dance recital was the orchestra competition by different schools and the event was named ‘abhbhut badaal’ (strange clouds). Here the students were very innovative in presenting music recitals as they used different kinds of instruments like drums, violin, utensils, pots, cutlery and even local ‘dhaak’ (Indian drum), ‘khartal’ (wooden clapper), ‘saank’ (Conch), ‘khonjoni’ (daf) and ‘ghanti’ (ritual bell) to produce brilliant rhythmic jingles. The coordination, composition of the music piece and innovative compilation of instruments was no less than that of the professional performances one happens to be audience to in the reality shows. In fact, their total presentation, from mannerism to the attire they had put on, was almost an emulation of the reality shows telecasted over Television. A kind of Celebration of oneself was very pronounced in every bit of the shows. The audience too peered with an eye that was trained to see such performances. Therefore, a sense of assimilation overtook them as they

were able to connect the virtual shows with the ones being emulated live in front of them. Rap music with ground breaking lyrics in informal language was normalized in the formal setting of the school. Rap included the issues of rebellion, crises of growing up, love, and romantic fondness, and pronounce urge to seek freedom and gain self-esteem. Music was mostly loud and at times hammering to make it synchronous with the issues that they were putting forth in their lyrics, making bold gestures and moves in self-expression. The teachers and administrative body along with parents were audience to all of it and seem to be collaborators in the event. They allowed an open space for such performances to the adolescent boys and girls, if not encouraging them directly by passing over permanent sanctions for the same.

Two other events were very significant in the fest. One, the fashion show and other was the face-painting competition. The theme of the 'badan-sobha-chitra' (face painting competition) was 'He tried to make peace outside, with war inside his mind'. Several pairs of students were participating in this event, and the most striking feature apart from their artistic display was the ease with which these adolescent girls and boys touched each other. They were totally comfortable in each other's close proximity. Moreover, they were dedicated and sat patiently while the other painted them. I could also see an urge to beautify the other and therefore a sense of care and pamper persisting in the act. They took good care so that the other doesn't feel restless or tired posing too long, and offered them water at regular intervals. One pair of students named Mamata Gupta of class X and Dhrubajyoti Roy of the same class shared some very interesting insights. They whispered to each other and exchanged happy glances while they engaged in the competition. The bodily contact surely went beyond sexual

understanding and urges, but definitely not in absence of the realization of the same. The girl said to the boy softly, as teachers and parents stood overlooking their work, “no one has ever admired us together with such appreciation and uncontested approval”. The smile in return that the boy offered had a profound sense of joy and victory. In an audience full of contestations and celebrations of human bonding, these two seem to have twined up to create a space of their own and declare their fondness and companionship. They reinstated my understanding as they mentioned how they have been friends for last 7 years and neighbors too. The boy said, “She is my model-canvas”. However, interestingly enough, the symbolic representation of peace and war on the girl’s face was worth all appreciation. The mandatory post-puberty days of avoidance of the opposite sex that necessarily entailed construction



Figure: 4. Source: Silver Point School, face painting competition.

of gender identities and learning sexually appropriate gestures thereby, could be possibly pulled down here. Thus finding new and more collaborative avenues to rediscover the other sex and learn non-stereotypical gender roles. The discovery of one's boyhood vs. girlhood and then dropping those learnings after a point to rediscover and relearn in such ways bring forth other significant emotions at play for sustaining human life; such as care, sense of equality and power of consent. The established ideas of masculinity or femininity is bracketed out, making way for new interpretation and contextualization of the same. Besides these two, there were other pairs of boys and girls who

participated in the competition and mostly the pairing was between opposite gender. However, there were girls who painted the faces of the boys too. The chief guest and judge for this event and Fashion show was Abhisekh Ganguli (voice-over artist in Bengali film industry) and Sunny Dua (renowned person in the music and advertising industry) respectively. They were cheering the performers, making them feel like the potential future stars of the entertainment industry. During the fashion show the ambience of any other fashion shows as witnessed on Television was replicated. Lights were dimmed, with spotlights moving along the students as they trotted the ramp. Each student displayed innovative attire, using newspaper to other waste materials to adorn themselves. Their pose and posture no way fell short of those of a professional model.

5.3.4. Site-IV Nava Nalanda School

Nava Nalanda, established in 1965 has been popular for its unique teaching style characterized by a combination of text-book knowledge and experiential learning. To fulfil the aim of holistic education, the school offers versatile kind of extra-curricular activities almost similar to those mentioned above. Textual study is supplemented by extra-curricular activities of versatile nature, being aimed at a complete development of juvenile faculties. Having been set on the ideals of Rabindranath Tagore and his idea of 'Shantiniketan', the school always remained a site for rich cultural exchange and reverberation. Apart from Intra-school contests on regular events, the students are taught to adopt dance dramas of Rabindranath Tagore and other literary work in Bengali literature and stage performances in public theatre halls, such as Rabindra Sadan and Nazrul

Mancha, which are often broadcasted on Doordarshan. Few of the plays were based on Abanindranath Tagore's 'Khirer Putul', Rabindranath's 'Natir Puja', 'Kalmrigaya', 'Taasher Desh', 'Balmiki Prativa'. Students were assisted on many occasions by professional performers to improvise and train the students better for enhancing the quality of the production. Besides these, I happen to visit the Nava Nalanda Mela, where I saw a plethora of handicrafts on display made by students. On further exploration I found at least half the stalls were occupied by sellers from outside, selling sarees, jewelry and food. I would like to quote here some information from the official website of Nava Nalanda:

Being accommodated on the boulevard in front of the main building at 25 Southern Avenue, the 'mela' presents an array of art and craft products by the students, a wide variety of village handicrafts from the sources of their origin, forgotten delicacies from the kitchens of the teachers and cultural programmes by the 'Bauls' from Birbhum, the 'Santals' from Chotanagpur, the 'Chhou' group from Purulia, the 'sankhyavadya' of puri, the 'animal mask' dance and the 'Gotipua' dance. (Nava Nalanda.org.in, Oct, 2021)

However, I found no stall by Teacher's or any of the Traditional dances being performed at the 'mela'. Rather interestingly enough, I became audience to a pop musical performance by a local musician. In fact there were performances by students on many remixed and revised versions of Rabindra sangeet. Upon interviewing, one teacher said, "this mela or any other activities gives the students a platform to express themselves and act as a fulfilling and relaxing experience away from the rigorous studies. They make craft items which they can sell here and have a sense of self-actualization. There are other programs

that are staged in prestigious theatres and public viewing is allowed at a price. The money collected from the sale of tickets is used for other activities of the school.” teachers more or less shared similar view, except for one or two who mentioned that the academics get affected when students from senior classes get totally immersed in these programs before the board examinations. The parents seem to enjoy this reliving of a strong Bengali cultural heritage by their wards, and stresses how important it is to ascertain their Bengali identity. However, one of the parent who is a civil engineer said, “I feel that the cultural growth of my daughter is absolutely happening fine. She being a single child is all alone at home and finds a creative space in the school to compensate for the absence of grand parents or other relatives who could transmit these kind of training. But I get skeptical at times about her academic growth as the career-oriented training is missing, which is so essential for preparing her for the competitive examinations.”

5.4. Neoliberalism and Training the Adolescent

Schooling and its herculean task to enable learning in a formal set up has always been a networked activity, organized under the aegis of the government and market forces. Two of the major aspects of this task is to socialize the adolescent into a social order keeping in pace with societal demands and to create employable personnel for meeting the economic needs of the capitalist order. However, both these aspects are congruent and feeds into each other, as the socially responsible employee is also expected to be responsible social citizen abiding by the larger politico-economic orders of the state and live a culturally

befitting life consciously as well as unconsciously. In the previous chapter we have discussed about the government initiatives in life skill training of the adolescent and its ramifications. Here we move into the other kinds of engagements as seen in the private schools, lying outside the ambit of direct government funding, hence enjoying some sort of explorations beyond state control. However, we should always keep in mind that no matter what kind of school we explore, the supervision and reach of the state cannot be totally absent. The state, as we discussed above, might have withdrawn its welfare initiatives to a great extent in a spree to allow market players into the domain of education, but the state now is the facilitator in this market takeover. In such times, as Kumar observes: “the state becomes an agent of capital, assisting it in expansion and whenever/wherever necessary, repression—physical as well as intellectual. In other words, apart from the mere physicality of the neoliberal impact, there are very dangerous and more powerful mental and intellectual instruments working overtime to consolidate the already gained grounds for capital or creating possibilities for newer grounds to be captured.” (Kumar, 2012: 139) In the Indian context such extensions of Neoliberalism needs to be understood as a follow up of the ‘embedded liberalism’¹ that occupied the policies and programs of a government aligning itself to a mixed economic structure. “In fact, there has been a neoliberal consensus evolving across diverse political formations and amply clear in the situation post-2009 general elections.” (Kumar, 2010: 139) For instance, compliance to the market forces for achieving competitive education and therefore attaining equality by building competence was the driving force among the education promoters and job aspiring youth while setting up of IITs (Indian Institute of Technology) and

IIMs (Indian Institute of Management) in 1950s and 1960s, respectively. But there can be no denying that after independence in 1947, Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru embarked upon a development plan that converged socialist and capitalist principles and had the Gandhian notion of ‘self-reliance’ in mind. In this framework, the government did subsidize education and took responsibility for creating employment opportunities all by itself. Significant educational expenditure was borne to train youth and engage them in making the Indian bureaucracy functional and run several PSUs (Public Sector Units). Though several privatization initiatives were at play even then, the radical absorption by the free market came with the liberalization policy in 1990s. In the early 1990s, the Indian government implemented major structural reforms. The new economic policies tried to match India’s development plans with the larger objectives of neoliberalism, which is often considered to be hegemonic on the global level (Gosovic, 2000). The advocacy was that neoliberalism would help realize human potential to its fullest through competitive market dynamics, social rewards connected to hard work and merit of students. Therefore, adopting such ideas of growth in developing countries like India usually involves a number of economic and social reforms. Starting from privatizing state assets, such as education and infrastructure, minimizing social expenditure, removing tariff barriers to enable free trade and attract foreign investment, and finally devaluing currencies to gear the economy toward exports combine together to bring change (Amin, 2006; Harvey, 2005, 2007; Nuruzzaman, 2005). Such measures seem to have benefited the middle class majorly and recorded a plummeted growth, unlike the claims of enabling the populace at large by allowing free competition. (Deshpande, 2003: 131-40).

And the justification of any resulting inequality would be in individual inactiveness and deficit of some kind.

While the Indian government was incorporating neoliberal policies head on, the state of West Bengal did show some delayed moves with the Communist Party of India (Marxists) at the helm of the affairs in the state then. The adoption of neoliberal reforms poses a particular challenge for such regimes, as it induces a withdrawal from traditional Leftist policy commitments, thereby putting ‘severe strains on the unity and coherence of populist parties’ (Das, 2018). Adoption of neoliberal reforms made pathways for some localized form of neoliberalism. “In other words, the interventionist aspect of neoliberal governmentality takes shape as an exceptional articulation of sovereign rules and regimes of citizenship, choosing to include or exclude ‘selected populations and spaces as targets of “calculative choices and value-orientation” associated with neoliberal reform” (Das, 2018: 7). Thus a dramatic revision of policy was seen in 1994, whereby the left front government took several politically revolutionary steps and allowed privatization in healthcare and even in education sector. To quote from the Policy Statement on Industrial Development, 1994:

The State Government welcomes foreign technology and investments, as may be appropriate, or mutually advantageous...[I]t recognises the importance and key role of the Private Sector in providing accelerated growth (GoWB, 1994: 7-8).

Therefore, we see the climate for a neoliberal way of life based on free market, competition, equity and promise of justice getting ripened over a reasonable period of time, both globally and locally. The adolescent being the potential

consumers in this ever expanding market display a significant role to play, which freshly designs and reconfigures their relationship with peers, parents and teachers at large. The school with investments coming from private bodies seek to make profit through multitude of strategies, while convincing their customers of the equivalent and at times exceeding benefits in form of services that they put out on offer. The cultural milieu to accommodate and facilitate such commodification and consumption is more often than not tapped to its fullest. Provisions for a plethora of ECA at schools indicate not so much a choice for the adolescent and their parents, as much as it opens up a box of possibilities to better one's life, living amidst risks and crises of varied kinds. In this high apprehension of risks from all fronts, crises of livelihood and employability seems to loom large. Ulrich Beck in his *Risk Society* (1992) has pronouncedly discussed how in a modern industrial set up with advanced technologies organizing their economies and thus their social and cultural practices have built up risks from within. He mentions how the individuals have to transform their skills and enter a process of individualization in order to cope with the risks, and education becomes one of the key institutions that feels the need to harness such coping skills. To quote from him:

In equal measure it comes to be demanded of the individuals that they cope with fear and anxiety. Sooner or later, new demands on social institutions in education, therapy and politics are bound to arise from these increasing pressures to work out insecurity by oneself. In the risk society, therefore, handling fear and insecurity becomes an essential cultural qualification, and the cultivation of the abilities demanded for it

become an essential mission of pedagogical institutions (Beck, 1992: 76).

5.5. Adolescents as Consumers

In the private schools I found activities ranging from skating, martial arts, dramatics, and public speaking to excursions. Separate fees are charged for such activities. Events are organized with sponsorship from the business houses like Camlin Pvt. Ltd, Educare Coaching center, Birla Institute of Technology, DCB bank Pvt. Ltd, to name a few. Reputed executives and media personnel invited as judges to collaborate and an apt platform was created whereby talent of varied kinds among the adolescents could be tapped and transformed into products sellable in the market. Besides, agencies providing dedicated services for such beyond-the-curriculum activities have spread out well and charging exclusively. Options available are plenty and each one, including the parent and his or her ward, is trying to make a choice based on various factors. One of the predominant guiding forces for taking up these activities is the peer influence. Adolescent girls and boys want to belong to community of their own and seek self-expression through reflection. In such situation friends and batch mates at school become the core group, influencing their interactions and thus negotiations with the social. They build a bond by participating in these group and at times solo activities to find an identity and therefore a worth in the social setup. Market forces seem to locate this nascent group of potential players, seeking to consume to become commodities of the future. Market not only finds a potential customer base to make profit by investing in education, but also

explores the varied possibilities of grooming the adolescent for fulfilling the larger goal of employment. Thus the promise of a better future for an ever transforming labour market is kept alive in a neoliberal conjuncture.

In this regard Zygmunt Bauman (2007) said, elaborating on society of consumers, the gap between the commodities and consumers blur fast. The consumer must become commodity to stand out with all its 'subjectiveness' as an object, not getting lost in the insipid mass of commodities, thus holding the promise of desirability high. Indeed, we all are ever in a rush to consume, as consumption defines life. But this consumption entails a braided process of commodification of the consumers (that we already are), into something to be more noticed, coveted, quoted and thus desired over the other commodities in terms of some quantifiable value. Bauman says:

They are, simultaneously, *promoters of commodities* and the *commodities they promote*. They are, at the same time, the merchandise and their marketing agents, the goods and their travelling salespeople (and let me add that any academic who has ever applied for a teaching job or research funds will easily recognize her or his own predicament in their experience). Into whatever bracket they may be slotted by the composers of statistical tables, they all inhabit the same social space known under the name of the *market*. Under whatever rubric their preoccupations would be classified by governmental archivists or investigative journalists, the activity in which all of them are engaged (whether by choice, necessity, or most commonly both) is *marketing*. The test they need to pass in order to be admitted to the social prizes they covet demands them *to recast themselves as commodities*: that is,

as products capable of catching the attention and attracting *demand* and *customers* (Bauman, 2007: 8-12).

I saw this 'consumer-commodity' dynamics being intricately played out in the schools. The desire to stand out, buy fame and therefore uphold the manufactured individuality is supreme. The process invites practices in the schools and their ECA that must carve out representational and symbolic relevance of that which is to be sold and bought. From curricular aspects of student's projects and fieldwork to extracurricular, everything must be representational and quantified. More so, the materialization of the courses undertaken or activities executed is merely an idealization of the objectified consumer demand. All being converted into finer commodities with subjective shine and glitz to meet the consumer-traced objective success. And interestingly, this chase for symbolic value offers opportunities to escape the actual scrutinizing glare of distinctiveness. It's the generality in qualification that makes one sustainable with the right kind of sellable packaging, abandoning deep specialization or mastery. Ironically, it's the 'massification' that must return for education, converting them into commodities in a society of consumers, but only with glitter and glow that assures merely it's desired symbolic value. Being 'noticed' and 'notified' is the new order of labouring in a society having shifted from production to consumption. And the plethora of circular, extracurricular as well as hidden curriculum aligns itself perfectly to meet this need.

5.6. The Middle Class Response to Risks and Parenting

The not-so-homogenous middle class that the private schools represented in my fieldwork came from a middle to upwardly mobile income group, representing varied occupational background. Thus the parents with such diverse socio-economic conditionality had equally diverse motivations guiding their choices for their ward's education. Though the goal that all pursued was to seek better chances of employability for their child and therefore provide adequate nurturing to achieve the same. This desire for suitable employability seem to have open up new areas of innovation in educating the adolescent in the face of neoliberalism. Economic situations have transformed dramatically to give way to new kinds of job opportunities, boosting the service and entertainment industry majorly. In such situations the middle class primarily seeking to secure jobs for their livelihood, adopt to circumstances and socio-political forces unknowingly and consequently develop some common characteristics as a class. This transformation comes with industrialization moving into a new epoch of production system and commercialization. "Given current challenges the global economy in the broader sense requires a different approach to achieve the needed growth within requirements of sustainable development – new approaches of inclusive growth, not based on financial speculation; adapting to climate change; adjustments to account for limited natural resources; protection of bio diversity requires new patterns of production and consumption based on the smart use of IT, biotech and nanotechnologies; and organizational and institutional changes at the micro and macro levels" (*The New Economics Foundation*). The massive growth in service industry to support the wide spread shift towards consumption has created new forms of work and thus training for

the same. Parents are keen on their children learning foreign languages as a part of their ECA and undertaking other grooming and life skill lessons, as these apparently are given value and scored for in higher education. Parents, especially those in the middle classes, somewhere feel the pressure of the precarious employment situation in the face of rapid globalization and corporatization and want to adhere to the new culture of economic sustainability.

5.6.1. Mapping Middleclass Trends

There has been several popular as well as scholarly discourses on middle class being the maximum beneficiaries of Neoliberalisation post 1990s. The thesis of 'brain drain' to the thickest consuming population of the nation, all seem to have its validation in putting India at the global pace of development. However, there has been a constant debate around this growth of middle class vis-à-vis becoming prey of the consumption trap and loss of Gandhian ideals of self-reliance. But there are intricacies beyond these binary positions that speaks of the negotiations and allegiances made by the middle class for its survival. Fernandes (2000) through her study of the urban middle classes in Mumbai contested the position that there was a total upward mobility across this class. She argues that the economic reform had given rise to insecure job opportunities, retrenchment and sub-contracted work for the lower middle class in the IT industries. (Fernandes, 2000: 96). Fernandes (2000) further states that the new middle classes' newness is represented by their interplay with the new economic sector (i.e., the private sector) and not merely by its social practices.

After Bourdieu, Fernandes (2006) identifies symbolic practices through which one locates a middle class position or its 'middleclassness'. These include acquiring business educational qualifications, entrepreneurial acumen through training in requisite institutes and enhancing "Personality Development and Communication Skills" (Fernandes, 2006: 96). These educational practices and many other innovative offers are seen to behold promises of a better future for the middle class. She argues, that though there is no denying of the hardships faced by a certain section of the middle classes, but the success story represented acts as a politically legitimate argument in support of liberalization. She says:

The new middle class identity shapes both the valuation of different forms of social and cultural capital... and the nature of middle class responses to the shifts and uncertainties associated with liberalization. It is this new middle class identity that has begun to manage the intersections and tensions between the discursive images of the new middle class consumer on the one hand, and the restructured and differentiated character of the middle class [on the other] (Fernandes, 2006: 136).

Talking of the hardships, Ganguly-Scrase and Scrase's (2009) argue in their ethnographic study, of the lower middle class in Kolkata, that the middle class exhibits rising aspirations of social and cultural mobility but paucity of desired capacity to fulfil them. They discuss how the hegemonic control of English education and its propagation through globalized media has impacted the middle class cultural identity. No wonder they struggle to live up to the new dreams of a self-sustained class that can be distinguished for its taste and way of life. But despite bearing the stress at personal and financial front, the parents

were very hopeful about their wards future even in a fast transforming economic system. They foster the idea of how “there is a stark contradiction between the rhetoric and reality of structural adjustment and globalisation for the middle classes” (Ganguly-Scrase & Scrase, 2009: 3). The anxiety of the Bengali middle class parent over the quality of formal education in the face of globalization has been well documented in the above research. The eagerness of the parent to facilitate their children to learn English language as a continuation of the colonial hangover and then to meet the recent job demands in a liberalized economy is pronounce.

A similar and at times vastly expansive concern was seen in my research regarding quality education among the parents. Parents seem to look for meaningful and life enhancing education for their wards, at times ensuring that they enter a ‘field’ whereby they acquire ‘cultural capital’ that redefines their newness as a middle class. To quote from Ganguly-Scrase & Scrase:

In a globalized, post-colonial world, there is an individual pragmatism emerging out of the choices offered in a liberalizing Indian economy. For the Bengali middle classes, it is the maintenance of cultural resources — formal education and English — established and handed down to them by the British all those years ago, which is essential to their social position. (Ganguly-Scrase & Scrase, 2009: 138)

Turn to neoliberalism has dramatically transformed the attitudes of people both as producers and consumers, having a trickledown effect on the educational practices as well as familial relations. The continuum between the family (more specifically parenting) and the educational field has exposed practices that could

restructure the heterogeneous middle class. In my interviews with the parents of the private school I get a persistent hint of the same. A mother of a boy called Sandeep Dutta of grade XII says, “I work as a journalist with a leading English newspaper and see what a competitive corporate job market demands from its employees. Just having technical knowledge of the work at hand is not enough, there is always a need to offer extra and more rewarding that can be worthy of being sold. The dynamism of the employee is what generates profit for the company and the perks are provided accordingly. Basic academic excellence is not enough, and to attain the other kinds of all round expertise one needs to engage in ECAs of varied kinds to prepare oneself for the future competitions of the job market. Besides, I feel, such beyond the text book learning initiatives prepare the students to face the competitive world. Higher education institutions offering MBA degree ask for student’s performance record in ECA and participation in leadership as well as entrepreneurial activities at school level during interviews. Besides, a skill of such kind would also help them to cope with the hardships of the work life in present day. There is immense job insecurity and an extra skill of such kind can offer them than alternate avenues of income.” Thus from feedback of such parents and many others, as discussed above, we can account for the keenness of the middle class parent in making their wards an ‘all-rounder’ to cope with the ‘precarity’ of the present economic times under the influence of neoliberalism. To do the same the middle class parenting is all out to appropriate their cultural capital in view of the changing times and accommodate many popular stances to create a new position for themselves, while retaining their status in a time immemorial location of a socially hierarchical system.

Thus in adherence to Pierre Bourdieu's (1984) conception of schools as sites where middle class culture is produced and reproduced, we can see that parenting too takes a new form whereby the production of 'middleclassness' and recreating it becomes the key focus. For Pierre Bourdieu class is retained and actualized through practicing actions in a given circumstance, whereby the objective structures are adopted and reinstated by subjective actions. These deliberate intentions and often than not unconscious gestures is explained by Bourdieu through his idea of habitus. He says:

The conditionings associated with a particular class of conditions of existence produce habitus, systems of durable, transposable dispositions...[that generate]... things to do or not to do, things to say or not to say, in relation to a probable 'upcoming future' (Bourdieu, 1990: 53).

From this standpoint, it becomes explicit that we try to understand the middle class and its heterogeneity through their varied creative ways for affirming their ever evolving position in a social space. Thus to understand these creative practices it becomes very important to take note of the resources that individuals employ to fulfil action. Bourdieu talked primarily of three kinds of capital: Economic, Cultural and Social. While discussing cultural capital, he talked of three kinds of form and their related competencies— embodied cultural ways to act in a requisite manner in a cultural field, owning objectified cultural goods such as art and artefacts, and having access to its institutionalized version through educational credentials (Bourdieu, 1990: 124) — for enabling a particular class define its character by sharing some and restricting others by exploiting all forms of capital. Bourdieu added that the cultural capital is not

equally accessible to all and to those it is, the rules of the game are often determined by the dominant culture and its habitus. In the Indian scenario, and specifically in my study, it was found very persistently that the lower middle class that had access to institutionalized cultural form were lacking in the embodied and objectified form and their access or ownership of the same was often determined on the terms of the higher middle class, which appropriated all the three forms significantly in a historical process. Many parents who were not very sure of the need for ECA or life skill training, often had a reply like, “It must be useful as the other parents are spending so much for it and all good schools are offering it extensively” and some parent also shared their predicaments and the urge to emulate the upwardly mobile faction within their class by responding, “I might not be able to afford the extra fees for ECA, but I do make a choice among many activities on offer keeping in mind what other parents are trying to opt for their children.” Parents are thus trying to negotiate and build some kind of semblance in their choices for educational practices. They are almost seen to share a concern that the best needs to be done and the best is often determined by the dominant faction. Thus the pressure of parenting is no less overwhelming than the peer pressure, with only the determining and controlling factor being of a moral kind i.e. of becoming a good father or mother as per the social codes formulated and handed down by the dominant faction of the middle class.

Alongside this moral commitment and the ‘practical sense’ of right nurturing their wards, the working middle class parent in my study often spelled out the need to engage their boy or girl in activities during the time that would go unmonitored in their absence, as they are away at work. Their anxieties echoed

as they said, “we are out for long hours for our jobs and those hours of loneliness and lack of any surveillance could make the adolescent age group very desperate and commit unhealthy practices”. One of the mother said, “We as parent made a choice of school based on the infrastructural support and creative teaching pedagogy. We looked not only for well-furnished classrooms, innovative teaching methods but also aesthetically rich opportunities for ECA, whereby our son could become a part of the Bengali cultural background we belong to.” Thus the advertisements on the streets and in the institutional websites paints a vivid picture of all that the education system is offering as a good service provider. For example: pictures of swimming pool, well-maintained basketball court or table tennis court, various cultural events, expedition programs and other career-oriented grooming courses are on display in every school websites and even on large hoardings at crossroads. Parents as potential buyers definitely take good notice of these. We find that the distinctive value of school as an elite institution in a post-colonial society surely mediates the choices of parents of the upwardly mobile middle class families and extracurricular activities on offer act as a good determinant.

5.6.2. Mother and Her Significant Role

I have found a common factor influencing the choices of educational opportunities for the middle class parent i.e. the long-term career goals, backed up by a uniformity in exploitation of economic and social capital. But the variance is observed in terms of gaining and exploiting of cultural capital by the middle class. And this variance brings to light the mother’s involvement in the

education of their children. In my ethnographic exploration I happen to find mothers' presence more significant and predominant than the fathers in the school events and programs. In fact, reasons for her involvement hints at factors beyond her need to care for her children. More often than not she is seen to find an avenue through such activities for reproducing her cultural position in the social set up. She engages in each of these activities, from making of craft items to deciding upon her ward's musical or artistic endeavors. It seemed as if the mothers were reliving their younger days by engaging and practicing the skills that once they had abandoned. While engaging in a focused group discussion with all the mothers who generally gathered outside the school or during such extracurricular events, I found almost 15 out of 18 mothers saying, "We have wanted our girls and boys to take up an extracurricular activity which we can help them out with". They also reiterated that music or drawing was their preferred choice as most other children of the extended family engaged in the same. However, few also did show their keenness in taking up new activities like learning a foreign language or some new form of dance. Angana's mother, a class X student who engaged in martial arts and had won many competition, said, "I was an athlete in school, having participated in many state level events and won prizes. But I couldn't pursue sports as I grew up. So when I saw my daughter doing well in martial arts I encouraged her a lot in spite of my family not very happy with her choice. However, my husband (an upper divisional clerk at the West Bengal Govt. Finance Dept.) gradually recognized his daughter's skill and interest, and started to take her to distant locations to participate in several competitions, where our daughter won medals." Another mother who is herself a professional dancer said, "It was quite obvious that her

son offered to play ‘tabla’ at school, as he had been hearing the instrument being played ever since his birth. However, he was very keen to learn dance like me. But other members of the family did not encourage him enough in doing so. His father was totally opposed to the idea of his dancing. I at times feel very sad for him, but then I’m happy that he has developed commendable skill in playing the musical instrument.” This boy named Akash, studying in Nava Nalanda School, wishes to pursue a career in music as a performing artist. Besides, there were many mothers who collaborated in the extracurricular activities of their wards with the same vigour as in their academic performances. At times they compensated for the curriculum by availing tuitions in the interest of their children, but actively engaged in the entire process of arranging and organizing both their curricular and extracurricular activities.

A similar kind of observation has been made by Henrike Donner (2005) in two Calcutta households among middle class households. Education and aspirations for upward mobility, brought about by changing labour markets, seem to have altered understandings of parenting and the division of work among women belonging to middle-class households in two Calcutta neighbourhoods. She argued that though mothers have contributed extensively to schooling and raising of the children in middleclass families of urban India, the changing pattern of employment in times of globalization and economic liberalization has transcended to a new level. Private schooling along with English education has become the precondition for multinational and corporate jobs. Mothers have taken up the onus of training their wards in such a formal education along with sharing the bulk task of the household. She argues that in the context of rapid urbanization and increasing consumerism the domestic organization needs to be

seen from fresh vantage points. The public-private division, women's employability outside house, marital relations and child rearing practices have majorly transformed in relation to the politics of the market (Donner, 2005: 119-39). This role of the mother takes a much intense and responsible character as the child nears his years of school-passing examinations. On the one hand, the mother need to understand and address the biological and psychological changes that the adolescent boy or girl goes through and on the other prepare them with requisite kind of training for the new job market. Historically, the middle class has used varied ways to retain their privileged position and often it's been through investing dedicatedly on their children's education. Other than exploiting the available economic resources, the middle class parents have cultivated and nurtured the home-school relationship with utmost commitment and mothers in a Bengali urban middle class set up have been the greatest contributor to the same. From seeking the right kind of school that reproduces their class position to considering a requisite curriculum and extra-curricular support has been the task of the mother. However, she is not the final decision maker always, she merely carries forward and fulfils the cultural demands of her familial and class location. Most of the mothers act as the harbinger of the paternalistic responsibilities, with orders subtly being handed down by the fathers of the family still on several occasions.

Gupta (2019) conducted a similar study in Dehradun (India) to understand parental investment in children's schooling among the middle class. She argues:

Social and economic forms of capital are necessary for middle class families to accumulate valuable educational resources. However, whether they are deployed to realize the desired educational advantage

depends on the distribution of parent's cultural capital. The management and utilization of available resources are influenced by the nature of mother's involvement in their children's education. While the mothers with higher academic qualification usually proactively engage in, or partner with, teachers in shaping their children's schooling experience, and consequently strengthen the home-school relationship, those who lack this embodied and institutionalized form of capital fail to translate the assembled educational resources into capital despite having common goals and adopting similar educational strategies (Gupta, 2019: 48-63).

She has categorized the mother's into— providers, partners and proactive agents— to account for the contribution towards their ward's education. The provider mother does all that is necessary to facilitate her adolescent boy or girl in achieving the educational credentials for gaining further economic and cultural capital in future, but she often meets hurdles and failures due to her lack of mobilization of cultural capital. I see an extension of the same in my study, the mothers of middle class Bengali families seem to have adopted herself traditionally to becoming a 'provider-partner' duo. She with her rich cultural training from her mother and other family members inter-generationally continue to play a role that is deeply ingrained in her psyche. Thus her institutional cultural capital of good schooling and similar exposure to extracurricular activities in adolescence get substantiated with her embodied form of capital. Rather in times of liberalization and looming employment crisis or change of job pattern she uses her cultural expertise to adopt proactive strategies to guide her adolescent boy or girl. Thus the cultural capital, unlike other forms of capital, which cannot be easily bought helps her in negotiating

ways to find access to the other forms and make best use of them for accomplishing the task of parenting. Thus the 'domestic transmission of capital' (Bourdieu, 1986) play a significant role in determining the parental role that one takes up in structuring the educational experience of the young during the growing days. Bourdieu says:

The typically functionalist definition of the functions of education ignores the contribution which the educational system makes to the reproduction of the social structure by sanctioning the hereditary transmission of cultural capital. From the very beginning, a definition of human capital, despite its humanistic connotations, does not move beyond economism and ignores, *inter alia*, the fact that the scholastic yield from educational action depends on the cultural capital previously invested by the family. Moreover, the economic and social yield of the educational qualification depends on the social capital, again inherited, which can be used to back it up. Most of the properties of cultural capital can be deduced from the fact that, in its fundamental state, it is linked to the body and presupposes embodiment. The accumulation of cultural capital in the embodied state, i.e., in the form of what is called culture, cultivation, *Bildung*, presupposes a process of embodiment, incorporation, which, insofar as it implies a labor of inculcation and assimilation, costs time, time which must be invested personally by the investor. Like the acquisition of a muscular physique or a suntan, it cannot be done at second hand (so that all effects of delegation are ruled out). (Bourdieu, 1986: 17-18).

The mothers are seen to be in a regular process of such inculcation in my study and often find resources to draw upon from heredity and also environmental conditioning via peers and family. Though most of the mothers I interviewed were housewives, but the employed mother too had a similar kind of negotiation going on in their role playing as mothers.

5.6.3. Family and its Focus on Parenting

Having discussed about mothering as an integral point of transformation in my study, it would be insufficient if the family responses aren't highlighted in terms of the neoliberal times. The mother operates from the ambit of a structured family system, which itself is seeing a rapid transition in terms of values, if not structure. The shift from hankering for a government job to taking up new kinds of private employment in the turn of globalization and accumulating appropriate skills for the same has been a serious concern for all the respondents. Shil Bae (2017) in a study on parenting in times of neoliberalism brings forth how the parenting influences the everyday lives of the families in New Zealand. She highlights how neoliberal socio-economic and political formations creates discourses about the normal, thus desirable, norms of parenting to reinstate the power structure induced by market. She argues:

Globalization has intensified the pervasive dominance of capitalism in an effective manner across the globe in recent decades putting active economic engagement of the subject on a pedestal. This imposes further pressure on parents to have two incomes, as well as performing the norm of the positive parenting pedagogy. While modern parents are provided

less support, they are expected to deliver more, thus generating optimal productivity for society with the least investment. (Bae, 2017: 37)

The parents in my study have expressed a constant anxiety over the future of their ward and therefore qualified all these extracurricular measures as modes to attain important skills for generating alternative ways of surviving the competition. They are ready to accommodate all kinds of cost to be accomplished in this provider role in risk-ridden times. The market along with the government is planning programs that can facilitate processes for taking education to an even newer level. The life skill policies and programs as discussed in the previous chapter are reflection of the same. Thus after Foucault (2004) it would be helpful to approach neoliberalism as a repertoire of market ideology influencing the government policies and art of organizing citizens for fulfilling interests of varied kinds, and not merely an economic intervention. Therefore, in such times the family takes up new functions, keeping many predispositions and predicaments in consideration. However, the adaption is always not very pronounced and conscious, as these are culturally inscribed and imbibed. Foucault refers to this desirable/economic subject as 'Homo Economicus'. He says:

Homo Economicus is someone who pursues his own interest, and whose interest is such that it converges spontaneously with the interest with others... with regard to Homo Economicus, one must *laissez-faire*; he is the subject or object of *laissez-fair*... that is to say, the person who accepts reality or who responds systematically to modifications in the variables in the environment, appears precisely as someone manageable,

someone who responds systematically to systematic modifications artificially introduced into the environment. (Foucault, 2004: 270 – 71).

Thus we see the parent accommodating to the demands of the market-nurtured education system and convert themselves into self-interested individuals working out rational ways to guide their actions. In fact, several of the parents said that they wanted to live up to the expectations of the child and the school authority and would do their best to accommodate. At times the pressure on them is very high to meet the given educational demands but they expressed that the pressure to secure a promising employment is even higher in their social location. Thereby we encounter the competitive forces weighing upon the family system heavily. The need to compete is so high for requisite educational rewards that the family too is pulled into the gallery for constant validation of oneself. Competition in acquiring desirable education with aspiration for mobility had drawn the family into a kind of close knit force especially in a nuclear form, whereby the father-mother-child composition in a modern nuclear set up is ever jostling to win some laurels through educational innovations. I again feel urged to refer back to Beck (1992) on this:

Competition rests upon the interchangeability of qualifications and thereby compels people to advertise the individuality and uniqueness of their work and of their own accomplishments. The growing pressure of competition leads to an individualization among equals, i.e. precisely in areas of interaction and conduct which are characterized by a shared background (similar education, similar experience, similar knowledge). Especially where such a shared background still exists, community is dissolved in the acid bath of competition. (Beck, 1992: 94)

5.7. Pedagogic Transformations

Neoliberalism has definitely transformed the purpose and goal of extracurricular in schools. As we saw in the previous sections that it has become another way to perpetuate cultural hegemony of a particular class and transmitting legitimate knowledge. It's viewed as means to an end i.e. seeking opportunities in the employment market as well as a way for converting adolescent and their parents into befitting consumers in a widely privatized system of education. With professionals from the media industry coming over as judges for musical programs and fashion shows, one shall surely see it as a platform for tapping potential young artists for early inclusion in the creative industry. Though, the mass of students might not be reaping benefits from the same in the long run, but the promise is surely enticing. Both parents and teachers see some hope or may be merely falls in line with the demands of the market and its mass mediated culture. However, in such activities one remarkable practice seem to nudge constantly and that's the bonding between the teacher and students. The camaraderie that evolves between the teacher and student is noticeable during the cultural events and stage shows. Besides, the initiatives are taken outside the classroom gives the students certain sense of liberation from the structures of the handed down syllabus, which neither the teacher nor the student has any control to decide upon or reformulate with regard to their location and time. Thus the relevance of free, meaningful and experiential learning possibly finds some scope in practicing of extracurricular activities. The extracurricular has always remained as something 'extra' as it doesn't fulfil the needs of the examination and score oriented education system

in our country. Pathak (2002) rightly said,

Schooling has become synonymous with legitimate knowledge. The success of schooled consciousness lies in one's ability to internalize this rationale. The child begins to believe that knowledge is what is acquired in the classroom, what is written in the prescribed textbooks, and what the teacher thinks is important. This realization leads the child to separate 'work' from 'play', 'real' texts from 'imaginary' stories. To make matters worse, the child is expected to concentrate on what is considered really worth doing: mathematics, history and science as taught at school. Everything else is regarded as extracurricular, something that is merely symbolic having no substantial meaning for evaluating the child's performance. Schooling, as a result, tends to cultivate one-and only one-ambition: to gain complete mastery over legitimate knowledge. (Pathak, 2002: 175)

Interestingly, this very detachment between text and imagination was something that many of my respondents mentioned and discussed how extracurricular activities help them bridge this gap. The boy who went for "tram yatra" or the boy who planned various games during the autumn fest, both saw it as ways for extending their learning in the classroom. In fact, the girls and boys who attended the workshop on baking also said that the workshop began with discussing healthy food habits and elaborating the nutritional and chemical composition of each ingredient being used in the process. One significant response came from one of the girls named Yana Shai of class X. she had displayed her painting of a woman smeared in vermillion on the occasion of "Baron" (a ritual carried out during Durga puja when the Goddess is applied

vermillion and sweets by the married women before she is taken away for immersion). Yana said, “I come from a Buddhist family and we do participate in the festival, so the rituals fascinated me immensely. I had studied about Bengal partition in the history class and there was reference of Durga puja being done in the border areas of Bengal. I asked my teacher in details about it and she offered me some further reading materials on it and asked me to prepare a narrative that I would read out during the school function. I also asked my mother if she knew about any such story as she comes from Bangladesh.” Thus we see that a scope for some kind of beyond the textbook educational practices emerge through such programs, whereby some kind of reverse knowledge creation and relativism is given a chance. But this entire process is and can only be supported by a dialogical learning environment, breaking down the hegemonic notions of legitimate knowledge.

Such scope for dialogue is often missing in our schooling system as the teachers are firstly, alienated from the syllabus building process or the prescription of textbooks. Secondly, they too are trained to believe in the supremacy of legitimate knowledge and blind obedience. Thirdly, time constraint to meet the needs of the examination system withholds them from exploring beyond the rubrics of patterned education in absence of any two-way exchange, active involvement, as if all is a bureaucratized attempt for passive consumption. Even in my study the consumption factor was no way seen to be washed out, rather it became the primary condition for rolling out varied kinds of extracurricular activities. But while taking ethnographic details of each ECA event, both in private and public schools, I saw some sort of involvement and engagement between the teacher and the student building up. I shall revisit few narratives

from teachers to substantiate the above observation. Firstly, the principal of United Missionary School (Govt. school), Ms. Leena George, shared how many girls in her family came from broken homes or belonged to families of estranged parents and how it directly correlates to their poor academic performance. Among many girls, she narrated the case of Sangeeta Mondal of class IX in detail. She said, “Sangeeta used to be very quiet initially in the lower classes, but as she grew she started to miss classes and show aggression in varied ways. Teachers were very upset with her as she often violated the class decorum and got into conflict with her friends. One fine day her Bengali teacher came rushing to my office and showed me an essay written by Sangeeta in an essay competition on ‘girl child’. She had given a narrative of how a woman was regularly beaten up by her alcoholic husband and thrown out of the house along with her daughter. It had such vivid detail that we were coaxed to think twice about the anonymity of the characters in her story. We decided to have a talk to her as we were sure that she was referring to herself under the cover of anonymous characters in her story. On deep conversations and reflections, we found that her mother who worked as a labor at some construction site was regularly robbed of all her earnings and abused by her alcoholic husband. She too was not spared from the rage of her father and her mother’s consequent frustration. She was physically abused and often left with no food at home. Ever since she narrated this story to us and we counselled her, she started to regain some self-confidence and performing better in school activities”. The second case is of Arun Nayak, a student of class XI. The music teacher of Silver Point School, Piyali Mukherjee, while divulging her experience with the students during music classes highlighted about this student. She said, “Arun has a great

sense of music and is equally brilliant in his studies. While preparing for the autumn fest he suggested me to use Rap music, I was completely in dislike of the same as I found no sense of rhythm or melody in that form. To be honest I did not have enough exposure to rap music. But Arun told me how rap music evolved as a voice of the black and therefore is loaded with powerful and meaningful lyrics. He gave me few songs to listen and provided the lyrics to follow. I was very impressed to see how beautifully like poetry the songs talked of struggle and other aspects of life. Finally, Arun and myself sat together to hear all the songs from the Bollywood movie Gully Boy (2019) and handpicked songs that could be used for the school program”. Besides, these two significant cases I have observed throughout my fieldwork an astounding teacher-student coordination and cooperation, breaking down the hierarchical distance. Both seemed to inform and help each other off and on.

5.7.1. Teaching Through Dialogue

On the one hand, in schools like Balika Shikha Sadan where I found teachers coming from outside to facilitate extracurricular courses developing strong bonds with students and assisting them in academic life through remedial coaching in life skills; on the other, I found teachers from government school coming from a differential class location than that of the student showing immense concern and empathy for the students during these events. There’s no denying that the class distinction remains vivid in these kind of programs on health, hygiene and environment that they assist their students on, belonging to a different class location. However, the initiative to care and guide them also

remains pronounce. During the rallies and cultural programs, they share their water bottles with each other, sit on the staircases and culverts of the street. The self-defense trainer, Partha Mitra, who took special training in yoga, meditation sessions and martial arts shared his experience with adolescent students of both public and private schools. He said, “The response from the public school students is much intense and enthusiastic than from the private schools. The girls of the public school often took self-defense lessons very seriously and attended classes even beyond school hours. Most girls during these sessions shared their experience back home of fear and anxiety where this kind of training gave them confidence to deal with crime.” However, he shared how in spite of not being a full time faculty in the schools where he provided service, he was invited by the students for every event like teacher’s day celebration or annual day program personally. A sense of respect and affinity grew far deeper than he expected and they shared much of their personal and academic ordeals in with him. He put forth another case of Anjali Burman of Balika Sikha Sadan School. He said, “This girl of class X had failed in a few subjects and her parents and teachers were very anxious about her performance in the board examinations. I was informed that she would need to concentrate in her studies and discontinue her martial arts training. I requested the school authority to give me chance to talk to her and her parents. Upon talking to both I learnt the girl was unable to concentrate in her studies and remained restless mostly. I advised to send her for martial arts class for half an hour everyday as it shall help her regain her confidence. Later in the class I paid extra attention to her and talked to her regarding her studies as well. She started revealing her fear of failing to meet her parent’s expectation. I counselled her to do her best and things did start

to change”. Thus many such experiences were shared by the teachers and a sense of collaboration was observed among them during such events. The language they spoke in, to the kind of gestures and mannerism that the teachers adopted during conducting these events were definitely contrasting to the hegemonic structure of classroom teaching, if not total negating the same. Thus a kind of interaction could be initiated where by the popular cultural modes and a youth-centric way of life could help create some sort of a stepping stone to a more liberal pedagogy, if not critical.

The prerequisite of having some sort of a democratic space in education could be seen nudging it heads from these accounts. I would like here to draw upon the ideas of Henry A. Giroux (2005), an American theorist having been recognized as the most outspoken proponent of ‘Critical Pedagogy’ movement in last two decades. He said:

Learning takes place in a variety of public spheres outside of the schools and while we need to defend public education against the ravaging influence of corporate culture.... We must also connect what is taught in the larger culture to the problems of youth and the challenges of radical democracy in a newly constituted global public. Progressive education in an age of rampant neoliberalism requires an expanded notion of the public, pedagogy, solidarity and democratic struggle. (Giroux, 2005: 39-43)

Though in my study I have seen a strong presence of hegemonic structures and reproduction of a particular class interest especially in the public schools, as discussed in chapter 4. However, the initiative of some teachers and voices

echoing some sort of democratic mindset definitely wasn't totally absent. Even in the process of cultural reproduction, deviations were noticed with tendencies for accommodating creative expression that the extracurricular activities provided scope for. From paintings to musical renditions all were used to express oneself without much hesitation and often accommodated overtones of freedom. Thus these activities drew in the popular cultural element and at times mass mediated cultural forms as tools for the adolescent to create a kind of free space to express oneself, if not nurture the larger political democratic ideals or reinstate the power dynamics inherent in 'popular' culture. I believe, it's surely holds promises of initiating a public sphere in the domain of systemic education and regimented schooling. Giroux has stated something very interesting in this regard:

Schools and teachers need to gain a vision of why they are doing what they are doing. For this reason, you need to define intellectual work within some notion of authority that you can fight for. That means it has to have an ethical and political referent. For me this means defining schools as democratic public sphere. We need to make a link between schooling and reconstruction of public life. (Giroux, 2005: 128-129)

References can be made here in relation to pedagogic innovations that the two alternative schools have tried to create in relation to corresponding philosophies. One is the 'Mirambika' school in New Delhi based on the philosophy of Sri Aurobindo and the other being 'Shantiniketan' in Bolpur (West Bengal) after the imagination of Rabindranath Tagore. 'Mirambika' explores ways in which the child can be supported to become an independent learner. It does not try to cast knowledge into disciplinary boundaries and seeks

mental and physical growth in tune with creative energy of life. There is no pressure of codified syllabus and corresponding texts. The teacher and taught relationship is very enriching. The approach is absolutely dialogical, where each student is heard and responded to by the teachers. They are often given puzzles to solve and encouraged to try without the fear of mistake grasping them. For instance, in the mathematics class the teacher gives problem-solving exercises from everyday instances and coaxes students to ask questions that are path breaking, if not deviant. The teacher turns a class of serious calculation to one of humor, drama and jokes. In Mirambika, the teacher appreciates the spirit of participation over the narcissistic acclamations of championship. The binaries like success-failure and loser-winner that are deeply rooted in competitive education is contested. The reports that teachers write for their students do not put forth the quantitative achievements of the students, rather they are strikingly different as they discuss qualitative growth of the student as a learner (Pathak, 2002).

‘Shantiniketan’ too developed with similar imagination in 1901. Rabindranath Tagore wanted to create an educational space for free learning and creative awakening. He wanted any learning to be conducted outside the four walls of a class room. Thus breaking down the hegemonic structure of the teacher-taught widely endured in modern education. Learning for him assured holistic growth, embedded in one’s social context and cultural moorings. Therefore, he gave special emphasis on learning through drama, music and craft, to mention a few. Here I would like to quote from the autobiography of Amartya Sen, *Home in the world: A Memoire* (2021), where he shares his experience at Shantiniketan

as a pupil. He narrated his interaction with his mathematics teacher to elucidate how a rewarding and collaborative pedagogy was at play. He writes:

“My mathematics teacher, Jagabandhuda, was extraordinarily skilled but remarkably unassuming. Initially, he was worried that I wanted to study things outside our limited syllabus and that I would neglect what we were meant to do. Some of the standard topics of school mathematics did not, however, interest me at all I was determined instead to think about the nature and foundations of mathematical reasoning. Rabindranath’s arguments in favor of freedom and reasoning encouraged me to try to do what I really wanted to do, even though Rabindranath himself had little personal interest in mathematics. Jagabandhuda eventually gave in to my persistence. My first suspicion, that he was resisting because he did not know much maths outside the syllabus, proved to be wholly unfounded. Often, when I suggested a relatively unusual way of tackling a well-known problem in maths, he would suggest yet another line of thinking, which motivated me to try to outdo the novelty of his reasoning with something of my own.” (Sen, 2021: 79-80)

These two secondary sources of information nonetheless assure us of the past and ongoing attempts at reinventing pedagogical practices to inspire the learner, but at the same time it also makes us reflect upon the limitations of the modern mainstream education system with its hard pressing systemic and bureaucratic demands. It ignites us truly to think of alternative forms of education and bring them onto the mainstream.

5.7.2. Popular Culture and Pedagogy

However, in my study I have seen possibilities and attempts, may be not so conscious, on the part of the teachers to make learning a liberating experience. I believe it became possible due to two principle factors. Firstly, the humanist approach that is embedded in every individual motivated the teacher to support and care for the other. Especially dealing with adolescent and children the paternal instinct seem to overpower all other emotive considerations. Secondly, the other socio-cultural forces that mediate our world of representation also has a great impact. In this relation the use of popular cultural modes in the form music, dance or literature during the extracurricular classes facilitates the teacher and the student to interact breaking the hierarchical order. The adolescent exposed to the popular and mass mediated culture finds a new space to relate in terms of fictional characters, musical revolutions and other literary imaginations. The inclusion of songs from Bollywood movies, adopting ways of popular iconic characters in dramas and performing to rock or hip hop numbers build a space for adolescents to express their selves. During such times the teacher and student finds a common cultural space to exchange spontaneously and nurture a bonding that shall go farther. Besides, I found the promise of reality shows and talent hunt programs having an overwhelming effect on the adolescent mind. The expansion of entertainment/creative industry opens up channels for an alternative employment. Thus the passion for creative pursuit seems to coax both the teacher and the taught, and they enter into a kind

of negotiated space where they start appreciating each other for reasons beyond classroom learning and examination-based performance. Most literature on popular culture and its relation to education have dealt with the young as the producers and consumers of popular culture. Young students are engaged in learning across space and time. They are no more bound to classroom learning. The internet and television has fast transformed their world of experience. They immerse themselves in a wide range of transcultural practices and global political events through virtual platform. Paul Willis (1977) in his work *leaning to labour*, demonstrates how working class students use popular culture to respond to and in some way reorganize the school space to their advantage. In doing so they not only reproduce their social location but also draws distinction from other class position. On the other hand, Allan Luke (2006) describes how the present technocratic model of education has led to loss of innovativeness and skill on the part of the teachers due to predesigned curriculum being fed to them. They have moved far away from popular cultural underpinnings of the society in a given time and organize their lessons that are decontextualized. Schooling cannot happen in absence of local cultural relatedness. Thus he suggests the need for a pedagogy that shall help teachers become cosmopolitan and transcultural by accommodating the young in terms of the popular, both locally and globally. Thus there is call for engaging with popular culture and reorganizing education that can cross boundaries of school, family and community. Besides, in a technologically advanced age, the pedagogical practices are bound to pull in many popular forms and methods that shall transform the teaching-learning exercises completely. *In the text Popular Culture in the Classroom*, Alvermann et al. (1999) have tried to explore how

the technological intervention within classroom and thereby the shaping of distinct youth cultures provides a window for relooking popular culture and its intricate relationship with education. The construction of adolescent identities happens through performances, visual media injunctions, musical compositions, animations and written narratives; and no educational endeavor can flourish without accommodating and blending the same. I would like to quote from Appadurai (1996) here:

Teaching hip-hop with the flow... suggests not so much an incorporation of hip-hop texts into the curriculum but an opening up of possible languages and identities, an engagement with multiple ways of speaking, being and learning (Appadurai, 1996: 40).

5.8. Popular Culture, Education and Parenting

While discussing popular culture and its ramification on educating the adolescent, one surely needs to make mention of the forms of commercial popular culture in the globalized world. Popular culture when understood as cultural forms or products that are widely read, seen and therefore consumed collectively by a community, then it puts to question the power ingrained within those forms and the capitalist manipulation fostered thereby. The popular cultural forms that are incorporated in the extracurricular activities of the schools have a wide coverage, starting from Bollywood movie songs, popular Tamil songs, hip-hop by American stars to Korean band music. Often these music or dances are viewed and replicated without having much information of the context of their creation. Thus a kind of dissociative emulation is seen and

therefore a frenzy overpowering the adolescent. Fast and easy access to cultural forms across the globe with the aid of internet and rapidly advancing technological innovations has given a new character to mass-mediated popular culture. Though there's no denying that popular culture was never a fixed entity. Its forms find meaning in the social field where it is incorporated and through practices that articulate them. Hence the popular in a globalized and an advanced capitalist order have a slightly different impact on the adolescent who are now consumers in the marketplace too. Stuart hall made a relevant comment with regard to such commercial popular culture. He said:

“If the forms of provided commercial popular culture are not purely manipulative, then it is because, alongside the false appeals, the foreshortenings, the trivialization and short-circuit, there are also elements of recognition and identification, something approaching a recreation of recognizable experiences and attitudes, to which people are responding.” (Hall, 1981: 233)

Hence we need to recognize how popular culture in the Indian sub-continent and Bengal in particular have become a commercial agglomeration of “Hindi-Hindu” cultural forms, westernized Bengali forms and international forms. Thus the influence of these cultural forms are profound, yet divisive on the adolescent. They do get swayed by them and inculcate practices and beliefs as depicted in the popular cultural ideals, but the temporariness of any such cultural form and its trans-locational adoption does decide its reach over any collective. On this very point it would be worth discussing how the magic of popular acts upon the parents and teachers who are overtly conscious of a class location and

try defending it even more strongly while nurturing their next generation. Throughout my field work I have found both categories of parents and teachers, ones who have been very enthusiastic in accommodating the popular cultural forms with aspirations of different kind (which I have already mentioned) and others who have expressed their skepticism. The mother who is seen jostling with new ECA choices on offer, constantly tries to figure out which one would be best befitting with the middleclass position she is planted in. Thus she is as keen in retaining the “bhadrolok” image and its cultural rootedness, as much as assimilating the new practices that come to define the middle class in the globalized age. For instance, one mother narrated how she wanted her daughter to learn “rabindra sangeet” but she also conceded to the idea of her learning guitar as the daughter wanted to make a career as a band artist. She shared her anxieties as a middle class Bengali trying to hold on to her cultural moorings, but also exclaimed that boys and girls of her family have shown exemplary success as models and stand-up comedians. In case of the Bengali middle class the mother appeared to take much onus in retaining the “bhadrolok” character, while allowing the popular cultural forms to seep in only after much consideration. The assimilative tendencies of the Bengali middle class alongside their keenness to retain the “bhadrolok” image has been a constant. Interestingly, I found the “bhadrolok” Bengali image being supplemented with new beliefs and ideas, without having replaced their culturally esoteric actions and thoughts. Thus changing dynamics of popular culture and its inroads into the education system surely have deep impact on the budding adolescent minds, and thereby a rippling effect on the family and community at large. In these situations, the reaction of the parents and teachers to the fast changing character

of the popular and thereby its absorption into the middle class, where principally they are situated, becomes a strong point for contestation. What would be retained as purely Bengali cultural tradition and what would be the new elements of “modern” that shall be picked up to define the new Bengali “bhadrolok” is quite varied and therefore heterologous. Interestingly, here begins the dialogue between the personal preferences of the parent and the structural changes in cultural forms. Therefore, the popular too doesn’t come across as something fixed and free of contestation. The dialectics of resistance and containment inherent in any culture gets displayed here too.

Besides, this inclusion and collaborative tendencies of the popular culture can be questioned from the stand point of *Culture Industry* (Adorno, 2001). The mass culture that gains popularity among adolescent boys and girls could be possibly seen as a means to create a false idea of sameness, making them behave and adopt similar ways. This ‘massification’ could again facilitate the market to produce standardized products and manipulate them into being potential consumers. Commodification and objectification is surely a fall out of this process and is often infested with illusive promises. Thus education system also does not remain outside its perils in neoliberal times, as observed in my study. But my claim here is not that popular is free of the tendencies to nullify individual criticality and dilute the ‘authentic’ culture. I rather pose here how popular and mass-mediated culture acts as a canvas for teachers and students to break the hierarchical barriers and share a common ground to appreciate each other with equal right and liberal values.

5.9. Summary

In this chapter I have tried to delineate how the grounds for transforming education in tune with market dynamics was already being prepared. Rapid privatization of education across the country with the promise of quality English education definitely served the interest of the emerging middle classes in the post-colonial era. The middle classes trying to secure jobs in the bureaucratic system of the country paid immense attention to acquiring requisite educational credential for their children. However, with liberalization policies being put to force this process of privatization and intrusion of market into education got further accelerated. In such times of neoliberalism, I tried to capture how education expanded its scope to accommodate wider demands of the growing market. Through observation of extracurricular practices in schools I have tried to locate how adolescent are fast turning into consumers of varied kind of services at offer in these schools. The activities that were always integral to any schooling system have now grown tantamount, including events and programs that represent a cultural overture of the deep changes that are happening at the economic and political structures of the society at large. In relation to that I have tried to understand parenting and its middle class anxieties in the face of an insecure job market. The ways in which parent-child negotiations shape the education that one avails is also evident in my work. Further I have accounted for the pedagogic transformations in relation to popular culture, which makes its thudding presence in the musical, literary and dance compositions of the school. Both parents' and teachers' role is seen to be becoming more critical in relation to grooming the adolescent boy and girl. With this framework and an ever more active continuum between the home-school-community, the mother's

role become very pivotal and at times determining. However, I have drawn attention to absence of such deep involvement on the part of the mothers from the lower income group in my previous chapter. Nevertheless, the rise of care quotient in educating adolescent has been detailed out here by revisiting pedagogical practices in public and private schools. The adolescent self that showed tendencies of liberation and assertion of identity while engaging in these extracurricular activities and programs could be recorded through subtle manifestation of gestures, use of words, throwing of speech and, poetical as well as musical renditions. All these shall be discussed in chapter 7 to locate the process of ‘self-making’ in adolescence.

Notes:

1. Embedded liberalism is a system whereby a combination of free trade and government welfare policies are deployed to tap the markets to its full potential. The objective remains to revive free trade and also to allow national governments to intervene in their economies with sufficient welfare programs for generating full employment.

Chapter 6

Rituals at school and The Adolescent Practices

Moving through a field that narrates events and experiences in the lives of adolescent girls and boys within schools, I have taken up keen interest in the activities that encompass their learning beyond the prescribed curriculum. The field has opened up a fresh discourse on learning vis-à-vis training (socialization verses social control), and this thin line of differentiation seems to get fainter as I move deeper into the fine corners and extend my discursive field, both institutionally and in public discourse. Extracurricular activities (ECA) as formulated and administered by the school authorities, either have strong mandates of the state and its higher education agencies or are catapulted by the socio-cultural demands nurtured by the market in terms of 'high-value' education. This leads to a varied experience in terms of what is enumerated and what is practiced. The exploration, thus begins at this disjuncture, upholding nuances and lacunae in the declared list of ECA, their adoption, and ultimate experiential disposition. All the schools that I visited had a well elucidated and fixed record of activities that they conducted throughout their academic year, which included celebration of Independence Day, Gandhi Jayanti, events to commemorate the Birth Anniversary of Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Foundation Day of the school, Teachers Day and Annual Sports day among others. However, all these events and the celebrations entailed do not remain uniform across schools. As discussed in previous chapters, an eschewed observance in terms of grandeur can be seen across different types of schools,

namely the private schools, missionary schools, missionary state-funded schools and public state-sponsored schools. Interestingly the constant feature that cut across all these variations is a larger belief system supporting these celebrations, guided by some grand moral imperative and parallel cultural adaptations based on their indigenous institutional affiliations. Above all, a process of ritualization is at play in all these ceremonies, often oscillating and at times overlapping between the religious and the secular. Thus, an attempt has been made in this chapter to understand this journey between the religious and secular in the lives of the adolescents as experienced through celebrations at school.

An attempt has been made to account for ethnographic experience of the rituals that are performed during Annual function day, autumn fest, Independence Day and Vidyasagar week at three schools of Kolkata, one located in Bhowanipore area, second in ballugunge and third in Chowringhee area. All these events took place during the year 2019 at several points in time. An ethnographic experience in these schools strikingly necessitated the incorporation of focused-group interview over one-to-one interview and the reasons have been discussed at length under methodology section in chapter 2. However, the prime driving force for such innovation was the ontological negotiations that gradually surfaced. Situational information was seen constantly being matched with epistemological considerations on the idea of schooling throughout the field.

6.1. Site of Research

6.1.1. School – I: Annual Day Celebration

There are few accounts which I shall use to elucidate the ritualization processes functional at schools. I would first like to talk about the annual function that I was audience to at the United Missionary School, located in Bhowanipore area of South Kolkata. This school was set in 1832 by London Missionary Society to provide education to the children of lower and middle income group residents of the city. Later on it came under the jurisdiction of Diocese of Calcutta and was funded by the Government of West Bengal. Being a Christian minority institution it wasn't a surprise to see their annual function being held at St. Paul's Cathedral of Kolkata, but the practices and programs performed were quite interesting for an annual day commemoration. The program began with a prayer song by the girls of the sixth and seventh grade. They had assembled close to the altar facing the audience/ worshippers seated on the chairs placed on both sides of the aisle moving up to the bema where the cross is ritually located. The song necessarily had reference to god and admonitions in his name. A verse from the song had very interesting reference to the 'lord' as a friend, making some common acquaintance to and finding a real life presence for his form. The verse reads like this:

Praise to the lord, who doth prosper
thy work and defend thee.
Surely his goodness and mercy
here daily attend thee;
Ponder anew
What the Almighty can do,
If with his love he be friend thee.

All the girls were dressed in checked skirts and white tops with a bow tied to their neck, though that wasn't their regular school uniform. These were dresses specially designed for the annual day program by the school authorities and were kept away to be only handed down to the girls every year for such special occasions and celebrations. Dressed in this ritual attire within the ritualized environment of the church, the girls after the prayer song held a ceremonial procession singing a hymn in praise of the lord, the school and the institutional custodian i.e. the Diocese church. The procession was led by three girls, in the center was Sudeshna Mukherjee of class XI, carrying the 7 feet long wooden cross in her hand, on her left was Piyali Das of class X with the school flag and on the right was Anjali Barman of class XII, holding the ritual lamp covered with Belgian glass case set on the edge of a long pole. The girls lined up neatly, maintaining equal distance and moving gently. They displayed a patient gait and a solemn as well as calm expression on their faces. All seem to be perfectly coordinated and an act in practice evoked in absolute synchrony with this 'pious' occasion. These girls were followed by the choir and then by the teachers, who were also dressed in a coordinated costume i.e. white saree with red border, intrinsically a cultural marker of Bengal. At the end followed the management of the school, which included the Principal, Diocese's priests, priest of Cathedral Church and Calcutta's Bishop of Diocese (Paritosh Canning Nag). After the procession the teachers' choir had a song recital (a Rabindra sangeet), the chorus of which reads like: "jogot jurey, udaar surey anando gaan baajey" (across the world echoes the music of happiness). The musical rendition was accompanied with piano in the background. There was complete silence as a sense of dedication and emotional exaltation filled the church with every

musical offering. Each song was well rehearsed and the melody produced was no less than any classical composition. The ambience within the high-raised ceilings of the church with soft light seeping through the painted glass windows was definitely one that soothed the senses. Appropriately set to awaken one to the ritual practices. All seem to be in a state of profound elation, thus making peaceful accommodation of the other in a trustworthy association.

The program moved gradually into thanks giving session and commemorating the contributions of the school and the missionaries towards girl's education in last 187 years. A prayer service was offered where verses from the bible were read out in Bengali. One of the teachers named Pratima Das read these messages aloud and the rest of the audience nodded to her service messages by saying 'Amen'. It was almost an orchestration of any Catholic prayer service with all its discipline and dedication. One very intriguing wish that is worthy of mention here reads like this:

Amader desher neta der jonno prarthana kori, bisheshoto mahamanna rashtryopati, Shri Ramnath kobind, pradhan mantri Shri Narendra Damodar Das Modi. Paschim Banger maha manyo rajjopal, Shri Jagadeep Dhankar ebong onnanno rajyer rajjopaal gon, lok sabha o Rajya Sabhar Mantri gon o Paschim Bangyaer Manoniya Mukkho Mantri Shrimati Mamata Bandopadhyay. Amader Bishop Maha Acharjya Paritosh Canning, onnanno Bhisop, Purohit o Netri barger sujyoggo parichalonaar jonno amra prarthona kori. Prabhu tomar kripay.

(We pray for the politicians and leaders of our nation, our President Ramnath kobind, Prime minister Narendra Modi, West Bengal's governor Jagadeep Dhankar, we pray for all our lok sabha and rajya sabha ministers, West Bengal's chief minister Mamata Bandopadhyay and for all priests and bishops so that they can diligently carry out their duties.)

In chorus: "Amader Prarthona srabon koro." (Lord, hear our prayer)



Fig. 5. Source: United Missionary Girls High school. Annual day celebration at St. Paul's Cathedral.

Finally, the Bishop delivers a speech to draw relevance of the annual day function of the school. He reminds the audience, which includes teachers, students and their parents, about how the United Missionaries have provided service to the people of Kolkata. He says, "ja India bhabte pareni, ta church onek khetre bhebeche" (what India could not think, the church did in many instance).

And immediately he mentions how they have never gone ahead to baptize a single child in this school. He further adds, though it is a Bengali medium school as far as curriculum deliberations are concerned, the school encourages learning and speaking of English through such activities so that the girls can cope with the needs of the present society. He reiterates "we are after all here to glorify Bengali, so no matter how much we draw teachings from bible, the purpose remains to impart the morals necessary for a good life and one of the most significant of them all remains the

attitude for sacrifice.” He drive in the need for sacrifice in personal life. He reiterates that only through sacrifice and discipline one can attain success, which in turn shall benefit the immediate family and then the larger nation and society. The goal is to keep up one’s selfless deeds.

6.1.2. School – 2: Navaratri Celebration

I happen to visit another school that had organized a fest on the eve of Druga Puja. The National High School located on Sarat Bose Road was observing ‘Navaratri’ within the premises of the school. National High School was established in 1913 as an Anglo Tamil School. The school functions under the aegis of N.R. Iyer Memorial Education Society. The school entrance wall had a banner that read: “Now in its 104th year the school aims to provide a comprehensive & value based education to its pupils at an affordable cost. The focus is on creating conscientious and responsible future citizens.” As I entered the venue I was enthralled by the decoration all over. The entrance was adorned with garlands, paper collage, streamers and glow lights, setting the mood perfectly for celebrations. However, the school had a very narrow home-like entrance and the decorations matched the informal set-up of a traditional three-storied house with an open courtyard in the center of the building. Surprisingly, the architectural details of the school were very unlike any formal one, with rooms as large as bed rooms and verandahs overlooking an open space where all the cultural programs were being conducted. As I moved inside, I was taken to the very first room where the ‘Golu’ was decorated. ‘Golu’ happens to be a wooden structure consisting of a flight of nine steps and each set of three steps

displaying idols of Goddess Lakshmi, Saraswati and Durga, respectively. This is a ritual decoration done across South India during Navaratri. The Principal of the school mentioned to me that this arrangement of ‘Golu’ is a ritual in all Tamil Brahmin households. The students had gathered around the ‘golu’ and few were making designs on the floor with powdered colours, while others were busy lighting up lamps. There was a neat coordination among the girls performing all these activities, which might not have been a learnt behavior for all of them or a common ritual back home.



Fig 6. Source: Painting by Yana Shai, student of Class X

The students had displayed their paintings and other crafts upholding the popular myths and parables relating to ‘Durga’ and the mythological belief in the victory of the good over the evil. Here too I find adolescent girls dressed in white and red border sarees and boys in white kurta pajama. Among many paintings, one stood out for both its artistic value and the agency concerned for its creation. The painting represented a woman smeared in vermillion during the ‘baron’ ritual of the goddess Durga, as done on the 10th day of the Navaratri (i.e Dashami) before the idol is taken away for immersion. The painting was made by a Buddhist girl named Yana Shai of class X. In this exhibition-cum-fest organized by the school I also found several parents coming along with their wards to view the display. One such parent was Sakhia Raza Begum, mother to a class VII boy. She was accompanied by her son to every room and all the stalls. She closely viewed all the visual narratives created by the students with regard to the festival. She said, “I have lived in

Topisa for last 40 years and have seen Durga Puja being celebrated across the city, but the small stories associated with the puja is something I came to learn here”. On being asked how she feels being at this festive occasion, she replied: “kids love to participate in these events and activities and insist that we come and see too, I also feel nice as there is something new for me. Besides, seeing the excitement among kids make me happy”. After having word with her I moved into the open courtyard for the cultural program arranged by the students. The program began with a ‘sloka’ in Sanskrit, glorifying the goddess Durga, followed by a ‘Dandiya’ dance, a typical ritual of western India. The girls dressed in traditional ‘ghagra’ (long decorated skirt worn by women) and ‘choli’ (blouse) were striking wooden sticks in a synchronous fashion, while moving in circular pattern to the rhythm of the drums. The drum was being played by Ashok Soren of class XI. His father had moved to Kolkata from Purulia with a job in the post office of Kolkata almost 20 years back. The boy seemed to be quite proficient in playing the drums that he had learnt as a part of his extracurricular engagement with the school band and NCC (National Credit Corps). The program was summed up with the arrival of the President of the school Mr. S Radhakrishnan, who carried out the ritual lamp lighting ceremony in front of the ‘Golu’ and offered his prayers to the Goddess.

Another very interesting section was the last room filled with food stalls at the extreme end of the building. Students had cooked varied kinds of delicacies back home and had brought it for sale. Food items ranged from fries, cakes to ‘Firni’ (a delicacy prepared in Muslim households on special occasions). However, there were no non-vegetarian items on offer as it was not permitted

by the school authorities. The girl who was selling ‘Firni’ was Asifa Khatun of



Fig. 7. Source: Silver Point School Exhibition.

class XI. She had asked her mother to prepare it for the fest and insisted me to have a serving for rupees 10. She expressed that she enjoys participating in the Navaratri celebrations at school as it gives her an opportunity to enjoy with her friends which she would miss back home on these days. Another boy

named Tejandra Singh had put up a soft drinks

stall. This Sikh boy’s father is employed with Uber as a driver and also owns a shop. He carried the soft drinks from the shop and made concoctions of varied kinds to sell in the fest. He narrated how he and his brother, who has also passed out from the same school, every year come to the school on Navaratri and enjoys every event. All the above celebrations and intertwined rituals observed at the school were not mere mimicking of acts. Rather the adolescent girls and boys seemed to have learnt, explored and unlearnt many of them through ritual practices within the school. The implications and ramifications could be varied and contestable, but whatever be it, a new pattern of organizing behavior among the adolescent can be traced, even if it be highly ritualistic. Thus we shall move forward to understanding the nuances of observing ritual practices to locate the meaning and relevance of the same in the lives of the adolescents.

6.1.3. School – 3: Independence Day Celebration

Schools across India celebrate Independence Day on the 15th of August every year. Celebrations are made to commemorate the ‘Red-letter Day’, much in

keeping with the larger educational mandate as handed down to the schools by the NCERT (National Council of Educational Research and Training). However, the adaption of the policies and programs take a regional character and the larger popular cultural milieu as well as the distinctiveness of the locale strongly gets reflected across both, time and space. Thus an attempt remains to observe and account for this uniform as well as distinctive narrative on nationalism and community feeling as transpired and recalibrated among the adolescent students over time in an institutional form.

I went to attend the Independence Day celebration at St. Anthony's High school located in 19, Market Street, Kolkata as early as 8 o'clock in the morning. This school operates as a unit of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Calcutta and was set up in 1865. The school was built alongside a chapel (St. Joseph's chapel) to educate the native Indians, as the then St. Xavier's and St. Joseph's Calcutta, North Point Darjeeling had been only catering to the Anglo-Indian boys. The school presently sits amidst the busy commercial area of Esplanade. The school premises is flanked by the West Bengal Food and Supply Department office on one side and the Fire and Emergency Services of West Bengal on the other. The famous 'Hog market' and other local vendors as well as shopkeepers sprawl across the area. Thus students to this school mostly come from families of these local vendors and shopkeepers who inhabit the shoddy residential buildings behind the market premises.

The celebration began with an introduction to the program by two boys from class XII, namely Mohammad Yasin and Arbaz Ahmed. It began with a slogan saying, "na pucho zamaane se ki kya humaari kahani hai, humaari pehchan to bas itni hai, ki hum Hindustani hein". (Do not ask the world about our story,

our identity is that of an Indian) After resonating a collective identity that of a 'Hindustani', they went ahead to refer India as their 'mother-land'. They read out a poem which celebrated the mother India. Saying:

Mother, I bow to thee!
rich with thy hurrying streams,
bright with orchard gleams,
cool with thy winds of delight,
dark fields waving mother of might,
mother free
mother I kiss thy feet, o
speaketh sweet and low!"

A deep sense of appreciation for the land gets recognized with one's birth in a particular piece of land and therefore the sense of reverence for the same, as commonly seen in the sub-continent that refers to the larger nation as the 'matribhumi' (motherland), worthy of worship and deification. The symbolism of the motherland is used here to transcend the regional affiliations to land, religiosity and race, thus embracing the larger territorial definitions of the nation.

To celebrate India's independence from the 'British Raj', the boys commemorated the sacrifices of the freedom fighters and immediately paralleled it with slogans that put the soldiers and the Indian army in equal footing with the former. The narrative thus built was that of a country whose security as a nation state has been ensured by the warfare system and gallant warriors at several points in history— let it be the freedom fighters like Subhas Chandra Bose or Mahatma Gandhi, whose posters were hung behind the podium, or the disbanded soldiers that the Indian army employs. They quoted

few lines from a famous song of a Bollywood movie 'lakshya' (2004), where the protagonist of the movie, a young and aimless boy, is seen finding purpose in life by joining the Indian Army. The lines read:

kandho se milte hai kandhe,
kadmo se kadam milte hai,
hum chaltein hain jab aise to,
dil dushman ke hiltey hai.

(When we march with shoulders high,
And tap our feet together, enemies shudder)

Thus recognizing the enemy of the nation remains one the prime factors in understanding freedom, be it in terms of the British colonizers or the idea of foreign invaders and threats. This sense of glorification and triumph continued with deliverances reiterating the pride symbolically embedded in the national flag. The two boys Yasin and Arbaz exchanged views while compering and say,

Arbaz, is tiranga ko hum aaj subah itna maan de rahe hai, jagah jagah par shaan se ise fehraa rahein hai, par afsos sham tak yahi tiranga sadkon par, kono me fenka, kuchla aur rondha jaayega. Ha Yasin, aisa hi hota hai! Isliye hum sabse nivedan kartein hai ki, tiraange ko sahi tareeke se uttar kar sammanpurvak rakhein.

(Today we are hoisting our national flag with such pride, but unfortunately by evening it will be lying on the street and trampled upon. Yes, Yasin, we should take care not to do the same and preserve our national flag with utmost care)

teen rango ka nahi vastra,
ye Dhwaj desh ki shaan hai
har bharatiya ke dil ka swaabhimaan hai
yahin hai ganga, yahi hai Himalaya,
yahin Hind ki jaan hai
tiranga ke rang me ranga hua
yeh apna Hindustan hai.

(This tri-color garb is the pride of our nation, pride of every Indian. Here is the river Ganga and the Himalayan Mountains, the life of the country. Colored in white, green and saffron is our Hindu nation)

Thus the program that began with celebration of the Pan-Indian patriotic sentiments as generated by the larger public discourse gradually trickled down to upholding the more realistic ideals of freedom and nation building, like democracy and equality, in the minds of the adolescents. The adolescent is commemorating the valor and struggles of making a nation on one hand and on the other, gets introduced to conditions for making a self-identity keeping in tune with the popular discourses of the region. Ideas of low self-esteem and complacency of the people is contrasted with the heightened spirit of the patriots, asking them to borrow the same spirit in their everyday lives. Yasin says to Arbaz in this regard, “Arbaz, humare vidyalay ke adhikaanksh bachche bhi is maansik rukavatoon se grast hai, unhone na hi apne Jeevan ka lakshay tayy kiyahai, naa hi mehnat karna chaatey hain. Hum mann lagakar padhenge, utsukta se nayi cheezey seekhenge, tabhi hum kuch ban payenge, apney parivaar ke sapno ko pura kar payenge aur desh ke vikass me yogdaan kar payenge.” (Most children of our school are also facing similar mental barriers. They haven’t been able to fix their goals in their lives yet and therefore do not work hard to achieve them. We need to study hard, learn new things with full interest, only then can we become something worthy and fulfil the dreams of our families.)

This narrative of responsibility towards the immediate family and larger nation continues through several other mentions that have often been seen getting echoed in other policies and ideals propagated widely. They pledged to not use

abusive words and be polite in their speech, thereby not hurting the sentiments of the others. Besides, they also mentioned that they need to take the 'Swaachh Bharat Abhiyan' of the government forward to make the country a beautiful place to live in. These promises reflect the immediate cultural and social crisis as well as demands of the environment that the adolescent is growing up in, thereby the collective motivations are nurtured and sense of discipline instilled.

There were use of songs from Bollywood movies that roared in patriotism either through songs or the storyline itself. From songs like "mera joota hai japani, ye patlun Inglestani, sar pe laal topi Rusi, phir bhi dil hai Hindustani" (from the movie 'Shri 420', released in 1955, the song says that my shoes are from Japan, trousers English, hat made in Russia, but my heart is Indian) the evocative lyrics highlights the transition from colonization to internationalism and India becoming a sovereign state. Another Bollywood number sung was "Jinmein ho junoon-junoon, woh boondein laal lahu ki, Yeh sab tu mila mila le, Phir rang tu khila khila le, Yeh sab tu mila mila le, Phir rang tu khila khila le, aur mohe tu rang de basanti yara" (from the movie 'Rang de Basanti', released in 2006, the song says, take the blood from the high-spirited youth and mix them all to produce the saffron colour of the Indian flag) thus a strong sense of commitment towards the 'safforization', consciously or unconsciously, gets displayed. Each song reproduced the ideas, goals and ideals of nationalism as manufactured by Bollywood from time to time through its popular songs that reaches the masses in greater ease than any other source of knowledge.

The program was wrapped up with a play in Hindi titled 'Aye Watan, Tere Liye' (oh Nation! For you). The play depicted an old and suffering man having four dutiful sons, each of different religious faith. They are shown to have immense

love and commitment towards their father until one day the hoodlums of the community and the corrupt politician tries to divide them on the basis of their faith. The hoodlums in the play are represented as the 'Islamic militants' and fundamentalists in both their attire and attitude. Besides, the four religion represented are Hinduism, Islam, Christianity and Sikhism, with no mention of the other religious groups that make a reasonable population of India. The play leaves a message that the nation can be protected only by doing away with religious differences and regional factions. Hence projecting an image of nationalism that necessarily overlaps with the religious spirit of the communities. Secondly, it also culturally defines other religions and finds it imperative to locate them in relation with and contrast to the Hindi-Hindu culture, though toned down and coloured in secular ideals. The play uses popular rhetoric such as, "jiskey haaton se tiranga na sambhala jai, unhe sansad se nikala jai" (those who cannot protect the national flag should leave the parliament) and "gaddar, hindustaan chod de" (disloyal must leave the nation), drawing a parallel to religious splits and political incumbency. Thus, keeping with the larger nationalist aims of the country and its mention in educational policies, the school seems reproduce the ideas of nationalism with much exuberance. However, Adolescents' enthusiasm and emotive excesses are tapped to make the Independence Day celebration an occasion for expressing their creative selves and untamed imagination. The bubbling energy and active minds are channelized to find expression through popular art form and musical extravaganza during these events. They weave in the regional cultural specificities and ethnic distinctiveness into their representation of the country and patriotism by reading out 'shayari' (urdu poems) and humming songs

written by Tagore. Their enthusiasm in carrying out the ritual functions of the day was symbolic more of their collective exalted spirit than the religious or secular ideals.

6.2. The Nationalist Aim of Education

Nationalist training and percolation of citizenship ideals have always gained prominence in Indian education ever since 1947. The post-independent state took a proactive step towards propagating the image of a plural society and multicultural fervor, as a reactionary movement towards colonialism. The Indian National Congress with its centralizing tendencies promoted a political nationalism, trying to formulate educational policies and texts that would articulate identities blended in religion, language and ethnic ways. However, the nationalist discourse echoing the collective suffering and oppression in the hands of the British colonizers marked the point of departure for any kind of collective representation. Education and its real-life disparities were always garbed under the much-needed inclusivity. An experiment was on to reconcile two opposing ideas, one of building the nation into a singular homogenous socio-cultural entity and on the other accommodating the multicultural forces. And this had to have an overarching impact on education with different political parties coming to power with contrasting ideologies. Jayaram (2015) said rightly,

In no state, therefore, is the educational sphere free from claims and contestations concerning recognition and incorporation of diversities, even as each state strives to attain some uniformity across within its

boundary. That is, both at center and the state levels there is constant balancing between multicultural demands and unitary tendencies in the sphere of education. (Jayaram, 2015: 288)

Nationalist practices and programs appear to be both ritualistic and deeply ingrained in the curriculum. The texts and policies at various points have been formulated and reformulated for the realization of national aspirations and building a homogenous national identity. The anxiety around social conflict arising based on regional, linguistic and religious loyalties fueled by economic disparity between the rich and poor, rural and urban, coaxed several governments to design appropriate educational framework to meet such challenges and foster social integration. With rising demand for educational benefits and urban employment, the central and state government had to revise their educational policies to appease the public demand for suitable educational facilities. Any revision had to keep in mind the need long of requisite training, mitigating the threat of potential social conflict and divisiveness. The Kothari Commission Education Report of 1966 echoed similar concerns and saw a threat to the unity of the nation due to partial and disparate socio-economic growth. In such situations regional assertion for recognition was seen as a problematic. The commission expressed its anxieties over compromised educational practices with regard to national integration. It states that sectional identities based on local, regional, linguistics and religion could not be nurtured compromising the national solidarity as many states were into (GOI 1966: 9). Following these secular commitments of the Nehruvian times came a new hope for democratic education in 1980s. The National Policy of Education 1986 stressed upon imbibing values of secularism and creating a common cultural

national identity through education, while transferring education to the concurrent list to strengthen the role of both the state and the center. The policy talks of a core curriculum based on India's cultural heritage and constitutional commitments, thereby hoping that:

These elements of the core curriculum will cut across subject areas and will be designed to promote values such as India's common cultural heritage, egalitarianism, democracy and secularism, equality of the sexes, protection of the environment, removal of social barriers, observance of the small family norm and inculcation of the scientific temper (NPE, 1986: 4)

Thus we see how the orders of the government transfuses the social need to regulate and reorganize with the spirit of nationalism, using education as the best promising platform. The ideas of nationalism that got propagated at various point in time always found sanctions under the umbrella of social and political motivations and corresponding pleas. But what is observed is much varied and enmeshed with overlaps between the prescribed and practiced. That's what has been distinct in my study of the rituals being observed in the schools under the banner of extracurricular activities. To mention of such nationalist ideological training, one surely has to mention the present shift to 'cultural nationalism' from 'political nationalism'. The rise of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) as the single largest party in the center and its articulation of nationalism in religious-cultural terms saw significant revival of 'religious imaginings' as discussed by Benedict Anderson (1983: 19). This Hindu majoritarianism in the garb of cultural nationalism often leads to contestations over issues concerning ethnicity, religion, community and thereby education (Jayaram, 2015: 296-97).

Thus contentious references and representation of a specific community in texts, curriculum and extracurricular becomes a concern. The representation of heroes and stalwarts from a particular community with different cultural significance and symbolic meaning in the school text and activities can never be universalized under a common majoritarian nationalist interpretation, whether political or religious. The local histories and regional collective memory, along with the spirit and fervor assigned to iconic characters, seem to always nudge its head and add voices of assimilation or variance to the larger nationalist imagery. It is here that I would like to mention what has been discussed in the NEP (2020) with relation to fostering the idea of India:

Knowledge of India” will include knowledge from ancient India and its contributions to modern India and its successes and challenges, and a clear sense of India’s future aspirations with regard to education, health, environment, etc. These elements will be incorporated in an accurate and scientific manner throughout the school curriculum wherever relevant; in particular, Indian Knowledge Systems, including tribal knowledge and indigenous and traditional ways of learning, will be covered and included in mathematics, astronomy, philosophy, yoga, architecture, medicine, agriculture, engineering, linguistics, literature, sports, games, as well as in governance, polity, conservation. Specific courses in tribal ethno-medicinal practices, forest management, traditional (organic) crop cultivation, natural farming, etc. will also be made available. An engaging course on Indian Knowledge Systems will also be available to students in secondary school as an elective. Competitions may be held in schools for learning various topics and subjects through fun and

indigenous games. Video documentaries on inspirational luminaries of India, ancient and modern, in science and beyond, will be shown at appropriate points throughout the school curriculum (GOI, 2020: 17)

Thus we see a tendency for subtle revival of the traditional ways of learning and living in India in an attempt to recreate a new idea of India. Thus training for instilling nationalist sentiment comes in different forms, codes and alternative concerns, having different political goals to fulfil for different party in governance. But the spirit that actually builds is not always as per prescription and reveals a lot of overlapping and cross-cutting dimensions due to issues of feasibility and functional justification.

Throughout my fieldwork I saw this regional spirit and the psycho-social aspect of identity infusing rich flavor to the larger nationalist imaginings as handed-down over time politically by the nation-state. Echoing ideas of democracy as represented in the songs of Tagore to narrating stories of bravery around Subhas Chandra Bose, famously known as Netaji. Likewise, the state government of West Bengal observed 'Vidyasagar Week' from 20th September 2019 to 26th September 2019, commemorating the 200th birth year of Ishwar Chandra Visyasagar. Schools of all boards and medium across the state were ordered to carry out cultural programs, photography and drawing competition, essay writing exercise commemorating the birth anniversary. Interestingly, the schools I visited observed this week long program with rituals that aligned with glorifying the contribution of Vidyasagar towards the development of the society, therefore the development of nation. Speeches were made mentioning his contribution towards women education and widow remarriage, making him the beacon of light for the nation. Most programs were articulated to endorse

social responsibility that the great man had observed towards education, community, therefore the nation-state at large. Patriotic songs were sung in several schools and dance recitals were performed glorifying local culture. Thus a mix of local cultural history and the political narrative built along those lines definitely decides the course of school programs and policies. However, the larger imagination of the country does not fail to occupy a prominent backdrop, even if ornamental and structural. The mandatory rituals of observing certain nationalistic events and activities as prescribed by the center and the state governments become articulated and operational via the local cultural beliefs and practices. The multiculturalism that seems to be a very challenging task for education to fulfill at times, possibly becomes significant through these ritual activities organized by the schools. Though the overt aim remains to fulfill ideological and political functions of the state. The activities often seem to absorb the adolescence into a euphoria of creative expression, providing grounds for dissolution of the dogmatic and ideological excesses. Thus both secular and religious rituals get redefined when practiced within the school premises and often provide some cross-cultural experience, if not promote and successfully propagate multiculturalism. In the following sections I shall discuss this ritualization process and how it works in the school environment.

6.3. Implications of Observing ‘Observable’ Practices

Locating rituals and finding a system of meaning reinstating or opposing an abstract belief system confronts us with the thought-action dichotomy continuously. The conceptual blueprints and mental constructs of beliefs, myths

and symbols emerge to inspire activities, while they aren't activities themselves. Rituals often end up being perceived as thoughtless, habitual and mimetic acts, having secondary and mere physical expression to prior logical ideas. Therefore, Edward Shils (1968) says "beliefs could exist without rituals; rituals, however, could not exist without beliefs." (Shils 1968: 736.) Yet despite the secondary nature of rituals, it plays a kind of functional-structural mechanism to reintegrate thought-action dichotomy of rituals. Durkheim in his *The Elementary Forms of The Religious Life* introduces rituals as the means through which a community generates, experiences and confirms the beliefs and ideals as real. (Bell 1992: 20). A dialectic mediation occurs between the subjective individual condition and the communal order through collective representations as generated and appropriated by actors in practice of the ritual. Thus rituals become means through which both the perception and behavior of the individual is socially appropriated. Beside, a further extension could be seen where ritual possibly becomes an expression of communal unity in opposition to the constraints and competition. Ritual offers a creative 'antistructure' that produces acts and forms of action in opposition to the hierarchies, traditional forms and given social order (Turner, 1966). This dichotomy of thought and action that could be understood better with the lens of a dialectical mediation between the two leads to 'homologisation' of the ritual 'observer' and the ritual 'actor', however keeping an implicit opposition between the conceptual and dispositional categories alive.

Moving along this dichotomy and dialectic invocation, I turn to the discursive field that I have been part of and begin to perceive of a culture that gets produced, reproduced and reformulated through meanings assigned by practice

of rituals in a fresh context. The school premises remain a sub context within a larger context of plural exchanges and innovations, and also a supra contextual unit reiterating meanings of the varied cultural symbols while gaining new meanings through practice of culture. The students, teachers and the institutional agents come with their respective indigenous religious faith and beliefs, and thus their cognitive and dispositional aspects for ritual performances. Here at the school they confront varied set of other religious belief and thus their corresponding rituals. Often they engage in performance of these not so 'native' rituals, generating possibly a new meaning or transposing the meaning generated through their experiences at school on their earlier ones to give way to a common chain of explanation for cultural phenomena. Thus the cultural life in performance projects a distinction between ethos (moral and aesthetics aspect of culture, and people's attitude towards their world and themselves) and worldview (cognitive aspects of culture, people's comprehensive idea of existence). (Geertz, 1973: 89, 98) Clifford Geertz suggests that rituals per se as ceremonial, dramatized, material enactment of a system of symbols reflect the moods and motivations as well as the general conceptions of order of things that men formulate to meet and reinforce. Therefore, rituals "not only are models of what they believe, but also models for the believing of it." (Geertz, 1973: 114) Here comes the third dimension of the detached observer or the researcher of any ritual performance, rendering a shift in the object of analysis from ritual thought to performances that merge conceptual forms with practical dispositions (one arising out of needs of a particular time and space). The participant in a ritual act experiences an integration of their own conceptual framework and dispositional imperatives,

and thus observer here gets the cultural vantage point to think over and make meaning of the ‘meaningfulness’ in the ritual act. This I believe guides me through in contextualizing rituals in a school set up that cuts across varied belief systems to fuse into a ritual action that necessarily upholds a single thought-action/conceptual-dispositional dialectics. For instance, the observance of the prayer service in the case 1 school consists of participants who come with their respective religious belief system but while carrying out the rituals at the church they give rise to a fresh meaning of rituals by converging the continuous thought across religions about any such pious practices with actions specific to the church. Here I make the methodological journey into engaging myself with ‘practice’ so that I can move back and forth between the theoretical explanations of religious structures and practicing of the same in the given context.

The theories of ritual and their methodological underpinnings ultimately turn our focus to the performance of ritual action. This emphasis on practice undoubtedly is a position that helps in transcending the methodological divide between collectivism-individualism, objectivism-subjectivism and often abstraction-empiricism. Embarking upon a study of rituals in a non-religious set up like school, performance study becomes very significant in terms of the ceremonial activities of the micro institutions and the macro social festivals that impinge upon them. Thus rituals that are enacted in the social cosmos by specific communities seem to be replicated and at times transformed within the school premises, but the traces to the larger practices continue to affirm itself with both expressive and instrumental ends in its folds. Thus there could be no denying that the institutional formality and regularization of rituals in their closed set up open up ways for symbolic, communicative and expressive

transmission of collective messages to others as to oneself, and also fulfill the instrumental goals of ‘social catharsis’¹ or social resistance via rituals. Practice in these terms remains an irreducible term for human activity, individual or collective, and entails essential features. Firstly, it is situational, having influences of other situations but not mere effect of those determining situations. In fact, on a deeper analysis of the ceremonial and festive events of the schools I see the influences of the other situations coming to exist only through the activities conducted by the schools and at times an extension of them (structural influences). Secondly, practice is necessarily strategic and seeks to maximize advantages. The practical adoption of ways by the adolescent and their instructors (teachers, school authorities and parents) to observe and fulfill the symbolic and instrumental functions of rituals gives way to a logic of economy, which might not be always stated or inscribed in its initiation. Practice, therefore turn out to be a constant play of contextually most precise schemes— as Bourdieu says, “The intentionless invention of regulated improvisations.” (Bourdieu, 1971: 79) Taking it forward from this embeddedness of practice in context and thereby its tactful innovation with respect to time, we can encounter rituals emitting overlapping experiences in indeterminate and equivocal conditions. The school moving into the church for celebrating its foundation day program, commemorating the glory of its institution, while organizing rituals intrinsic to the faith and spirit of the church simultaneously, leads to misconceptions about the limits and constraints of the practice. But these misconceptions are important cues for tracing the blurry line between the secular-religious, sacred-profane in its real life dynamics. Therefore, as we recognize these features of ‘practice’², the force of negotiations and

motivational agency brings forth the third feature, i.e. practice as a social drama reproducing or reconfiguring the vision of social order. The dynamics of the ritual practices and observation of same invites one into peering through the ideological formulations, its discharge and circumvention in a vital institution for 'man-making' like the school. Thus the science of practice as understood by Bourdieu and invoked through a dialectical method of conceptualizing and enacting offers an object of analysis (i.e. Practice/ritual), which is dialectic in nature and thereby the method is constituted in the object itself.

6.3. Controlling, ritualizing and adolescents' Embodied selves

Ritualization³ as a way of acting makes some activities more privileged, therefore distinguished from others. Various culturally specific strategies emerge to assign ritual status to some actions, thus distinguishing the sacred from the profane. Such ritualization process gives way to mechanisms for social control and thus accepted modes of and models for social relations. In both the schools the rituals ordered everything into a hierarchy. Including the space, conduct and relationships. The adolescent girls and boys who come with a set of beliefs and ritualized experiences from their homes, confronted a new set of rituals and an extension of the same at times at the school. But whether new or replicated, the hierarchies of control seem to remain pertinent. The primary ritual of holding the prayer service or placing the Golu in school 1 and school 2, respectively, having priests or headman (necessarily a Brahmin) of the community to conduct the acts most sacred comes as reinforcement of such ritual hierarchies. The social relations are therefore structured based on the

culture of rituals that emerge around the notion of sacred. However, the rituals find a situational twist to itself and adopt certain improvisation, if not radical innovations. The carrying of the cross by Sudeshna Mukherjee of class XI and the Lamp by Anjali Burman of the same class reveals the engagement of adolescents from other faith into acts that are ritually symbolic for dissolving boundaries of a religious community. Thus rituals demand an exactness of gestures and a sense of sincerity to be enacted in a particular time and place, providing an authoritative model of control for the performers. Adolescents become very crucial agents in such participations as it transmits through and into them a moral code via structures of 'invisible control'⁴. Hence ritualization is also concerned with nurturing of the body within a structured space around fixed rituals. And this whole process happens silently under the symbolic acts of rituals.

Bodily symbolism that rituals create by demanding purification, decoration and disposition qualify the body as a social object. Thus the adolescent girls being dressed in clothes specifically designed for the ritualistic ceremonies at the church, their ordering themselves in a clear and defined pattern and maintaining a slow gait as well as wearing a solemn expression on their faces while walking down the aisle with the cross, their dressing up in ritual costume of a 'Dandiya' dance, decorating their bodies and transforming into Krishna or Durga; all turns them into embodiments of social experiences. Thus the construction of cultural reality permeates the all pervasiveness of the body, which in turn gives way to bodily experiences that make meaning of the social. Mark Johnson (1987) claims that "the indispensable forms of imagination" that emerges from bodily experience profoundly affect human reasoning. Thus the rituals and its

corresponding belief systems are embodied and predisposed through the bodies of the adolescent boys and girls, creating meaning of the ritual by engaging and internalizing them via the body. The girl carrying the cross in the church when asked about her understanding of the sacredness of the act she was carrying out within the church, she replied: “I do not touch the ‘thakur er ashon’⁵ or perform any of the ritually pure acts without taking a bath or during my menstrual cycle, so while I’m here at the church I do keep in mind that the altar where Jesus stands is a pabitra (pure) space and the cross is an object representing God.” A practice that gives way to a normative frame for behaving in a certain way also inculcates values that travel across faith and particularistic belief systems. Ideas about manifestation and organization of the body is fed by ritual experiences in the formative stages of adolescence when the body is already under major physiological changes, impacting the social transformations thereafter. Therefore, the experiences that make up ‘social body’ in turn prepares the body for further ritualistic activities across life, making the social come alive in varied cultural drama. Irving Goffman (1962) examined this molding of the body and production of a memory device in turn that organize society based on cultural principles. The boys who dress up and represent themselves as Lord Krishna in the ‘Dandiya’ dance have an embodied realization of the mythico-ritual practices around “lord Krishna” and therefore go ahead to make meaning of the associated patterns of cultural and social beliefs emerging therein. Thus Bourdieu writes, that it is through the ‘Practical mastery’ that the ritualized body develops a sense of rituals within a structured and structuring environment. (Bourdieu, 1977: 91) The creation of a ritualized space within the school premises or moving into a ritually classified space for celebration of a belief

system (in this case, both, religious and secular) often produces experiences that impress upon the bodies of the participants, at times reinstating the collective order and power of the community that he or she is born into as well as the ones they move into in their lifetime. “It is in the dialectical relationship between the body and structured space, one finds the form par excellence of the structural apprenticeship which leads to the embodying of the structures of the world, that is, the appropriating by the world of a body thus enabled to appropriate the world.” (Bourdieu, 1984: 89) In fact, in both the schools the girls and boys develop an agency even within the controls of the ritual structure and make negotiations between the strict hierarchical binaries of sacred-profane, purity-pollution, inside-outside and others. The creation of a situational, thus a temporal ritualized environment that weaves within its fold all institutional demands of the host, makes room for ritualized agents as well to create and recreate rituals in a plurality of beliefs. These beliefs are reproduced, reinstated and often reinvented through the embodied ritualistic practices of the adolescents in an alternative site of socialization i.e. the school and give way to multiple cultural interpretation of their expanding social world. The adolescent with their yet unresolved definition of the bodily existences, find this interlocution between the body and the ritual practices as a fresh platform to socially assign meaning to the varied statuses and roles that lay before them.

6.4. Collective Performances and ‘Effervescence’ in

Adolescence

Exuberance in ceremonies and celebrations are integral to all situations, ritually marking possibly all events of a life cycle. But there are rituals which might not be always performed with a classified purpose to fulfil or any universal meaning to make. Such are rituals that emerge out of a group’s interactional dynamics. Within the schools and in their celebrations a heightened emotional expression with regards to their allegiance to the school, the authorities, the nation and the institution’s religious custodians could be constantly observed. The prayers or the songs were soaked in gratitude and total admonition of all. Students, teachers and parents in collective spirit participated in each and every event abiding by all the necessary schemes that the rituals invited within the ritualized space of the school during the celebrations. There was profound cohesion and synchrony in whatever they did. The collective experience not only showed undeterred acceptance of all symbolic representations but also inculcated strong affectual bonding. Reassertion of the larger value system and coherence in its interpretation as well as adoption helped the adolescent socialize into a culture that accommodates new meanings for many of their old ritual experiences and qualifies older meanings through fresh experiences of the same. The formal authoritarian structure of the institution is no way compromised but a kind of informal break away within the same structures are facilitated to ascertain the embedded values and at times bring in normative forces to give it a cross-cultural significance for the budding minds. Victor Turner, the British

Anthropologist, rightly elucidates how rituals concomitantly allows structuring of value in a community while accommodating cathartic functions and at times provide safety valves through periodic injunctions in form of antistructure or redemptive practices. He says, “Norms and values, on the one hand, become saturated with emotion, while the gross and basic emotions become ennobled through contact with values. The irksomeness of moral constraint is transformed into the love of virtue.” (Turner, 1967: 30) At times ritualization through various modes of celebrations gives birth to habits of negotiation, adjustment and therefore acceptance of the unfamiliar. The adolescent confronts contrast in meaning of the rituals in external display and within oneself upon thoughtful reflections, as during the glorification of ‘their’ God vis-à-vis ‘My’ God and ‘their’ ceremonies in contrast to ‘my’ ceremonies. But all seem to dilute, if not diverge, in the moments of entertaining performances through music and dance that are organized with high vigor and vitality by all. The psychosocial dimension of the ritual often impacts the adolescent in a way to impress their minds with experiences that are both pleasurable and antidotal for aggressive impulses. It can be debated that the ritual exercises control the adolescences’ affective state to repress actions and expressions or at least mold them into socially desired and uncontested ones. For instance, the nationalist fervor that got reproduced through the Independence Day celebration surely was in all measure to guide them into a certain way of feeling and thinking about nation and becoming a nationalist. However, I’m making no attempt to not recognize this molding or repressive thesis, but only trying to uphold the communication of positive values through ritual performances that often integrates the adolescent with the universe of other values that make life meaningful for them.

When such ceremonial gathering and celebrations gives rise to a strong multicultural experience within a cross cultural context like a school, it becomes a source of affectual collective memory that harbors a uniform and unifying moral order.

What is true of practices is true of beliefs. The state of effervescence in which the assembled faithful find themselves is translated outwardly by exuberant motions that are not easily subordinated to ends that are defined too strictly. They escape, partly without destination, displaying themselves merely for the sake of displaying themselves, and taking pleasure in what amount to games.” (Durkheim, 1912: 385)

Thus the energetic and vibrant adolescents are motivated by strong bonds of friendship in a milieu of ‘collective effervescence’, entering into close relations with each other and working together for decorating the ritual space, initiating collective ferment in musical deliberations, rejoicing in dance recital, organizing group lunch or simply dressing up in their respective ethnic costumes to uphold the communal feeling and represent their cultural identities while endorsing the festive spirit. Durkheim writes in *The Elementary Forms*: “when we find ourselves at the heart of an assembly animated by a common passion, we become capable of sentiments and actions of which we are not capable when reduced to our own efforts” (Durkheim 1912: 209-211). He thus mentions of ‘creative’ and ‘re-creative’ functions of rituals and ceremonies, where to maintain the re-creative attribute often parties (economic or political) come together to refurbish their faith by representing and contrasting them in common. Thus the common bonds made and the dissimilar practices identified builds a scheme in the collective memory that more or less offers an ideological

and moral grooming, cutting across ritual practices of varied religious and ethnic factions. Therefore, reverence for the almighty in ritual offering, authoritarian control and universal love for the other are few of the common motivations that find common grounds in all religious and secular rituals of the school. Thereby emerges a culture of *bonhomie* unique to the adolescent lives in practicing these rituals at school. The peer network gets solidified through such ritual celebrations and promotes secular accommodation and subversive use of these traditional-religious rituals of the institutions of school and society at large. Though the institutions of knowledge production and citizenship training might have their designated pedagogic prescriptions of disciplining through such rituals (both apparently secular and apparently religious), the spillover effect of such emotionally engaging activities are quite evident in the behavior of adolescents. In Gore's words, the "regimes of truth" may provide a very useful tool for analyzing pedagogical discourse defining pedagogy as the process of knowledge production embedded with disciplinary powers.

These powers function through technologies of the self, making strategies for self-disciplining via techniques and practices that adolescent students absorb unconsciously to mold themselves and others. These technologies of the self are enacted socially as much as they are at the "site of the body; eyes, hands, mouth, movement". Therefore, we can say that "pedagogies may produce particular political regimes of the body" and such "technologies of the bodily self can also be understood as manifestations of the internal (mental) self – how people identify themselves. (Gore, 1993: 60)

6.5. The Religious-Secular dynamics in Adolescent Experience

There is however no denying of ideological reproduction through schooling and its pedagogic indulgence in practices of control. Several thinkers like Durkheim (1961), Louis Althusser (1971) Bourdieu (1978) and Basil Bernstein (1996) have highlighted the socializing function of schooling in making moral beings and at times to the extent of manipulating the individual consciousness and controlling them ideologically. Pierre Bourdieu has always perceived school as the repository and nurturer of culture, an institution to provide sacredness to culture and thereby reproducing it as a marker of distinction. Basil Bernstein (1977) in his explanation of pedagogic discourse throws light upon state and its regulatory mechanisms for framing educational codes to perpetuate control. In view of these positions one can reflect upon the contestations that have always arisen regarding religious instructions in Indian missionary schools. Christian missionaries have made a remarkable presence as far as education is concerned. But inevitably there has been the thesis of indoctrination into the faith of the religious Christian community both in research and popular ontological deliberations on education. Often these have transpired through the populace with varied explanations, mostly in the tone of religious intrusion and control. “Apart from turning communalism, defined as the ‘antagonistic mobilization of one religious community against another’ (Ludden, 1996: 1), into a perennial problem, the majoritarian ‘cultural nationalism’ has resulted in contestations over every issue involving religion, including education.” (Jayaram, 2015: 296)

The Christian educational institutions invariably impart religious instructions to their Christian students by offering special classes to read verses from bible and

invite them to special prayer mass. “The non-Christian students are offered a veiled and less objectionable form of religious instructions, euphemistically called ‘moral education’.” (Jayaram, 2015: 301)

However, while looking at the schooling process through the lens of programs and practices that lie outside the curriculum one surely finds similar traces of training the ‘subject’, but there can also be no denying that these activities provide scope for innovation and escape from the clutches of the structuring processes. However, parallel to this thesis of control and indoctrination, there grew the resistance thesis through works of scholars like Henry A. Giroux (1994), recognizing the agency of the students in their learning processes and making of selves. Thus the reflective and critical voices of the subjects of the system of school education often lies beyond the textbook. It would be a mistake to find these voices anywhere else other than the domain of extracurricular activities where both the educators and the learners are at equal play in fulfilling the herculean task of training. Krishna Kumar says that the students’ experience of the truth through textbooks are underplayed by experiences of the same outside of texts and he quotes Ayesha Jayal on reproductive inabilities of textbooks: “The gems of wisdom contained in textbooks rarely survive the writing of the exam. But with help from state-controlled media, the lessons learned at school and college serve as the alphabet and the grammar that makes psyches literate in the idioms of national ideology” (Kumar, 2001: 65). Thus the rituals observed at all the three schools mentioned above, with their high dosage of religious innuendo, also lie at perils of subjective interpretation and contextual maneuvering to unravel many unintended implications and ground breaking functionalities.

The ritual practices and the misrecognition of its aims in education often open up the field for varied interpretation and debates over its utility. The festival organized for Navaratri within the school offered students non-religious ways to express themselves through display of their painting, setting up stalls to sell their ethnic foods and uphold their cultural distinctiveness by decorating oneself in their ethnic dresses as well as exchanging cultural distinctiveness in forms of dance and music. Interestingly, there were certain cross-overs too, with cases like the Buddhist girl making a portrait of a woman smeared in vermillion. The girl being a Buddhist possibly has no religious offering in mind while sketching this image. But surely she grew some strong attachment with the festivities that she has been observing over years. Thus the ritual practices of playing with Vermillion before the emersion of the goddess has had enduring and gratifying impression on her mind about a woman and her coming of age. Secondly, the myth and its interpretation of the win of good over evil runs across time and space much like any mythology does, only having transformed in its objective representation to become more relevant, ensuring its survival. The girl too has been wrapped by the greater narratives of a cultural tradition and made way for local practices of little traditions to continue the reciprocal exchanges between the two beyond the religious confinements. Thirdly, the leisurely moments of her life offers her the creative space to reimagine the goddess and her multiple interpretations, both religious and secular. The interface between the two (religious-secular) is something that the girl learns through her creative moorings in a culturally liberating space. Thus the woman next to the goddess and the 'popular' imaginings around celebration of woman power gets reiterated into the scope of popular culture, feeding a parallel market-mediated idea about

the celebration. The adolescent girl being a potent customer of the mass-mediated products doesn't escape these daunting ideals. She learns many things secular while being planted temporarily into a context of religious rituals, while also being at a risk of picking up few religious misgivings under the garb of secular.

Here I would like to focus on the secular practices and its emerging meanings, moving away from the constitutional state-religion dissociative definition. Hindu Nationalism seem to have overshadowed any discussion of religion in India and problematized the communal politics and conflicting identities in that light. Though they still remain pertinent, in view of state's ideological apparatus (Althusser, 1971) operating in its full swing to manipulate the masses on divisive principles, the inter-religious or pluralistic pledges made in everyday lives of co-habitation are of equal significance. Thus the ceremonial ritual performances and celebrations in the schools discussed above brings forth instances like Arifa khatun, who puts up a 'firni' stall to become a part of the event and Sakia Raza Begum, who sees her presence at the fest as a good platform for making meaningful engagement with her son in a multicultural ambience. In fact, Anjali Barman's (the lamp bearer of the church) statement has been very intriguing; she says, "Ishwar to ek, tai ami to bari te sondhey di aar ekhane lamp ta niye jaachi. Aar amay teacher ra khub pochondo korey, ami school er sob kichu tei onkso grohon kori" (God is one, so I worship him at home as I worship him here. Besides, I am quite liked by the teachers and therefore participate in all activities of the school). Her faith and ideas of spirituality seems to cut across the ritualistic observance of two different religions. Reservations do remain about her statement being a document of

media-generated faith, thus a popular rhetoric. But the fact that it has coaxed her to act in certain way hints at the larger imperatives of religious negotiations. These instances help delineate secular in two modes of operation: firstly, the non-religious or non-communal beliefs that arise out of our routine yet non-habitual actions of everyday. Secondly, a universal ethic emerging from rituals that guide one's understanding and therefore engagement with any ritual expression of any other religiosities. The second being more foundational for a pluralistic cultural milieu in any society at a given point of time. Based on these two micro approaches towards secular, I have found adolescent girls and boys exhibiting 'scalar religiosities'⁶ (Copeman & Quack, 2019) whereby they display relative and scaling affiliations in terms of the boundaries of their respective religious belief and practices. A significant pattern of behavior upholding such scalar religiosities may also tell tale about the identity-class nexus that is at play. The students of both the schools were from lower middle class families having good exposure to popular discourses on secularism and religion generated through media and the market. Thus, 'religious pluralism is the normal condition in which religious subjectivities are formed, nudging to look into 'how religious diversity occurs at different scales of social life'. (Das, 2014: 82)

However, the prayers loaded with wishes to keep the leader of the country and state in good health; the Bishop's mention of their missionary goals to uplift the society, upholding Bengali as a cultural community in the presence of the counsellor of the ward where the school is located— makes me skeptical about completely abandoning the state-religion hegemony in appropriating our cultural adaptations. The use of Church's premises for an annual function of the

school and then glorification of an anti-conversion bearing in the institutional policy diverts one's attention to 'not-so secular' ideologies in circulation. The preeminence of ritual practices with respect to ethnic and religious affiliations of the governing bodies of the schools hint at the dominance of a particular faith in an 'ideally' secular institution. Extending the argument forward a similar narrative from an ethnographic account of a Delhi-based school operating under the aegis of a reformist Hindu philosophy— The Arya Samaj can come to my support. Meenakshi Thapan in a special article, refers to a 'havan' being organized in this school every month as a part of the institutions ritual practices. "The symbolic value of the havan varies in the multiplicity of students' articulations about its practice and their relation to it. It is part of tradition but it also has a practical place in their everyday lives. Attendance at the havan is valued by students for its perceived therapeutic qualities more than its religious significance in the life of an individual or the community. It is however seen as being constituted by the Hindu dharma and therefore belongs clearly to a particular tradition that is eulogized as it is experienced as providing a way to release tensions and enabling concentration and reflection on school work. Citizenship education, in practice, apart from the theoretical lessons that students learn in civics classes, is about a particular religion that is routinized into the curriculum through regular practice. While the 'havan' has a certain significance in the lives of students, classroom interaction among peers in fact tends to play down the very purpose for which students want to participate in the havan" (Thapan, 2006). The interventions of the state and the religious affiliations to create ideal citizens run parallel to the religious minorities or elites seeking support of the state to organize and sustain. However, such 'bi-

instrumentalisation’⁷ often confuses one as to who uses whom, between the state and the religious organizations. However, the project of citizenship training remains pertinent in school education, whether through practice of religious rituals or adopting secular methods, and at times taking the mid-path. And standing at such a crossroad of multi-variate forces, the edgy and exploratory adolescent minds and senses are often the target of many to build a potent population in the days to come when either of the agencies (state or market) can benefit and make them subservient to their interests. However, the promises of an exalted experience through varied learning programs and extracurricular activities often defer such straight-jacketed transformation of adolescents into standardized citizens, if not completely denounce it. Besides, the multicultural values have no doubt found a throbbing presence in the policies of Indian education ever since independence and have kind of build an overarching nomenclature that the schools often try to adopt and follow like any other rhetoric. But the adolescent mind is ever curious and questioning the given, making them accommodate multicultural ethics in a possibly revised way drawing upon and rejecting the larger social vision and mission of education. Surprisingly, all of these negotiations and assimilations seem to happen silently within the extracurricular engagements of the adolescents.

6.6. Summary Observations

My endeavors therefore have not been to merely locate the religious ways deployed at schools to attain citizenship ideals or the excesses of nationalist training. Rather I engaged in documenting ritualistic engagements within the

school that echo the larger socio-religious practices and help identify the distortions, manipulations and/or the reassertions in the sub context of a school through local cultures of the immediate community. This in turn helped me understand the other hidden forms of learning and unlearning that takes place. I have tried to paint a more vivid picture of the adolescent lives at the crossroads of experiencing, learning and making collective memories to trace the genealogy of their existences across a culturally plural landscape. Adolescence and their exploration of the other culture through rituals (secular or religious and at times overlapping) almost come out as an act of play that overwhelm them in the spirit of collective effervescence. Therefore, it has invited a deeper enquiry into the multi-cultural reverberations that keep occupying the intuitional framework of education, at times under the garb of socio-religious cultural practices and other times the nationalist project.

Notes:

1. The notion of rituals as irrational and symbolic vis-à-vis the rational and instrumental activities can be contested by the performative value it underscores. Ritual as cathartic performances are often carried out in response to fear, anxiety and disciplining into some sort of social symbiosis. In fact, Victor Turner developed the notion of social drama enacted through ritual performances to highlight the expressive yet the instrumental function that they fulfil in any institutional set up.

2. Bourdieu defines practice in terms of a dialectical relationship between a structured environment (by which he invokes 'objectivist structures', which are not necessarily the real world but an agent's practical interpretation of the world) and the structured dispositions engendered in people which lead them to reproduce the environment even in a transformed form. (Bell, 1992: 78)
3. Ritualization is a way of organizing certain social action so that they can be marked off from other actions. Culturally specific ordering of these actions is done to meet some strategic purpose of distinguishing the sacred from profane and thereby assigning powers to the act itself that transcends the human actor.
4. Culture uses ritual to control by means of sets of assumptions about the way things are and should be. The rituals often remain invisible in their process of naturalizing the dominant assumptions and ideologies. While apparently having to do something insignificant, the ritual practices extorts the essential commitment to order. However, this kind of silent control through formalism of ritual can run the risk of having a dissociative and distancing effect. But interestingly rituals are performative in nature and thus transform into practices, a real time activity, whereby intrinsically weaving instrumental logic in its modes of inherent strategic manipulation, economy and expedition. Thus making the Gramscian notion of ideological domination (cultural

hegemony) less pertinent, as the will to act in the structure of dominance and subordination becomes a motivational dynamics of agency.

5. 'Thakur er ashon' is a sacred place in the house of most Bengali family. It could be a dedicated room or at times a small raised throne in one corner of the house where the idols or picture of the God and Goddesses are placed and worshiped regularly by offering flower, incense sticks and sweets.
6. Social positions in terms of accumulated economic and cultural capital often impacts one's ability to remain detached from matters of religious behavior and belonging. Such secular religiosity shows a possible way of circumventing the reductive religion vs secular binary. The contemporary religiosities when perceived from the eyes of the people who consider themselves not so traditionally religious and questions the all-pervasiveness and unilineal nature of religion, helps account for the ambivalences. (Copeman & Quack, 2019: 54)
7. Bi-instrumentalism acknowledges religion as a tool that is used by several institutions to exploit each other. There are often instabilities and incoherence in such exploitation, whereby making it very difficult to understand who is using whom as an instrument to serve an interest.

Chapter 7

Adolescent self in the Field of Extracurricular

“Civilization with all its accumulated mass of cultures and skills, its artifacts, its necessity of longer and severer apprenticeship and specialization, is even harder on adolescent” – G. S. Hall (Cited in Fleming, 1948: 38)

The above remark on adolescents and their predicaments by G. Stanley Hall (1904) rang loud and clear among the collaborators of the Child Study Movement in the late nineteenth century in America. The transition from childhood to adolescence has always been infested with wreckage of mind, body and morals. Exaggeration in personality and excesses of emotion is used to describing the boy and girl, keeping in view the social expectations, sexual maturation standard, institutions of religion, education and laws for the juvenile. While trying to draw an understanding of adolescence in Bengal in chapter 2, similar strains have been highlighted. Rhetoric such as, “It’s the difficult age, nothing can be done” echoes time and again the adolescents struggle with changes in the body and consequent reflections of the mind. Policies and programs formulated by the government of India concerning adolescent practices with regard to education, healthcare and well-being are surely indicators of the social concern about this transitory phase and required training for self-management. In fact, the idea of training and learning has been the key concern throughout my research while exploring adolescence in the field of extracurricular as conducted in schools. A serious account of training and learning has been made in relation to extracurricular activities, highlighting the

various cultural, religious and political forces influencing such training in the schools.

However, there has been some serious observations in relation to development of the self and its expression. Hints of these have been dropped in the previous chapters with an ambition to relook and reflect upon them in greater details in this chapter. Therefore, we shall move into the deeper cervix of training to locate how the adolescent expresses oneself and negotiates with social realities and artefacts while remaining a part of this overt learning process and covert disciplining methods. It is through the dance forms, musical experimentation, paintings and poetry that the adolescent represent their socially maturing minds and deviations in personality. Tendencies to opine on several issues and voice one's self are traced along participation in these activities and their negotiations in relationships with peers, friends, trainers and educators. Thus we shall explore here the art and aesthetic representations by the adolescent and its wider meaning and ramification. The training of the body and gendered injunctions shall be focused upon and the longstanding theories of biological and physiological changes in this age will be revisited. Thus an attempt will be made to delineate the streaks of negotiation that the girls and boys make through their engagement in extracurricular activities and the relationships that emerge in such group participations.

7.1. The Discourse on Adolescence

In this section an attempt has been made to reconstruct adolescence beyond the psychological and developmental theories dating back to 20th century, where

the adolescent was seen lying in the periphery of adult life with ways short of a socially mature adulthood. The discourse on adolescence binds them into a category, marking a space and time of being and behaving like adolescents—someone not-yet adult in his/her body and mind, hence expected to present themselves similarly (Talai & Wulff, 1995). Lesko (2012) has put forth how for years adolescence has been characterized as ‘coming of age’, controlled by raging hormones, succumbing to peer pressure and naturalized as an age with strangeness in reference to taste for music, moody expressions, laughter alternating with sullenness, tendencies of defiance and passionate arguments. She poses to question these naturalized qualifications and relook how these accepted ideas led to an administering of the same notions via protection, education, diagnosis and incarceration by varied educational, medical and legal policies (Lesko 2012: 4-5). *In Act your Age! A cultural Construction of Adolescence* (2012) Nancy Lesko has critiqued such a homogenous and naturalized idea of adolescence, she argues that prioritizing biological determinism in constructing adolescence and representing them as collectives, expressing standardized behavior and needing consequent support must be revisited. The turmoil of growing up does not always consume the waking moments in adolescence and thus they often react and respond based on their varied class, caste, ethnic and gender locations. Thus the negotiated understanding about ones lived experiences and experiences of others (friends, peers, educators, parents and guides) in relation to them help reconstruct adolescence with greater agency. The socio-political and the economic conditions in the Indian context has also seen the youth— not making any pressing mention of adolescence as it always remained overlapping with

conception of childhood and youth— as needing some kind of moral and social awakening and codes of moderation, if not control. The education system historically remained embedded and influenced by the religious framework and nationalist spirit. Thereby from the ‘gurukul’ ashram where the adolescent boys lived with their teacher for holistic training to the colonial and post-colonial modern education, the western philosophies of training, disciplining and enculturing of the adolescents always found moorings in the religious intendance. The ideas of philosophers like Swami Vivekananda and leaders like Mahatma Gandhi were soaked in nation-building urgencies, thereby propagating a desired imagery of youth subsumed in qualities essential for fulfilling the same purpose. Vivekananda said:

Education is not the amount of information that is put into the brain and runs riot there, undigested, all your life.... We must have life-building, man-making, character-building assimilation of ideas (Advaita Asharam 2012: 302)

Vivekananda inspired the youth to not only invigorate their mental energies, but their physical energy as well. He recommended ‘muscles of iron’ and ‘nerves of steel.’ He wanted to open up a repertoire of values that would inculcate dynamism in the youth and take them beyond the defined successes of formal education. Thus we constantly find in his sermons and speeches on youth filled with an invitation and inspiration of some sort of heroism. Besides, some sociological engagement with the idea of Indian youth and adolescence were found in the work of an early Indian sociologist Dhurjati Prasad Mukerji (1946). He referred to youth in India as the statistical term that includes people who fall within the age group of 15-25 years, and he mentions only a section of it can be

said to be living on unearned income or wealth of the family i.e. the students. He further adds, no stage of social development has ever seen a synchronization between physiological adolescence and social adolescence because of the economic pressure, which has only widened the gap for student group. To quote his words:

Of all the progeny of predicaments which the students' sex-urge has created, the worst is the concept of love. Students by themselves could not have begotten it, but our effeminate literature has always been helpful. The conspiracy of literature (music, painting, cinema too— they are adjunct to literature in our country) with sex urge of middle class youth has been responsible for host of substitute feelings and attitudes which hang over the mind like a smoke screen. The first duty of students towards their sex, therefore, is to see through that veil. And the best way of doing it seems to be to question the primacy of sex itself for the youth as a whole. (Mukerji, 1946: 20-22)

DP thus reiterates that sex-urge is only one of the forms of social energy that defines the youth and that, according to him, is controlled and subordinated to law, codes, orders, pressure of customs. Thus the main problem lies in subordination for youth and unpleasantness of control. In other words, the gap between the adolescence and his initiation into a membership of society creates the greatest problem. For DP the youth is a ward to his family, enjoying maximum protection and has no independent social existence of his own. He mentions that the girls are in even more severe conditions of subordination. Thus he gives an image of youth or adolescence in marginality, having passed the family's given pattern of behavior and not yet sure of the new ones. Some

are subjugated and some self-surrender. So the tragedy of the Indian youth is no less romantic according to DP, as his frustration of being on the margins is so real. For DP the Indian youth is essentially a 'child' of the middle class guardian and imbibes all the weaknesses and strengths in attitude of that middle class parent. But he laments that the prescriptions of the middle class guardians and their ideas of liberalism and individualism are not going to help the young. The young needs to reformulate the entire notion of 'character' to fight his or her new circumstances. The youth has the pressing need to redefine their unreal and fabricated location in marginality.

Keeping this discourse of adolescent in mind an attempt shall be made to locate the negotiations that the boys and girls have been making in my field of research. In the following section I would discuss the 'Bratachari' movement of Bengal that was incorporated into the school education around 1930s and then move forward to elaborate the 'Sukanya' project undertaken by the West Bengal Police in 2019 to impart self-defense lessons to girl students of various schools in Kolkata. The aim is to show how the social motivations at play to physically train the adolescents and sermonically instill certain values worked, and how the adoption as well as the practice of the same revealed varied justification and fulfilment of diverse purposes among the adolescents. Therefore, a certain agency of body and mind could be traced, as the self negotiates with the structures of morality, transpired through the bodily codes of conduct in a gendered space.

7.2. ‘Brathachari’ to Self-Defense Coaching

Bratachari movement was initiated by Gurusaday Dutt (1882-1941) in 1932 for spiritual and social improvement of the youth in Bengal. The founder of the program initiated Bratachari movement to conduct physical and mental training of the young, fashioned through dance, music and drama based on ‘authentic folk traditions’ of Bengal. He perceived the then anxieties of the middle class Bengali around the declining health of their men. This was corroborated by the colonial discourse on ‘effeminate’ Bengali men and a strong initiative was thus taken to reconstruct the idea of masculinity and boost the physical culture of Bengal (Adhikary, 2016). Dutta thus saw a way of doing the same by promoting a form of exercise that was based on varied forms of folk dance in Bengal. Keeping in tune with the nationalist spirit of those times, Dutta sought to revive the traditions of Bengal as well. Therefore, the movement arose in a backdrop of multifaceted attempt to train the youth for the desired social and political structure of the time. Bratachari movement was initiated based on folk dance and songs, in the form of ‘brata’¹, to inculcate practical training and discipline for a harmonious coordination between the body and the mind. This innovative tradition of self-discipline was acknowledged avowedly and introduced in the schools as a part of physical education curriculum by the then director of physical education of Bengal, James Buchanan. In holding certain training programs with school teachers and students and throwing light upon the purpose of the program, Dutta (1939) said:

The discoveries made by me in the villages of Bengal and then in other parts of the province and the result was an inner renaissance with my own self and an inner realization of re-establishment of contact with the

cultural soil to which I as a Bengali belonged, from which I had spring, but from which the educational mill of our country through which I had passed, had separated me during the years intervening between my childhood and this re-establishment of contact at the age of nearly. (Dutta, 1939: 427-428)

The movement as adopted in the schools, proposed several ‘bratas’ or oaths to be taken by the adolescent ‘bratacharis’. These bratas were based on five principles: knowledge, labour, truth, joy and unity. To fulfil these five principles several vows were taken by the adolescent girls and boys and most had very distinct prescriptive ideals based on gender. Some of the bratas were like:

brata loye mora bangladesher kajey
tarunatar sajjib dhara anbo jiban-majhe
chai amader shakta deha, mukta udar man,
ritimato palbo mora moder pratipan.

(We take the pledge to serve Bengal; Revive the vigor of youth in our lives;
Build our bodies, while open our minds; and keep our vows till death)

There were other ‘bratas’ that talked of healthcare and inculcating appropriate habits for a good body:

Shakta deha, tikhno mon
Purno kritto, dridha pon
(Strong body, sharp mind; completes work, determined in one’s vows)

mon duraste, tan durust
Tan duruste, mon durust

(When mind is healthy, body is healthy; when body is health, mind is health too)

Bratachari maaje dant
uthe bhor e, puno raat
Dubela na majle dant
Korbe pore ashrupat

(bratachari's brush their tooth twice a day, once in morning and at night, if not, then they shall shed tears)

Besides, there were strong recommendations on not developing a paunch, not to hang the 'koncha'², to avoid luxury, and not to eat except when hungry. There were pledges that promoted the significance of physical exercise and play, and emancipation of women. Pledges such as having an earning before marrying of women existed, there were also vows suggesting adoption of polite and modest behavior by them. There were anti-dowry verses as well:

Bratachari rakhe sajatane
Pon mana praniyom mone
(bratachari's donot take dowry)

Thus all the adolescent boys and girls who took vows of becoming bratacharis had to perform few acts regularly. These acts were 'Abrittali' (recitation of the above mentioned vows and injunctions; Krityali (performing good deeds); Sangeetali (the act of singing); Kridali (playing regularly, especially indigenous games); Mallali (learning the art of wresting for building one's body and self-defense); Birali (displaying courage, respecting elders and practicing chivalry towards women). The above acts were few among many that highlights the kind

of grooming that was being done with respect to making of ideal men and women. There were different 'bratas' for the girls and the boys and some were common for both. A kind of practice was introduced whereby the adolescents recited the brata in a musical rhythm along with dance-like gestures. This was done as a group activity and almost like a ritual so that the vows got internalized. Therefore, a scope was made even within a regimented kind of training for selves to explore the socially undesirable practices and generate certain kind of negation within one's psyche. However, one could possibly see a sort of disciplining on different lines, opening up the evils and the hidden contradictions in the mainstream social norms and political ideologies of the time. But I would like to highlight here the alternative and parallel awakening to ideas that were introduced through cultural interventions. The use of folk dance, music and drama to train the adolescent boys and girls possibly opened up ways to revisit the mainstream codified lessons of the classroom and those imparted in a larger social milieu. Though certain gender rhetoric in construction of the self remained constant, the initiative to challenge one's self for engaging in alternative lines of behaviour cannot be denied. The ability to locate one's relationship to one's body and its larger implication in terms of health and identity is also reflected in these activities. Ideas of masculine and feminine that transposes into a self-identity, impacting one's negotiation in social life, is often generated through these activities. And interestingly, it not only happens through performance of roles but also through verbal exchanges. Different kinds of ideas and thoughts about an ideal boy or ideal girl image when spoken out in sermonic form leave a deep impact on the adolescent minds for sure.

7.2.1. Case Studies— Physical Activities

The idea of body and its associated sense of identity gets nurtured and leaves deciding impact on the adolescent. The social engagements of varied kinds give way to such deep and overlapping cues about one's body in the adolescence. My account of the various extracurricular activities in the school brought me close to seeing such overlaps in the construction of gender as taken-for-granted universals and consequent individual negotiations among the adolescents. Most of the extracurricular activities, as I have discussed in the preceding chapters, with relation to performative arts have revealed certain preoccupation with the body among the adolescent. The uniform codes, dance gestures, articulation through paintings, physical training and role playing in dramas, all had elements of bodily self-discovery and manipulation of the same. However, here I would like to draw attention to a project called 'Sukanya' as under taken by the Kolkata police along with West Bengal Government to train girls of the government schools in self-defense as a part of the extracurricular. The community wing of the Kolkata police had issued orders seeking trainers and supervisors for coaching the girls in martial arts and it had clearly stated among other qualifications that female coaches would be preferred. But incidentally I found no female coach rather the coach who organized such training in the schools was a man named Partha Mitra, who was trained in martial arts and ran an independent coaching center for such training. Upon attending few coaching sessions at the schools and interviewing the girls and at times few of their parents, I found varied and cross-cutting responses. The eagerness of the girls to learn was primarily self-driven and often transcending much opposition. The resistance that arose interestingly hovered around the fear of security of the girls

and doubts around the need for such ‘masculine’ activities. Parents seem to be anxious about the bodily transformations of their adolescent girls and saw a need to groom it in a way that is protective in nature. I would like provide accounts of girls and parents to show how the concerns were voiced and how certain negotiations on the part of the adolescent girls mitigated those concerns.

Suparna Saha, a student of class 10, said that they were told in the class one day that they would be taught kick boxing and martial arts as an initiative towards ‘nari surakha’ (women protection). The first day all girls of their class were called upon and those who participated in different kinds of activities were selected by the teachers. She was in class IX when she was selected along with 60 other girls. But only 10 of them were still continuing the classes. According to her, some prioritized studies and did not want to take this extra hour of physical training and some were not permitted by the family to continue any longer. She also said, “Previously I used to feel very weak doing this training after school hours, but started to enjoy it as it made me more energetic and confident. I also developed a strong body and could pick up heavy things at the household. I started to participate in activities in the community programs that required physical strength, where only boys participated. Especially during family get-togethers where boys were expected to pick up furniture, set up tents and carry heavy luggage or commodities from market, I could also participate and help”. She added that since there was certain element of violence in kick boxing, she was keen to learn. Quoting one of her remarks: “I was at zoo one day and a man tried to misbehave with me. I did not shy away, rather held his hand tightly and resisted”, she related it to her sense of confidence and her strong sense of self protection that she gained over time. She lamented that

initially her peers at school and in neighborhood made fun of her and teased her by calling her 'don' (a mafia leader), 'beta chele' (boy) and at times even 'duscharitra', as her interaction with the male trainers were looked down upon. On deeper interaction, she revealed that their bodies being exposed at times while doing the exercises and male teachers having to touch their body to teach them certain postures and steps were a topic of discussion among the friends and at times few teachers as well. But she also added that most of her teachers were supportive of her taking these classes. Her teacher, Mala Biswas, said "Suparna is of boisterous nature and such activities suit her perfectly. She has the body and height that facilitates her in such activities. Besides, she is the captain of the class and her leadership qualities will be enhanced by learning these activities". Suparna mentioned that though her proximity to the male teachers and her not-so-feminine attitude is a point of ridicule among many, her family has somewhat conceded to her participation in karate and kick-boxing. She practices at home with her brother at times and has participated in many competitions and represented her school, bringing laurels to the latter. She participated in a competition called, 'meyeder parar kick-boxing pratijyogita' (kick-boxing competition of women in the neighborhood) and dress, helmet, metal gloves and boxing boots were provided by Kolkata police that had to be returned after the performance. She wants to continue taking such classes as she feels it will help her find a suitable job later on. With a naughty smile on her face she made a passing comment, "ami to ektu maar dhor korte pochondo kori, tai amar esob khela bhalo lagey" (since I like to join in fisticuffs, I chose these games). Her indifference to the ridicules by friends and at times labeling by authority was very pronounce in her attitude throughout. Her teachers and

especially her father showed skepticism regarding her continuing these self-defense activities, but she seemed to have pushed her way far. Upon talking to her father, who had his own business of water-treatment services, I found that he saw not much need for such training, in fact he thought these activities are not for girls. He added with a smirk on his face, “Class er captain ba monitor to dustu meyeder kora hoi” (the naughty girls are made the class monitor usually). However, he allowed his daughter to learn as it was being conducted by Kolkata police and had some job prospects. He often told her that she must not be very aggressive with people on the streets, asserting that “eka berocchis, besi kichu bolar ba korar dorkar nei” (donot be too vocal as you are moving out alone). Thus we see that the father is still insecure about the safety of her daughter and considers her protection a matter of concern. He also did not find any utility in these programs, breaking the stereotypical notions of feminine ways of acting and behaving. But he only saw a streak of hope as a possible pathway to securing a job.

Another girl named Rihana Ahmed of class XI of Ballygunge Sikha Sadan School also took up these classes. She was active in all kinds of sports and other extracurricular activities. She said, “I am the only one among my other sisters who likes to play and enjoy participating in these self-defense programs. My teachers encourage me a lot and I have represented the school in several competitions. I feel very good when I can exert my physical strength by performing such activities unlike other women members of my family. With my friends also I can show my strength and physically defeat them. I am not a weak person anymore and can protect myself better.” She said that she was made fun of by her sisters when she wore the karate uniform and her mother strictly told

her not to perform such ‘indecent’ activities at home, especially in front of the elders of the family. But she added that her father is aware of these programs she participates in, as he is the one who reaches her to school and other places for such activities. I happen to see her perform at one such event and found that her team spirit was well appreciated by her friends and coaches. I sat with all the girls at the interval hour in between the events and tried to observe the exchanges they were making. One of the girls named Snigdha Basu, of class IX addressed Rihana as ‘didi’ (elder sister) and praised her for her stunts in karate. The girls started to discuss about how they have grown muscles in their legs and hands due to regular exercise. Some seem to be very happy and proud, as they flaunted it to their friends. While few others were skeptical on such revelation and rather expressed their anxiety over their dark complexion and stiff bodies that were being built due to participation in these physical activities. In fact, Singdha commented that her cousins back home say that she would never have a boyfriend as she looks so boyish in her manners and behaviour. She added, “All boys include me in their games and call me ‘hero’ while I walk down the street. But they do not admire me or call me beautiful as I’m taller to them and have a larger and fatter body”. Though she displayed a sense of complex regarding her body type, she also had an admiration for the sporty look that her seniors at school wore after being associated with these physical exercises. She said, her mother was always encouraging of her participation in these physical activities, as the former had many ailments which could be healed if she exercised properly. Her mother who is a teacher in a primary school, always told her how women with strong body are greater performers in career. But Singdha seem to be lost between her mother’s ideas and her peer group’s

attitude towards her body. Torn between the ideals of physical beauty of a woman and the aspirations of becoming a strong and successful person, she often had to overcome the former with her participation in these activities that at the end of day generated a sense of pleasure. However, unlike Singdha's mother, Rihana's father had a different view. He said, "I do not oppose to my daughter's participation in these self-defense classes as it is a part of school activity. But it becomes very burdensome to drop and pick her up after these classes, which generally happen after school hours. I have my business and coming out regularly becomes a problem for me. The other female members of my house do not go out alone often so they cannot do this task." On being asked why he takes this extra effort for his youngest daughter, he replied, "usko bahut saukh hai, aur bahut prize bhi milta hai usey competition mey, teachers bhi bahut encourage aur pyar kartein hain usey" (she really likes doing it and fetches lots of prizes by participating in these activities. Teachers also appreciate and love her). Besides this he added, with slight bit of remorse and authority at the same time, that once she is married she won't be able to enjoy these things. She might have to lead a very different life, so he feels that she should be allowed to enjoy her time now. Besides these girls, I tried talking to many of the students from neighborhood government schools and private schools too who had initially joined this program, but could only tap four of them. One of the girls named Rekha Naskar of a government school was reported to have dropped out of school after class VIII. Her discontinuation of studies made her absence from all such activities an obvious outcome. Another girl, Piya Bera had been beaten up by her father one day as she was seen staying back at school after school hours were over. The karate coach also informed that she was seen with him

practicing kick boxing one day by her brothers and harassed badly. After that she discontinued these classes. Whereas, Amrita Roy of class IX, studying in a private school, had withdrawn from these classes as her mother insisted that she should focus more on studies and not waste her time in self-defense classes. The fourth girl, Ayesha Sharma said that she lost interest in these classes as she fell ill and did not like the way she had to exert her body and strain herself in these physical activities. She was rather happy staying at home and enjoy watching television or reading story books. Thus overall we see a consciousness among the adolescent girls about their gender roles and a corresponding idea of the body. The body and its protection has also been an essential factor in determining their level of confidence. And this confidence has often nudged them to negotiate with their parents and other members of their social world to experience new limits of being a female gender. However, there has been a constant tussle of the body and mind and overlaps between the normative structure and liberation-seeking agency.

The boys, on the other hand, displayed a strong need to align with the given standards of body in my field. I have already discussed how through the vows of 'Bratacharis' an idea of strong and masculine body was transpired among the then Bengali middle class adolescent boys. Upon talking to the principal of Cathedral Mission High School at Elgin Road, I found a similar notion echoing loud and clear. He told me, "Boys of our school come from varied linguistic and cultural background and are mostly of the lower income group. They need to go out and engage in either their fathers' small businesses or take up jobs as electricians or some form of work that needs rigorous physical labor. In such circumstances having a healthy and strong body is essential. Thus participating

in physical education classes and other such programs like NCC ³ (National Cadet Corps.) is beneficial for their development.” The boys, nevertheless, had their own reasons and predicaments to narrate for taking up such physical activities. Abiruddin Ahmed of class X played the flute in the NCC band. On asking him about his interests in these activities, he said, “I joined the NCC as my friends were part of it. But I initially did not like it. I used to feel tired doing the drill and hard exercises every day. I liked to be with my sisters and enjoy watching television in my free time. But my father scolded me whenever he saw me sitting with my sisters. He insisted that I play with the boys. So I started moving around with the boys of my age. But they used to tease me for not being physically as strong as them. I joined the NCC and performed very badly in the drill and race. One day the teacher asked me to be a part of the NCC band and play flute, as I was not bodily strong or fit to do the other drills and exercises. But I enjoyed wearing the NCC uniform, especially the cap while playing during Independence Day and Republic Day. I do not have a muscular body or physical strength like my friends, but with regular exercise I can become like them. With this hope I come for NCC drills everyday”. Another boy was standing next to Abiruddin during the NCC practice and quietly listening to our conversations. His name was Mohammad Raja. He looked fairly disinterested in the NCC activities, but stood there for long. As I struck a conversation with him about his family and his liking for physical activities, his response was, “I come here for NCC drill to escape doing chores at my father’s bedding store. I am expected to carry heavy bedding and sacks of cotton at the shop. I cannot carry such heavy luggage, so I stay back longer at school. My two sisters help my father in the shop and does all the household tasks. They are stronger than me and mock me

for being weak. My friends tease me often when I come last in the race or when other boy's bully me and beat me up. They call me names like 'ladies' and at times throw dancing gestures at me. I have still joined the NCC so that I can be part of the activities that boys in the school do and I am not left out and also to stay away from my father's shop." This boy's predicaments seem to cut across several issues, ranging from economic concerns to social stigma associated with a growing adolescent body. However, in stark contrast to his case, I found the case of Sumit Singh of class IX. He appeared to be very vibrant and quite active in the NCC games and drill to make me think otherwise. So when I asked him why he had chosen to be a part of NCC, he replied "I enjoy playing all kinds of games. Here I get scope to display my physical strength and my body. I engage in various kind of activities that are very rewarding and interests me immensely. At the NCC camps I enjoy the firing and shooting events, as well as the airfield experience. My uncle who is a 'jawan' in the Indian army does all of this. He is so strong and good looking. When I see his photographs from the army camps I feel so excited. My friends appreciate my looks and admire my muscular body when I do the physical exercises. I feel so happy when the girls call me handsome". At the NCC practice hour I also had the chance to meet one of the parent and learn about his anxieties regarding his son's not-so-masculine attitude. Sujal Behera of class IX was born to a father who is a photographer and runs a studio in Mominpur, Kolkata for a living. His father had some very intriguing views to share, he said "My son sings very well, he has a wonderful voice and has participated in many competitions and won prizes. He has appeared for audition at Indian Idol (the Indian reality show organized by Sony Entertainment Television) but missed out because of his frail body and

unimpressive personality. He lacks the smartness that is required from boys. He has always been a very meek child and introvert, suffering from health issues possibly makes me so. When I see his healthy and sturdy friends I ask him to go out and play with them so that he can become like them. He never likes to engage in such physically demanding activities, that's the reason why I insisted he joins NCC so that he can at least do some physical exercises regularly and gain self-confidence and become smarter. A man cannot be physically weak after all. Whatever job he takes up he has to have a strong and healthy body.” Thus he echoed the ideas of manhood and masculine body and its correlation with social roles that are expected to be played out. However, contrary to this I found few negotiating voices, if not challenging ones. Pritam Jana was one of them, who had come from Mednipore to stay with his father at Kolkata for better schooling. His father is employed with CESC (Calcutta Electric Supply Corporation) as an electrician. Pritam said, “I learn Casio and drawing from a tutor outside the school. At school I do not participate in much of the activities. The boys are very aggressive and violent at school and often end up fighting and beating each other during play and in such sessions of physical activities. I do not like so much violence and feel humiliated by them as I am shorter to them and most of the time I am bullied in the games. During the NCC classes, which I joined initially, I was made fun of because of my height and body. They do not take me seriously and often ignore me and call me ‘dudh bhat chele’ (a boy who hasn’t yet grown up, feeding on milk and rice still like a baby). I am told by my father that I am away from home to study hard and subsequently get a good job, therefore should concentrate on my studies. I have taken up science tuition and need to spend time there. I at times feel lonely as I do not have friends

at school, but I have made friends with a girl called Seema Das in my tuition. She does not tease me or ridicule me for being short or physically weak”.

These narratives have opened up the intricacies of emotional and psychological dilemma that the adolescent mind deals with. It also draws our attention to their disapproving voices towards given standards of masculinity and bodily engagements. The trainers for both self-defense program and NCC had some revealing cues about adolescent behavior. The trainer Partha Mitra opined that the participation of girls in self-defense program is higher among lower and middle income group families. They are enthusiastic and have the persuasion to learn something that might help them have a strong body like their counterparts. But even though they join with full vigor, often they drop out due to familial pressure and to meet other household commitments. On the other hand, the NCC coordinator when asked about the boys’ performance in physical activities, said “NCC is an age-old program organized by Indian Government and it’s carried out in most educational institutions of the country. However, its emphasis and charm in schools have dropped in recent past, but we see some revival again with strong emphasis on Yoga and other physical activities at school. The young boys are brimming with energy and such activities help them to channelize the same. There are tendencies among the boys of this age to become violent or harm themselves and others bodily. Engaging in NCC programs help them become more disciplined physically and mentally. Besides, there is a pressing need for men to grow a strong and manly body to have a rewarding and fulfilling life later.”

7.3. The Gendered Body and Adolescent crisis

Adolescence seemed to be in two serious crises: firstly, of being defined and categorized into a single age-defined bracket and secondly, the crisis of moderating them, as their identities remain a site for constant debates around knowledge, power, cultural representation and social roles. From both primary and secondary sources of information that I have come across and discussed above this has been a historically established social practice. From Bratachari movement to NCC and also in the philosophies of great thinkers as well as literature produced by social scientists the social anxiety and concerns around adolescent body has been persistent. The politics of this guardianship could be traced along varied lines at different points of times, namely: nationalist ideologies, citizenship plea, class assertion, colonial education and racial superiority. In my field, I found a strong need for reproducing the gender stereotypes among the schools catering to lower income groups. However, the private schools that catered to the middle or upwardly mobile groups were seen making innovations to the given standards, but the bodily assertions and stigma associated with breaking the gender roles cannot be ruled out in any way. Lenski (2012) from her study on adolescence has very rightly stated:

The adolescent was a trope for turn-of-the-century worries about unknown futures, about ability to succeed and dominate in changing circumstances, about maintenance of gender and class hierarchy in changing social and cultural landscapes. Adolescence was also a standard, a flag, around which reformers rallied in largely Progressive-inspired reordering of social institutions, including the educational and juvenile justice systems. At the same time adolescence was a social fact

produced through a set of practices, including emphasis on and control of sexuality, segregation of girls' and boys' curricular areas in increasing years of compulsory schooling, separate justice facilities for juvenile delinquents, and unrelenting emphasis on youths' futures. In this light, adolescence can be glimpsed as a *technology* to produce certain kinds of persons within particular social arrangements. (Lenski, 2012: 41-45)

Even Donna Haraway (1989) has talked of how adolescence is made to lie in the border zones and imagined to be at perils in between the preceding and succeeding zones like childhood-adulthood, docile-strong, asexual-sexual and unproductive-productive. Thus a romantic endeavor was always sought in 'making of the man' activities by the society at large and education in specific. Thus promoting a culture of either disciplinary supervision or reflexive socialization, building a moral concern towards nurturing the body in a desired gendered role. This kind of shaping of adolescence bodies strongly found justification in health concerns and it significantly surfaced in my study. The concern was more so with the boy's health in relation to his masculine power. The girls were on the other hand nurtured into ideas of a body needing protection. Thus, the eagerness among adolescent girls to seek a strong and healthy body was more often than not followed up with injunctions for restraining their vulnerable bodies. The celebration of strength and therefore physical power was mostly associated with boyhood, with promises of able and active manhood in the future. Hall in the *Pedagogical Seminary* expressed concerns on education for health and said:

Health is the condition of all success and nothing can atone for its loss. The art of keeping our bodies always to the very top of their condition is thus the art of arts in which so many sciences culminate. ... The muscles are the only organs of the will, and have done all the work man has accomplished in the world. ... All exercises that strengthen and enlarge muscles strengthen and enlarge the nerve and brain fibers or cells. (Hall, 1904: 119-125)

Thus the association of strong body and power in boyhood finds roots through concerns over health. Often making muscular bodies appear synonymous with healthy ones. And the extracurricular activities appear to be ripe space for reliving this bodily rhetoric. Physical activities to groom the body, dance therapy, folk musical revival or yoga, all come with a healing prescription for the body and mind and the pedagogic assertions do comply with these ideological fabrications of well-being. However, it would not be very prudent to say that the healing, resurrecting or well-being does not find scope in these activities. But my argument is that the motivation is merely not what often simplistically gets projected. The problem seems to be rather with 'hypermasculinity' and gendered violence that gets pronounced in these physical activities. However, this has started to gain some attention and therefore the counter discourse on protecting the feminine body has also been making a headway. Nevertheless, the competitive spirit and comparison that these activities breed are no less in reasserting gender stereotypes and masculine power dominance, as that's one of the key ways to 'becoming' a successful teenage boy. However, I have been able to take note of the voices of dissent and negotiation, if not complete negation. The girls and their parents (especially the

mothers who are educated) are seen to rethink their notions of body as handed down to them. In the previous chapters I have made a mention of how girls are negotiating regarding their bodily purity during times of mensuration and thus their participation in religious rituals during those times. The idea of body and its representational value in terms of sexuality is also being redefined with mothers, mostly from the middle class, taking a differential interest in the growth of their daughters. One of the mother told me that her daughter plays the drums and likes to keep her hair short, wear head gears and fancy bands as well as clothes that fit the percussionist image of stage performers. She reiterated that she has noticed that her neighbours and relatives are scornful about at her daughter's appearance, but she sees no problem in it. Similarly, another mother, who I had referred to previously for having encouraged her son to take up dancing, lamented how people found her son to be effeminate. But she always stood by her son and saw no problem in his bodily departures from the masculine excesses. In fact, a study done among school going adolescent girls of rural Haryana showed that there was a direct correlation between mother's educational level and the adolescent girl's body image satisfaction (Kumar, Malik and Sachdeva, 2021). Thus, the concern with a mediated ideal body type is of course a point of concern for the adolescent girls. As it impacts their participation in strenuous physical activity on the basis of apprehension that it might affect their ideal feminine bodies. None the less, the ideal body also seem to play a strong catalyst for engaging in such activities and furthering such grooming with a different end in mind. The crisis seems to be deep and varied for adolescence, having to live up to the gendered body types and at the same time negotiate for a space where their bodies are not the sole indicators of their

personality and identity. The struggle seems to be hard both for the boys and girls and across socio-economic classes, with overlaps in imaginations about their gendered roles and the consequent lived experiences.

7.4. Poetries and Paintings: A Canvas of Adolescent Life

Durkheim, who saw a pressing need to configure everything in an education system to morally mould the adolescent and discipline him, hardly ever saw the need for ‘play’ holding immense possibility to fulfil the same goal. The leisure time for adolescent surely got extended in late modernism with wage work becoming scarce. Therefore, leisurely engagements were introduced to fill up the gap so that the adolescent could be kept under the surveillance of their tutors, care takers and guardians. However, Freire (2006) through a group intervention program titled “growing up with leisure” aimed to facilitate adolescents to become agents active in guiding their personal growth. He argued that when leisure is experienced at the level of personal, in interaction with the other (i.e. social) and in relation to the ecological, then it becomes facilitator of positive development in adolescence. The process of self-identity within a society does not only happen in relation to the significant others, but wraps into one’s experience the objects, places and things of leisure. Thus, the school playground, the music room or the instruments and even the environmental locale one chooses to find leisurely moments in, leave a strong impact. Thus, no matter how overwhelming the supervision is, the kind of extended and far reaching meaning leisurely activities have in the lives of adolescents is bound to have some unique and determining subjective experiences. The aesthetics of

the leisurely hour and the consequent activities it makes way for can be of great significance in lending agency to the adolescent. “We choose leisure activities not merely because they are useful for leisure, but to convey the very sense of who we are” (Williams, 2000: 353). Leisure activities that help reflect upon oneself and one’s relationship with the social, transmits a sense of identity that blends the personal and social. The group interaction in these moments of leisure during adolescence cannot be imagined without the strong and thudding presence of the peer group. The leisurely moments encountered during extracurricular activities often offer the adolescents opportunity to treat the world around with greater creativity, assigning meanings free from adult interventions. Through creative exchanges and negotiations in meaning of relationships as well as other material or non-material objects, as assigned by the adult world, the adolescent possibly creates a ‘way of living’ of their own. I have collected the paintings made and poetries written by them as part of their ECA during leisurely hours to account for their active selves.

This a poem written by Atreyee Ghosh of class 9. The name of the poem is:

‘Me’ as ‘He’

How would it be if I would have been a lad?
I guess the idea isn’t that bad.
I would have grown beard like my dad
Those pink shiny slippers, I guess,
I wouldn’t have had.
I would have been busy playing football,
And would have never been gifted a Barbie doll,
Those fairies of my dreams
would not have been there,
instead, I would have dreamt of a cricket player.
My cupboard would never have
those pretty little skirts,
And would have been filled with
few more checked tee shirts.
I would have enjoyed it all but

in a little different way;
I would have been moulded a little differently,
but with the same clay.
However, I realize all that I have is the best for me;
And it didn't much matter
Whether I am a 'he' or a 'she'.

The poetry here renders a deep negotiation with the gendered lives that the adolescent girl engages in. The way a boy forms his identity is perceived by the girl as a self that is missing for her. She desires those ways in casting herself into a self that goes beyond the difference and yet she accepts the role she is socially expected to fulfil as a girl. Such sort of reflections are seen on varied issues by the adolescent. Another poetry goes like this:

Labyrinth of Suffering

She sat there silently holding a feather soaked with ink
The inventory of the little things in her mind kept on struggling
To imprint their impression on the mysteriously white sheet she was
staring at
The words she wanted to utter clog her throat in dismay

Soon the light faded, the streets went dark
The grey damped the leaves
The black covered from pole to pole
The rumbling thunder coiled into her ears, causing to numb her screams.
Now she is left in a corner of her dark room
She is left only with feather and the sheet
And then there lies the glass

She captures her reflection as she throws mirror to the floor.
Her image is distorted screening "is it worth it anymore?"
Her body starts to flicker like nobody wants to know her name
Just another soul with feelings but nobody's there to feel the pain

The naked soul stares at moon
Escaping the sarcasm of the devil
She lifted the paper which drenched with her cursed tears.
She wrote her poem, contaminating the sheet with blood.

The ink turned red, so did the clouds.
The clock ticked and wolves howled
The man came storming down the lane.

He buried his feet into the house after seven years.
But the love of his life was already gone.

He darted his eyes round her lifeless body for the last time.
As he hummed their favorite song with his angelic voice,
Which led to their prolonged sleep.

This poem is written by Namrata Ghosh of class XI. Here we find her idea of longing and belonging in a man-woman relationship very pronounced. She has expressed the suffering in loneliness and how the woman in her poetry is grieving to express herself but has none but a sheet on which she can pour her mind. She doubts about her existence and finally perishes into death. The yearning in love and longing for the man, who came 7 years later to only find his lady love dead, speaks of the adolescent girl's deep understanding of companionship, bereavement and thus the self that needs to play out roles in relation to the other and therefore make an identity. The next I would like to quote from an article written by Neha Sen of class XI, for her school magazine. She wrote something on freedom, which again brings out the adolescent's assertion of self. She writes:

... From what I could gather from my mother's tales was that she was an obedient and calm child, who always abided by what her parents told her. And to her pleasant (some might argue unpleasant) surprise, I turned out to be the complete opposite. Belonging to the 'Gen Y' as we call ourselves, I have my own opinions which I will readily voice, even if they are against what my parents taught me. And my calm and obedient mother is always left fumbling for words. The only conclusion she arrives at is that we enjoy too much freedom, which is debatable. Freedom is a relative term. While for a country, it is the right to govern

her own people, for an adult it is the ability to take his own decision. But freedom for us might just mean being able to buy a box of chocolates without the permission of his or her parents. Being active on social media and given the liberty to read opinions of different people on different issues, children get a sense of freedom. On these social platforms, they are given the freedom to voice their opinions. But if on being given this freedom, a child develops values and opinions on varied issues, then why should freedom be detrimental? If given the freedom makes a child prepared for the world outside, then why should freedom not be granted?

Such profound sense of independence and thus putting forth an identity draped in the sense of social and political rights speak volume about an adolescent ever 'becoming' selves. Another poem written by Rwitocheta Banerjee of class XII echoes her fragmented thoughts:

Distorted

She remained awake all night
With traits of dead skin beneath her eyes,
It hid all her pain
But never showed it
Or tried to blame!
Ecstasy and pessimism,
Reigned through her adrenaline
Still giving her a chance to captivate him forever.
But when will that chance come?
Or, will it ever?

In the above poem we see the dilemma in the girl's mind: ecstasy or pessimism she is unable to decide. She is ruminating over her chance to achieve, as if the struggle of fulfilling one's wish is not mere crisis of the adult. This sort of reflection among the adolescent is further seen in a prose written by Prapti

Ghosal of class X. She has addressed her personal diary by personifying it as her friend and has spoken to her. She shares:

... like remember the other day I mentioned about how I tried this new dress on which I thought looked beautiful on me. Until the extra fat on my thighs literally screamed at me to take it off, but I forgot to write about how even if it was for a second I found myself beautiful. Remember? How I was talking about the bad day I had, I fought with my parents I told you about every wrong thought that came into my mind but I did not once mention about Bruce, remember him? My only best friend and only friend (except you of course). The moment he realized I wasn't fine, he came up with chocolates and flowers and a letter appreciating every good thing about me, again I ignored the fact that I smiled. Genuinely, you know diary, I am always so engrossed with the negative things around me that I missed out on all good things happening. In order to pity myself I forgot to live. I forgot that ten people don't matter if you have one who makes you feel yourself. You don't need to be slim to look beautiful.

The adolescent girl expresses her deep anxiety with her body in relation to a socially celebrated body-type as beautiful. But she discloses that her only friend Bruce has been able to appreciate her for her intrinsic qualities and make her feel beautiful. Thus, through her writing she expresses her turmoil of body and mind that she encounters in socially and culturally handed out orders. She fights the anxieties of growing up and flouts some structural patterns. Her need for a friend at this age to confide, beyond the parents, also becomes pronounced.

Like others expressing varied emotions and negotiations of the self, Sharanya Sarkar of class IX, has expressed his deep thoughts on relationship and loss of loved ones. He writes:

The way you smile and the way you cry
Forever can I stare at you two, without saying goodbye,
Both your picture that I have with me,
Are the only treasures,
That's more than life to me.

Neither do I have a friend of my choice
Nor do I have a mother or father's voice,
The only thing I have with me—
Is a pen's nib on a blank paper
To write down everything about me.

Betrayed, cheated, hurt have I been
But never a drop of water from my eyes has anyone seen,
When I look up at the sky,
I wish and pray to be able to fly high.

The only thing that I haven't learnt,
Without my mother and father's word—
Is that, the past in fire will be burnt
But time will never stop marching forward.

The boy languishes for his parents but has picked up adult ways of keeping composure and act calm, unlike a child. He is also in a tussle with the predicaments of moving forward in one's life forgetting old ties. He grieves of his betrayal and says that he would make up for it by succeeding in life. Thus we see that he has not only given up his child-like helplessness but has also learnt to manage himself emotionally. The signs of his growing up shows a transition that cannot be considered to be totally susceptible to uncontested moulding and manipulation.

I would like to dwell upon this idea of self-in-negotiation further by bringing forth few artworks that the adolescents had produced as part of their

extracurricular activities. Though many of such pictures I have already shared in the previous chapters in varied context, dropping a hint of the conscious and reflective selves of the adolescent. I have shared a picture of two boys, one painting the face of the other. However, I shall be referring back to the picture given in chapter 5 (fig. 4) of a boy painting the face of a girl, as it is more pertinent and needed elaborate explanation here.

In a face painting competition students were given the theme 'He tried to make peace outside, with war inside his mind' and asked to paint each other's face to represent this theme. Several pairs of students were participating in this event at Silver Point School in kasba area of kolkata, and the most striking feature



Figure 8: Source: Silver Point School. Boys painting faces in a competition.

apart from their artistic display was the ease with which these adolescent girls and boys touched each other. They were totally comfortable in each other's close proximity. There were girls painting the faces of the girls and vice-versa. On talking with the teacher coordinating the event I found that students had made a choice on who would be their canvas, but she added that obvious choices were made by the girls and boys based on their friendship. These girls and boys showed complete dedication in their offering of themselves while the other painted them. I could also see an urge to beautify the other and therefore a sense of care and pamper persisting in the act. They took good care so that the other doesn't feel restless or tired posing too long, and offered them water at regular intervals. They whispered to each other and exchanged happy glances while they played along. The bodily contact

surely went beyond sexual understanding and urges, but definitely not in absence of the realization of the same. One of the girl softly said to the boy painting her face, as teachers and parents stood overlooking their work, “no one has ever admired us together with such appreciation and uncontested approval”. The nudging smile that the boy offered had lots to say, thus be decoded. In an audience full of contestations and celebration, these two seem to have twined up to create a space of their own and declare their fondness and companionship. They reinstated my understanding as they mentioned how they have been friends for last 7 years and neighbors too. The boy said, “She is my model-canvas”. The girl Mamata Gupta whose father is a businessman, said: “Dhrubojyoti (the boy) is my neighbor and is very good in studies, he helps me a lot in every way. He is my best friend. My father does not like me going to his place always. But we do everything together. In school also other friends know about our strong bonding. Some teachers do not approve of our friendship but most of them like us.” However, interestingly enough, the symbolic representation of peace and war on each other’s body gave rise to a parallel feud of similar kind within their minds. The post-puberty days of guarded interaction with the opposite sex that entailed construction of gender identities through abeyance, could be possibly put to test here. Thus, opening up new and more collaborative avenues to rediscover the other sex and learn non-stereotypical gender roles. The discovery of one’s boyhood vs girlhood and then dropping those learnings after a point to rediscover and relearn in such ways, possibly is followed up by few other significant corollaries. Such as care, sense of equality and power of consent. The established ideas of masculinity or femininity is bracketed out, making way for new interpretation. Many other girls and boys

who participated in the event also chipped in about their friendship with the classmates of the opposite gender and at times the same gender as well. The fact that they spend so much time together and engage in varied kind of activities with each other, make them feel comfortable and discover new ways of seeing the world, unlike those normatively designed and handed over to them by the adults. They reiterated how the school becomes a space for them to spend time beyond their teaching-learning hours with their peers and enjoy their leisure time. They have been to picnics and excursions together without their parents and had been able to participate in varied kinds of social activities of everyday life away from the supervision of the guardians. The world of adolescence seems to gain new meanings, as they redefine their own rights and duties towards each other in such collective interaction. The time spend together with peer's aid in rediscovering attitudes, gestures and emotional cues that are unique to them at that age and provide them with a sense of identity, free of much prescriptions. Therefore, they seem to make a community of their own.

An adolescent mind is not bereft of his or her imagination for sure and this got reiterated several times in my ethnographic endeavor. Apart from what they spoke and how they behaved in a school setting during the extracurricular activities, their self-expression through art and other cultural performances gave out a lot. I have made reference to them through out in the previous chapter, but would be focusing on one painting here to build the idea of self with greater emphasis. Here I would like to throw light on a painting made by a boy of class IX of South Calcutta National School (govt. school) at a drawing competition organized by the state government during a week long program under the aegis

of “Nirmal Vidyalaya Abhiyan”. He participated in the competition where the theme was "denounce the use of plastic". The school with bare minimum infrastructural support could provide for some papers to the boys to draw, but the small one-storied house with four rooms and five teachers is all had decorated the school beautifully for the occasion. The shoddy building with damp walls and old furniture could possibly hardly look like a proper school. However, the way the young boys had got together to clean the school and prepare representational documents of the same through their artwork was undoubtedly commendable. They had aesthetically created an environment where boys playfully engaged in the program. Some sat in a hurdles in the classroom to draw, discussing with their peers about what they were drawing and who does it represent. Some boys had gathered outside in the small garden outside the school to exchange ideas while sketching what they saw in front of them. The teachers told me that though the theme was circulated by the education department of West Bengal government, but they did not restrict the boys to stick to the theme. The teacher in charge, Bishnu Pada Das said, “The boys come from not-very-well-to-do families to our school. They hardly have any training in drawing, so asking them to draw as per the theme will be of no use. Rather their participation is more important, as it will give them an exposure to a new way of representing their hidden skills. Besides, it will help them to enjoy with their friends in a collective activity other than studies.” So the paintings were very spontaneous and represented everyday activities and the lives of the boys through their eyes. Nevertheless, the drawings surely imparted cues about how the adolescent mind worked in constructing their social reality. The boy who I mentioned above and also in chapter 4 (fig.1) belonged to a

family consisting of two younger sisters and his father. He had lost his mother when a child. And his father is a sweeper. His drawing left me quite intrigued not only because it was very different than the other drawings that his contemporaries drew, but also because of the detail he tried to capture. It stood out as a pertinent signifier of his vision of himself and the social. He drew a girl trapped in a plastic bottle, something very different to the theme given. Firstly, I saw a hint of rebel in his endeavor, trying to capture an image that tries to question the stereotype representation of plastic usage and its control. Secondly, the female body that he drew trapped in a bottle signifies his understanding of a female body and femininity, hinting his understanding of bodily gender differences and therefore a certain familiarity with sexuality. Thirdly, the female being trapped in the bottle makes us aware of his love for life and fear of captivity (the meaning of captivity could be diverse here). Further, if I become a little ambitious, possibly, I could also see a tinge of discrimination peeping from his eyes, as the trapped girl symbolically qualifies. Lastly, the plastic bottle as a trap comes across as a great innovation from the young mind. Thus, I begin to ponder. On a rare occasion at the school he has poured his imagination to uphold his subconscious thoughts and conscious experiences, where otherwise he is expected to take lessons in arithmetic and language under strict guidelines. On seeing me peer through his life in a moment's activity, he adds to my experience by passing on information about his home and three sisters who do not go to school unlike him. However, his expression of pathos in the painting goes mostly unnoticed. The school authority that had mentioned a prescribed theme, and also to great extend the content of the art, was oblivious to this production of the sole and lone boy. The school was only following mandates

handed down by the hierarchical orders of the state and its welfarist promises. But the boy revealed his social and cultural experiences through his drawing and possibly made an effort to contest in his own way. On talking to him and his class mates, in a focused group participation, I gathered that he often misses school and has to help his younger sisters back home. The boy added, “amar bon der ato kaaj korte dekhley kosto hoi, ora school ey jete chai kintu parey na. tai ami oder jonno kokhono kokhono school asi na. oder sathe barir kaaj kori.” (I feel sad to see my sisters working alone at home. They wish to go to school but they cannot. I stay back at home at times to help them). Thus we see that through such activities he is able to represent his economic deprivation, social



Figure 9: Source: Drawing Competition at South Calcutta National School for Boys

discrimination and cultural violence⁴ that he encounters every day. The other boys also commented and made fun as they peered through each other's drawing. Some boys bullied the ones who could hardly sketch anything. While some tried to make meaning of the figures that they had represented in their painting. One such boy Samiran Haldar of class X had drawn few people cleaning a space. At first his peers laughed at the figures that he had sketched as they were disproportionate. Then they started to tease him by relating each figure with his family members. One boy asked him as to who the person is who is doing the cleaning in the picture that he had drawn. To that he replied, “amar maa

porishkar korche school, je bhabbe sob somoy kore” (my mother is cleaning the school as she usually does). I further gathered that he stayed in a home run by an NGO (non-governmental organization) for the poor boys. There his mother works as a sweeper and also provides her services at the school. The assertion with which the boy declared that it’s his mother who he has drawn with a broom in her hand was quite a rebuttal to the mockery of his peers. Thus he felt the need to represent his social position no matter how discriminatory. The same boy also added that his friend sitting next to him has better set of colours and sketch pens that are provided by his father who is well off, unlike him. Thus we see how through art and other creative pursuits the adolescent boys are finding ways to express themselves, and at times raising a voice in dissent. There might not have been very loud deviations or challenge in their gestures, as they are mostly performing within the structural and normative space of school. But they surely find avenues to express their views, perceptions and negotiate their ways in a pursuit to seek some kind of agency.

7.5. Love, Friendship and the Adolescent

A serious anxiety over controlling and tempering the adolescent body has found supreme importance throughout, as represented in literature and the field of my research. A remarkable finding on similar line was found in California Adolescence Growth Study done in 1946. The study was done with two hundred girls and boys over a period of seven years to track the changes in their personal and social development. At the interval of three years it was found that the emphasis on social skills, good looks and ability to co-operate with grown-ups had heightened. Skills in athletics gained prestige, however boys could achieve

status through intellectual and moral growth. Leisure time was spent in heterosexual activities, and becoming popular and attractive to girls was also a significant marker for recognition. Whereas, the girls were appreciated for being well-groomed, sophisticated and keeping company of few and 'ideal' boys. 41% of the girls were found to suffer from anxieties around divergences such as excessive tallness, fatness, shortness, acne and other disapproving features. Fleming (1948) says:

Such sexually inappropriate physique in the case of boys and sexually inappropriate face or figure in the case of girls provide obvious reasons for sensitivity as to personal abnormalities. (Fleming, 1948: 148)

Thus the body image and the corresponding sense of sexuality gains significant importance and it gets revealed through interaction with the peers at school and often more so when they engage in varied activities in their leisure time. The relationships that seem to build between the adolescent is very deciding for them. In all the poetries and paintings as well as physical activities examined above make a clear indication towards the need for approval of the friends in varied ways. Friendship seem to be a strong factor for the adolescent to nurture an identity. Deep languish and yearning for friends was as persisting, as their need to voice themselves. Even though there were instances where friends often became their critique and teased them, yet their opinions left a mark in their minds to make a mention of. The girls and boys recognized the parallel voices of their peers and considered them as qualifying messages for their everyday activities and their self-development. In fact, the choices they made for taking up any activity or denouncing it was heavily influenced by the peers. It was the desire to spend the leisure time with the friends that gained paramount

importance. The ideas of sexuality were subtly ingrained through exchanges among the peers of same and opposite sex. Though standardized sex education is a prescribed mandate for many of the schools. Especially with the CBSE and West Bengal Board having formulated policies on those line. But understanding of sexuality surely transcends the one-day lesson on sex as an act. The man-woman relationship or even the stigma of same-sex relationship is learnt through social interaction with the peers in the school and beyond. Since I have not gone into studying the sex-education policies of the state in great length, I would reserve any critical analysis of the same. But what I want to bring to light from my study is the need for friendship and relation with opposite gender for imparting a deeper understanding of love relationship between a man and woman. Thus the need for the adolescent to find a space relatively free from the adult supervision (parents and teachers) guides them into forging new bonding with contemporaries. Fleming on this has made a very pertinent observation:

The opinion of one's contemporaries become of increasing import with adolescent development of awareness of the necessity of becoming independent of one's family. Its relative significance depends, however, upon one's attitude to the home and to the values recognized in the home. Acceptance by an admired group is essential for healthy functioning. (Fleming, 1948: 145)

They try to build a community of their own, having to discuss their own predicaments, achievements and predispositions. The adolescent find out through these newly cultivated relationships a sense of self that was possibly missing under the tutelage of the adults. They use the newly learnt and observed information in such associations to not only assert themselves, but also to fight

out the possible disapprovals and discriminations through negotiations on varied levels. The urgency to live like the adult in a socially, culturally and politically vibrant environment, makes the adolescent question the given orders and prescriptive injunctions. And activities beyond the curriculum help draw in the larger social experience into the educational scope, whereby the adolescent can relook and redefine it in their own right. However, the way it happens is not very uniform and overt. It takes place at a very subtle and nuanced pace and at times on the willingness of the adults to offer this opportunity to the girls and boys. Thus the socialization process is reversed only when the adult feels sufficient need to create platforms for such exchanges, negotiation and therefore release. Few other factors that perennially play a role are the socio-economic position of the boy or girl. The ability to articulate one's opinion and imagination is hugely determined by their years of cultural handicaps and advantages. The poetries that could flower the crux of an adolescent mind with such precision, was missing for any first-generation learner who came from a relatively poorer family. The adolescent boy or girl with such disadvantages were seen to speak out through other medium, extending his energy into some other sort of activities that acted as a divergence away from violence. Nevertheless, the adolescent is ever nudging and negotiating in a space, at times readily offered and at times upon insistence, to express themselves and create an identity of their own.

7.6. Summary Observation

In this chapter a narrative has been built around the agency of the adolescent. The discourse on adolescence that developed around nurturing and controlling has been moved towards recognizing their ability to negotiate and throw away the 'need-to-be-controlled' label. Taking this discourse further a review has been done of the physical activities that the adolescents are expected to participate in and how they assert their divergent thoughts and feelings thereby. The body and its gendered implications that circumscribe the adolescent personality has been delved into. And their quaint voices have been recorded in relation to the same as well as the notions of sexuality ingrained therein. The leisure time engagements and the creative renditions that the former allows to bloom has been carefully analyzed to peep into the adolescent self in making. Thus, a strong sense of desire for identity has been seen. This need for recognition and understanding one's position in relation to others come through a strong association with the peers. Friendship seem to be the source of motivation for acquainting oneself with the new social world and also for becoming a self that can negotiate. It is through the peer group engagement and approval from the same that the adolescent appears to make meaning of varied objects of their lives. Thus the adolescent self is an ever 'becoming' one with constant negotiation with and assimilation of the social world around.

Notes:

1. Bratas are vows that are uttered as a part of folk ritual. These vows are repeated in a rhythmic fashion as the mind and body is in coordination for a sort of physical movement or a dance like gestures. These vows signify certain goals and purposes of life that the devotees promise to live up to.
2. Knochha is the lower end of a dhoti, the unstitched garment worn by Bengali men. Hanging the knochha not only signified luxury, but also a sort of moral decadence and femininity. (Adhikary 2015)
3. During 1947 the war in Kashmir and consequent loss of a portion of Indian territory; along with huge depletion of military reserve made the nation builders of India think of ways to strengthen its Armed forces. Thus a Tri-Services Organisation, comprising the Navy, Army and Air force, was found through a legislative bill for providing military training to the youth of the country. This body was named as National Cadet Corps and it engaged in rendering light military skills and drills to the young boys and girls at the school level. A committee headed by H N Kunzru recommended this cadet organization to be established its units in schools and colleges at a national level.
4. Symbolic violence as conceptualized by Bourdieu highlights the reproduction function of the education system and how all of it happens through creation of culturally significant meaning with hegemonic powers. "Every power to exert symbolic violence, i.e., every power which manages to impose meanings ... as legitimate by concealing the power relations which are the basis of its force, adds its

own specifically symbolic force to those power relations” (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977: 4) such violence is meted out through pedagogical practices in the school, family and other institutions of training. The socializing agent (here the teacher, trainer or parent) enjoys arbitrary power over the wards and this power is rooted in the power relations between the social classes of the socializer and one being socialized.

CONCLUSION

I

The journey through trails beyond the curriculum and adolescent practices within the school has given some fresh insights into both, education and a specific age group availing the same. Exploring the less focused extracurricular (ECA) domain of education pronouncedly hinted how these ECA activities are not of mere ritualistic value, but have multi-dimensional proliferation and thereby goals to meet within the school education system. It is through the field of extracurricular that the adolescent was observed to have found a sub-domain or sub-unit for socialization, resocialization and anticipatory socialization (in several cases), as the major agencies of socialization like the school, family, peer group, state and religion intersect under the execution of ECA. National policies and programs have made significant mention of several such activities and underscored their need for adoption. Reports produced by Kothari Commission (1964) to the recent National Education Policy (2020) have constantly hovered around the implementation and innovation in the area of extracurricular and more so with regard to secondary education. A relevant emphasis on the same was in terms of introducing some sort of work-experience or, to be more precise, vocational training. Along with it there was a pronounced urge for moral and citizenship grooming of the adolescent boys and girls. Every activity was mooted keeping in mind the nationalist reassertions on one hand and cultural diversification on the other. However, activities relating to art, craft and music were assigned dedicated classes with an objective to foster creativity and ignite the imaginative faculties of young minds. Community association

and social responsibility were considered as essential ideals to be nurtured from an early age. Moral responsibility in line with larger promises of education were tried to be met time immemorial through practices beyond the curriculum, if not as much within the curriculum. Historically extra-curricular activities have always found significant importance in school education. But it appears to have gained overwhelming importance in present times with institutions having included them as a new mode of teaching-learning. To make it more pertinent, policies in the NEP (2020) have tried not to keep much discrimination between curriculum and extra-curricular. And all of it is done envisaging the pressing need and the holistic influence it has on the adolescents' development. Thus my journey into schools to record these significant hours spent by the adolescent, adopting and practicing modes of action in the field of extracurricular, has ascertained some past hypotheses around the importance of extracurricular activities and also revised a few. Nevertheless, some fresh insights have also shored up as I indulged in recording the art and aesthetics weaved by and around these activities. The aim of the study was to principally see how the urban adolescence was shaped through participation in these activities for a significant period of their schooling years. It was in this light that the present research was geared towards exploring the socio-cultural and economic conditions that served as a breeding ground for designing and implementing the extracurricular activities at school. Other lifeworld-promoted intersubjective experiences were also to be understood with regards to the educational structures, parental influences, market transitions, and cultural and political legacies in their overlapping as well as absolute significance. Thus the objective was to locate micro empirical experiences in the field and relate them to the larger social order

of things as they nurture and mould these experiences. Through some fresh engagement with the lives of adolescents and the education system at large, I tried to record ECA practices at public and private schools of Kolkata. Nevertheless, a significant emphasis was on enumerating the Bengali ideals and deviations to contextualize my research in relation to both time and space. Attempts were also made to keep the journey between the research space and the larger socio-economic reflections alive, as accounts of the latter was felt necessary to save the study from becoming an isolated account of the phenomena and also to reiterate the homologous nature of the subject under investigation.

II

Every search for knowledge demands a method to cognition and we develop the method alongside research. A field-based cognition develops through a long course of interaction and negotiation with the individuals who constitute the field. The two sides participate in the interaction with their subjective levels of cognition, based on their respective fields of experiences, knowledge, memory, interests and approach to life. While the primary task of the researcher is to draw an honest understanding of the individual and collective life (of the field) from their perspective (as Weber prescribes) the researcher cannot be merely satisfied sticking to “conscious models” (constructed strictly on the basis of the accounts of the information givers), she/he would rather make efforts, following Levi-Strauss, to transcend the “conscious model” and advance towards exploring the “unconscious” and construct the “unconscious models” through a constant

dialogue and negotiation with the field (Levi-Strauss, 1963, 1966). The unconscious models are relatively broader understanding of the structural principles which the researcher should be unravelling and which the subjects in the field may or may not be aware of. In other words, it would be through exploration of the answers for “why question” that the researcher renders his/her theoretical or structural understanding. And in doing the same for my present exercise I made efforts to free my work from what Mills would have labeled as “abstract empiricism” (Mills, 1959). Reflecting upon larger epistemological positions on modern education at the edge of post-industrialization helped me locate my empirical research and verify as well as revise the universals from below, where and when appropriate. In light of understanding the adolescents through their participation in extracurricular activities in select schools of Kolkata, I have seen a multifaceted use of varied kinds of activities beyond the curriculum, both within and outside the classrooms. And interestingly these engagements had bearing of the socio-cultural conditioning of both the adolescent and the school that they happen to visit. It is interesting to note that the cultural reproduction and thereby varied sorts of injunctions being placed to accomplish the former mirrored Bourdieu’s (1971) concept of “field” and “practice”. Thus methodologically I had figured out my field not only through narratives offered by the adolescents and their parents and school authorities, but also transcended to gather cues from the corresponding performative practices. I needed to account for the representational information as manifested during performances and through paintings and poetries crafted by the adolescents. The endeavor was to enumerate the field and its practices alongside the reproduction of social and cultural systems and the gaps, if any. Incidentally,

much meaningful actions were deciphered from the narratives offered by the respondents, and much more got substantiated while observing their corresponding behavior in the field. Thus an ethnographical study into the schools could only be made consequential by engaging in a kind of cultural hermeneutics (Geertz, 1983), whereby pictorial, textual and performative manuscripts were re-read and revisited. The sole ambition remained to make the meaning-making process collaborative between the researcher and researched. As a researcher, total phenomenological “bracketing” was impossible as I engaged with the field of extracurricular in the schools that had certain prescriptive policies and programs to follow, and one could not define the field denouncing the structures of knowledge that had been built around them. Nevertheless, the assumptions, prejudices and preconceived perceptions about adolescence were put aside while accounting for their actions and behavior in the field. However, a cautious mention needs to be made here about the ways in which their experiences in a negotiated space were continuously feeding into the findings. A sort of “anthropological destarngement” (Schutz, 1973) was adopted, whereby the unknown was made known by trying to momentarily live the same events, actions and emotions as that of the participants. The adolescent boys and girls were recorded alike in their emotive and cognitive expressions, keeping aside the authoritative conditionings as brought in by the teachers, parents and through administrative prescriptions. But this position was very tediously achieved as my presence itself was recorded as part of the authority structure, if not a stranger. Their revelation during a semi-structured interview and later on their spontaneous performance during activities were initially influenced by my position of purview, as if they were often responding to a

teacher or one of authority. But gradually as I started to engage in their collective, thus intersubjective space, I found the guarded and impressionable forces wearing off. Many commonsensical, personalized motives, attitudes and desires of adolescent girls and boys that are taken for granted, found fresh meanings in an inter-subjective and inter-related construction of their own. Thus, the presence of an outside researcher was negated, rather an empathetic sounding board was welcomed. I too as a researcher was able to draft some second-stage meaning by encountering the first-stage meanings accomplished by the adolescents in their inter-subjective and negotiated space. This approach was taken on to achieve some sort of ethical justification in analyzing series of behaviors, attitudes, opinions and gestures that could have had diverse interpretation. This kind of a combined interpretative exercise could possibly not be completely value neutral, as my personal history and socio-cultural location did infuse while seeking validation for some data over others. But I guess, the best that I could do was to move to the next level of interpretation, using other sources of accountable experiences and thereby performing “anthropological estrangement” (Schutz, 1973). In doing so I collected paintings made and, poetries and stories written by the adolescent boys and girls. It often gave out an estranged account of their social and cultural lives from a detached position. These creative and aesthetic expressions affirmed the adolescent’s consciousness of their world as experienced. And even if imagined, it mirrored their minds through embodied as well as disembodied acts. Hence the ideation that these pieces of art reflected helped cognition on two levels: first, to substantiate their intersubjective meanings produced during the activities and secondly, to arrive at a universal analytical position of strength

that cuts across a reliable picture, accommodating multiple layers of validation. The interpretation of the “texts” (poems, speeches and paintings) created by the school going girls and boys, collected through ethnography bears methodological significance as I was privy to the moments of their creation (the aesthetic moments), and interact with them to have a grasp of the kind of thoughts and emotions and social locations that prompted the creation of the “texts”. I could see the tensions of adolescent life finding expression in these “texts”. Thus, after some exacting exploration of the field from all sides certain patterns of understanding could be delineated and crystallized, which I tried to analyze in four different chapters.

III

As I was trying to explore the adolescent age group and their engagement in the field of extracurricular at school, I found an antipodal understanding of the same. The understanding grew with reference to ideas, popular opinions, social history, and rhetoric as well as everyday experiences with regards to parents, teachers and therefore the community at large. Nevertheless, the adolescent selves’ negotiations and conscious as well as unconscious expressions remained a vital source of information for constructing the idea of adolescence. This construction was restricted to the schooling process, more specifically in the backdrop of ECA serving as an omniscient mode of socialization.

From the literature revisited, I found several state policies and programs dedicated to adolescence. These policies were mostly formulated to address the needs and vulnerabilities of this age group. To draw attention to the concerns

around adolescence as projected, I would like to quote from an article published in a leading newspaper of the country. “There are 1.2 billion adolescents in the world that account for around 16 per cent of the global population. About every fifth adolescent lives in India, and every fifth person in India is an adolescent. So, the necessity to focus on their welfare for the country cannot be overstated. The country’s future development trajectory is inextricably tied to the wellbeing of today’s adolescents since it is the key determinant of their transition into adulthood.” (*Economic Times*, 2020). One such significant program for addressing adolescent health issues, named Rashtriya Kishor Swasthya Karyakram (RKSK) was launched in 2014. The program aims to holistically approach the health problems of adolescents across the nation and in turn ensure their development. It is a community-based service whereby a continuum is built between the healthcare bodies and the schools so that requisite support can be provided in adolescence. The linkages are built between the teachers, peer educators (representative of adolescent students), and other service providers (such as, Anganwadi Workers—AWWs, Accredited Social Health Activists—ASHAs, Lady Councillors and Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan—NYKS—volunteers). The proposed program seeks to approach the adolescent through the education system and peer-influence mechanisms. The target is to find remedial measures for problems relating to adolescents’ nutrition level, sexual practices, reproductive health, mental health, substance abuse and violence. Thus a strong emphasis has been laid to focus on the development of the adolescent of age 10 to 19 (as prescribed in the program). The schools are often tagged to local health care system through tertiary level bodies like Anwasha Clinics and other adolescent-friendly care centers. In fact, many schools also

disclosed that they at times felt the need to assign teacher-counsellors within school, beyond the government directives and programs, to dedicatedly hear out the adolescent problems and workout solutions. However, programs like these and few other solely focusing on adolescent girls are trying to reach out to out-of-school candidates. But for delimiting the scope of my study I have not explored the out-of-school functionaries. Nevertheless, from the days of ambiguity around who are adolescent to the present decade's pressing concern for identifying them and addressing their issues at the community level, and more often than not through education, has been quite a revelation. Upon citing from Bengali literature and analyzing popular children/adolescent (as alternatively used in Bengal) fictional characters, I saw an equally vulnerable and needed-to-be-guided image of adolescent shoring up. Exploring and reimagining the character of "Topshe", the adolescent nephew of detective "Feluda" in Satyajit Ray's detective series, a socio-cultural construction of adolescent among middle class Bengalis could be presented. Interestingly, reminiscence of the image could be still traced in the attitudes and expectations of the adolescent boys and their parents. The all-rounder curious boy, lying on the edge of uncertainty and indecisiveness, painted a popular image of adolescent in the local as well as global minds. Stanley Hall's (1904) representation of adolescence as an age of "stress and storm" and Margaret Mead's findings among adolescents of Samoa in *Coming of Age in Samoa* (1928) suggest of a larger problematic concerning the nature of adolescence in modern societies vis-a-vis the primitive. Later, Durjati Prasad Mukerji (1946) reiterates a similar dilemma around the construction of adolescence in the Indian society at the early years of nation making. He said

that any social development could not find a synchronization between physiological adolescence and social adolescence because of the economic pressure, which has only widened the gap for student group. Thus the sexual excesses of adolescence as perceived by adults and therefore taming, more appropriately channelizing their energy, remained the social concern and cultural practice universally. With this discourse running through history, education gained a pivotal position in constructing and reconstructing adolescence. And it was done through collaborative engagement with the community. From “coming of age” to “act your age” and its transitional attributes, as represented by the adolescent girls and boys during their schooling hours, uphold a notion of adolescence parallel to the perennial understanding.

IV

The ideology of value-oriented education often raises questions about the ethical positions taken for justifying which values to be imparted. Education has been the harbinger of such valued lessons to ensure the cultural standards in any given society. But whose culture and what sort of appropriation of that culture is being done remains a point of deep rumination. An account of the extracurricular activities carried out at public schools exposed that values imparted herein got validation by negating an opposite set of values, based on certain socio-cultural and politico-economic considerations. So, the question as to whose values will qualify and embody the value-education courses in and beyond curriculum remained pressing and critical. Researching into the extra-mural components of education in these schools brought forth the lacunae in policies and practices, mostly promoting majoritarian ideologies and thus

raising concomitant consciousness. It revealed how life skill training in these schools were designed reasserting a value position that was in the interest of the “other” rather than those imbibing them. Adolescent boys and girls were merely engaged in the process of reproducing their socio-cultural positions through these activities. For instance, Rallies and hygiene lessons organised by the state government unravelled how the metropolitan city thrives on a popular perception of untidy settlements in poor neighbourhood, and conceives of a public space divided into contaminating and non-contaminating zones. In fact this reflected in the consciousness of the girls and boys too who spoke of their relative position of advantage and disadvantage in relation to the hygiene conditions as prescribed and poised desirable by the authority. Besides, the humanitarian position taken by the political players along with the teacher-collaborator often sought these adolescent members of the society as “containers” (Freire, 1971) to be filled up. Structures of domination come to play in multiple ways to prepare the “citizens of tomorrow” with motives undeclared. Deep-seated ideas about cleanliness and environmental protection find fresh vigour with the “middle-class community” sprawling the adjacent areas of these neighbourhood public schools. Notions of safety, cleanliness, hygiene and health seem to reflect need of protection of the privileges of some citizens at the expense of the other. These extracurricular activities reflected the passivity of adolescents belonging to lower income-group households. Alongside, a pressing desire to nurture that passivity was also noticed in the interest to meet manifold political, social and cultural mandates. But the same grandeur in training/ indoctrinating the adolescent students through state-sponsored programs were found missing in the private schools. The majoritarian

control over value education even today, standing at the crossroads of neo-liberal economies and liberal democratic political formations, speak aloud through muted voices of the adolescents belonging to the fringes. However, there has been peeking instances with possibilities of resistance to the given moralities, trying to find an alternative position voicing morality “arisen” from subjective and subaltern experiences. For instance, during a sit-and-draw exercise on protection of environment a boy drew a girl trapped in the bottle, ignoring the prescribed theme for the art competition. Besides, many girls expressed how they did not understand the lessons offered to them, as whatever was expected of them regarding hygienic practices were not possible to be followed due to several infrastructural limitations and economic reasons.

V

While discussing the life skill training that circumscribed the extracurricular activities in the public schools, I was prompted to find parallels of the same in the private schools of Kolkata. Something more intriguing and beyond the defined scope of “life skill” with plethora of other functions and functionalities were exposed. I noticed, firstly, that the predominance of state-sponsored, state-regulated and state-formulated extracurricular programs was missing. And whatever was being carried out was based on nomenclatures and administrative prerequisites, with not much elaboration and excesses as seen in public schools. Secondly, the passivity on the part of the students and the almost-negligible presence of parents as in public schools was also obliterated. As most of these schools had English as their medium of instruction and a reasonably high fee

structure, the inmates came from relatively economically higher class than those in public schools.

Rapid privatization of education across the country and its inevitable inclusion of English education was the point of attraction for the emerging middle classes since the post-colonial era. The middle classes saw a promise in such education for acquiring requisite educational credential for their children and securing jobs. However, with liberalization policies being put to force, this process of privatization and intrusion of market into education got further accelerated. In such times of neoliberalism, education too expanded its scope to accommodate wider demands of the growing market holding hands of the technology. Surprisingly enough, I could locate how adolescents along with their parents were fast being turned into consumers of educational products and services. And interestingly provision for and thus availing of these services were possible only because technology had made deep inroads. For instance, the use of smart phones to record songs and download the background scores of new songs before any music performance. Free market orients its consumers towards “personalized consumption”, leading them to consume “goods” and “services” in the form of education as well. With the promise to equip one with new skills and give them an added advantage over others, the market lures the student-parent consumer duo into buying the best facilities and lessons on offer beyond curriculum. For instance, schools hire private agencies to offer a plethora of ECA for their adolescent students and the fees for the same are often hefty. And they too use technological aids to reach the students beyond the class hours to offer their training lessons.

A kind of commodification of the consumers (the adolescent in this case) take place, banking on a fast-paced “culture of consumption” among the middle classes. And this culture often evolved through acts of emulation and chain of reactions like any other embodied form of culture. Many parents and students were picking up extracurricular activities based on their peer’s choices of the same. In fact many adolescent boys and girls as well as their parents expressed how their friend’s, neighbour’s and relative’s engagement in a particular form of activity had a rippling effect on them. I could sense an anxiety of being left out that guides their choices. They too wanted to be part of a social group in all its intrinsic terms and were nevertheless nurtured into trusting and valuing group choices. I am not very sure if it could be seen as a “herd-like” behavior, but it surely represented an urge to cultivate tastes that define a class location. Thus the receding state-welfare initiatives to accommodate market-profit goals overwhelms the education system as well. Plethora of extracurricular activities have been introduced merely to accommodate demands of the students and their parents. There are events and programs that reflect a cultural overture of the deep changes that were taking place in the economic and political structures of the society. Adolescents were trying to make choice in pursuing activities based on its alternative career implications and advantages too. Many adolescents in my study lay bare their insecurities of not finding a seat in reputed engineering colleges, and hence wanting to build an alternative career in either music or other performing arts. For instance, many parents and their wards told me how they were keen to go to a particular school because they knew that those schools were technological equipped and it would provide them greater exposure at every level. A girl said that she enjoyed the art classes in her school as she learnt

to draw using a software on Google Draw and therefore enjoy many mediums of painting. However, the choices mostly were made under peer influence as well as parental guidance in lieu of credence for employability in a volatile economic scenario. The economic vulnerability was surely a driving force behind finding alternative avenues of income, but there is no denying that on several occasions the utility quotient of an ECA was superseded by needs to belong to one's social class and adopt corresponding practices.

Parenting and its middle class anxieties in an insecure job market and an emerging "risk society" (Beck, 1992) were constantly felt in my study. Middle class parents were seen responding to the dramatic changes in job opportunities and adopting alternative career choices. At times they were also found to be quite hopeful about the boom in service and entertainment industry, building dreams and nurturing desires of seeing their wards turn into celebrity someday. They were moving beyond the goals of securing an occupation for a lifetime to making their wards multi-talented and nurturing traits that would befit them to juggle jobs or even start new enterprise. For instance, a mother expressed how she wants her son to learn at least two foreign languages as that would help him secure admissions in MBA schools. On the other hand, the son was more interested to become a travel photographer. The ways in which parent-child negotiations shape the education that one avails are also evident in my work. Picking up skills beyond the curriculum and syllabus was seen as vital not for self-development alone, but also the need of the hour to reconfigure class identity and location. The glitz and glamour associated with many of these activities and the celebrated career choices that they seem to promise of, often had deep impact on the minds of the adolescent and their parents. For instance,

the possibilities of becoming a chess master like Vishwanathan Anand or becoming a participant in the popular television show “India got Talent” were surely inviting dreams to coax parents and their wards to make relevant choices in ECA. Middle class parenting exhibits a new dimension in terms of socio-economic changes, as the parents make attempts to retain their cultural significance as a class with newer choices to make at the turn of globalization and assert their ideas of “taste” (as Bourdieu conceptualizes) therein. Thus the not-so-homogeneous class was seen trying its best to secure itself against the risks and apprehensive crises that were looming large at the brink of modernity. Therefore, after Bourdieu (1971), who elaborately and convincingly discussed about the middle class reproduction of culture through educational enterprise, I have also tried to make an attempt to touch the notes that reveal similar reproduction but in a different epoch, which Ulrich Beck (1992) and Anthony Giddens (1998) later have termed as the “risk society”.

At this juncture, the role of mothers seem to stand out distinctly in relation to their historical position in the family and their responsibility of nurturing their offspring. Mothers of the middle class families were seen enthusiastically engaging with their wards and the schools during all kinds of events and programs. Her involvement extended beyond her need to groom her child, as these activities often turned out to be a ripe site for her to reproduce her cultural position. For instance, while making of craft items for her child or deciding upon their musical or artistic endeavors, the mother seemed to be reliving her younger days practicing the skills that once she cherished, but had long abandoned due to varied reasons. The mother was found to be the first line of support and agent to deal with the biological and psychological changes of their

adolescent boy or girl. She in a transformed social milieu, having to take up employment beyond the domestic sphere alongside performing familial duties, exposes herself to fresh set of anxieties in the role of a mother. Thus other than exploiting the available economic and cultural resources, the middle class parents have cultivated and nurtured the home-school relationship with utmost commitment and mothers of Bengali urban middle class families seem to occupy a pivotal position here. The mother is also seen here jostling with new choices on offer as ECA, trying to figure out which all would be befitting with the middleclass position in the neoliberal times. Thus retaining the “bhadrolok” image and its cultural rootedness on one hand and assimilating the new practices that come to define the middle class in the globalized age on the other. For instance, one mother narrated how she wanted her daughter to learn “rabindra sangeet” but she also conceded to the idea of her learning guitar as the daughter wanted to make a career as a band artist. She shared her anxieties as a middle class Bengali trying to hold on to her cultural moorings, but also exclaimed that boys and girls of her family have shown exemplary success as models and stand-up comedians. However, the mother is yet not the final decision maker always, she merely carries forward and fulfils the cultural demands of her familial and class location. In case of the Bengali middle class the mother appeared to take much onus in retaining the “bhadrolok” character, while allowing the changing values to seep in after much consideration.

Mostly mothers become harbinger of the paternalistic responsibilities, carrying out orders subtly handed down to them. Interestingly, mothers of middle class Bengali families seem to take up a provider-partner duo role along with her adolescent boy or girl. Her rich cultural training attained inter-generationally

and institutional nurturing through good schooling in her early years make her adept for such task. Through her embodied form of capital, socially and institutionally imbibed, she paves new pathways for child-rearing. Thus we see the parent accommodating the demands of the market-nurtured education system and transforming oneself into motivated-individuals, seeking rational ways to groom their adolescent boy or girl into suitable man and woman in a new social order of risks and uncertainties. The middle class character has surely transformed with neoliberalization and scholars have extensively discussed it in last decade. But my concern here was to understand the assimilative tendencies of the Bengali middle class alongside their keenness to retain the “bhadrolok” image. Interestingly, I found that the “bhadrolok” Bengali image is being supplemented with new beliefs and ideas, without having replaced their culturally esoteric actions and thoughts.

Another significant correlation was identified between pedagogic transformations and popular culture. A thudding presence of popular cultural elements in the musical, literary and dance compositions of the school programs opens a new space for negotiating the idea of education. Both parent’s and teacher’s role become critical in such situation. Use of popular music or dance numbers often seem to put aside the hierarchical structures of the classroom, if not totally remove them. While analyzing the behavior of the participants during the activities, one remarkable practice that surfaced was the friend-like bonding between the teachers and the students. A sort of camaraderie was seen evolving between the teachers and students during the cultural events and stage shows. Besides, all initiatives were seen being conducted outside the classroom structure, giving the students certain sense of liberation from the disciplinary

demands of a curriculum. There seems to emerge a kind of collaboration, sharing and thus negotiating learning activities, between the teacher and the student. Thus the relevance of free, meaningful and experiential learning possibly comes to exist. The initiative of some teachers and voices echoing some sort of democratic mindset wasn't totally absent. For instances, a teacher was found picking up lyrics of a Bollywood number to sing along with his students for an annual day event. Hindi Bollywood numbers, pop and rap music, dances emulating the Hindi movie songs and even western music were integral part of school programs. Teachers with their middle class upbringing stated that they were also becoming used to this inroad of popular mass-mediated culture into the extracurricular activities. Though some did ponder and revealed their inhibitions around such inclusion in educational practices, but they also opined how it was inevitable as education couldn't remain divorced from the community and larger social and cultural changes.

In a globalized world the penetration of mass-mediated popular musical and dramatic representations into regional culture was surely unavoidable. The idea of popular finds new meaning with musical and dance forms across the globe crossing over each other and finding embodied and material representations in regional micro spaces. For instance, the surge of Korean boy band called BTS (Bangtan Boys) and its rising popularity among the Indian adolescence is worth noticing. Adolescent girls and boys emulate their style and use their music to cast a new image of themselves. One girl from the schools I visited told me how she was enthralled by their "cute" and "soft" appearances, unlike the violent-looking boys of her age group. Their music is available on YouTube in plenty and therefore adolescent boys and girls were heavily exposed to the same. In

one of the stage shows of the school, a musical rendition was made using the background scores of the Korean band. Thus, we can see that the Western influence in terms of commercially provided popular is no longer limited to American pop shows and British music concerts, it has extended to draw close the Far East and its popular cultural forms. This could be possible through the massive expansion of social media aided by technological revolution post liberalization and advent of an information-based society. The adolescents of 1990's who used to tap their feet to Michael Jackson's popular songs — "black or white" and "they don't care about us" — are now celebrating the musical scores of a Korean Band. Here we need to mention that the popular is now under the grip of commercial "Hindi-Hindu" cultural forms on one hand and globalized international forms on the other. Accommodation of both these forms into the commercially manufactured popular culture and transmission of the same surely have certain manipulative ideological propaganda to meet in a capitalist order. Thus the changing dynamics of popular culture surely have a deep impact on the budding adolescent minds and thereby a rippling effect on the family and community at large. In these situations, the reaction of the parents and teachers to the fast changing character of the popular and thereby its absorption into the middle class, where principally they are situated, become a site for strong contestation. What would be retained as purely Bengali cultural tradition and what would be the new elements of "modern" that shall be picked up to define the new Bengali "bhadroluk" is quite varied and therefore heterologous. Interestingly, here begins the dialogue between the personal preferences of the parent and the structural changes in cultural forms. Therefore, the popular too doesn't come across as something fixed and free of contestation.

The dialectics of resistance and containment inherent in any cultural form gets displayed here too. Stuart Hall (1981) makes a very pertinent remark in this regard:

The struggle continues: but it is almost never in the same place, over the same meaning or value. It seems to me that the cultural processes— cultural power —in our society depends in the first instance, on this drawing of the line, always in each period in a different place, as to what is to be incorporated into the 'great tradition' and what is not. Educational and cultural institutions, along with many positive things they do, also help police this boundary. (Hall, 1981: 237)

Though cultural reproduction was evident throughout during these activities, deviations in the form of musical renditions, dance expression, poetic imaginations and imitation of recent popular forms of cultural artefacts within the school boundaries could not be rejected. Activities at school often drew upon the popular cultural forms to echo collective imagination and ideals with regard to nation building, patriotism and democracy among many other. In such situations scope was made for the teacher to learn and relearn in new light about the popular and subcultural interfaces as dished out by the adolescent. It also acted as a tool or method of negotiation for the adolescents to create a novel way of expressing themselves. Hence, though the risk of nurturing a larger political ideal and commodified expression of the masses cannot be negated in inclusion of the popular cultural forms within the education system, its ability to provide a platform for adolescents to express themselves must not be overlooked. I believe, it's a way to start initiating some sort of democratic ideals

in the domain of systemic education and question the regimented schooling after the critical pedagogues. In my study I have seen possibilities and attempts of such transformed pedagogic initiatives on the part of the teachers. While reminiscing the “Guru-Shisha” tradition of India and revisiting the relevant exercises made by thinkers in that direction, I could reason out two principal factors at play for such teaching-learning innovation. First, the humanist approach embedded in every individual motivates the nurturer within the teacher to care for the pupils beyond her/his given job description. Dealing with adolescent from a counter perspective and learning their lingua-of-franca, their tastes in music and other creative expressions, the teacher allows some democratic space. For instance, in my study teachers were found comparing events along with their students in a kind of ambience where the spontaneity in their exchange of speeches were marked by stark informality. Second, the other socio-cultural forces that mediate our world of representation through popular culture coaxes the educationist to adopt changes in the same direction, at least in the way they perceive education. And here I would not resist to mention how I saw teachers organizing fashion shows for their students and deciding innovative themes for the same, moving beyond the ostensible commodification that the event intrinsically seems to entail. The point I want to rather make here is that the event was used to meet some other end, though its popular usage indicated something totally different.

VI

The extracurricular activities as designed and administered in schools, reveal either strong mandates of the state and educational bodies or are catapulted by the demands of the market under the umbrella of “high-value” education. Thus producing contrasting experiences in terms of that which is enumerated and those practiced. All the schools I visited had fixed record of extracurricular activities that were to be conducted in any academic year. Some of the activities and observances were common for both public and private schools, but their ritualistic character did show some difference in terms of grandeur. Celebration of Independence Day, Gandhi Jayanti, events to commemorate the Birth Anniversary of Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Foundation Day of the school, Teachers Day and Annual Sports day were some such events that were observed by all schools. Though the celebrations and corresponding funding for the same weren’t uniform, a common belief system seemed to bind the adolescents for participating with supreme enthusiasm. This common belief system at times resonated the larger political ideologies, and on other times reflected the contrasting regional cultural adaptations and indigenous socio-cultural affiliations. I would like to draw attention here to the “Hindi-Hindu” popular cultural forms making its way alongside the age-old multi-cultural representation of nationalism via songs and dramas mostly inspired by the Bollywood. However, the local assertion of the nationalist imagination and religious beliefs through music and dance dramas as created by the schools borrowing from the cultural heritage of Bengal, specifically in works of Tagore, have a lasting impact on the minds of adolescents. The process of ritualization that encumbered the ceremonies commemorating these days of significance

surfaced a unique pattern of behavior among the adolescents, often oscillating between and at times merging the religious and the secular. Therefore, I did not stop at discussing the religious ways deployed by schools to attain citizenship ideals or the excesses in nationalist training. I engaged in documenting ritualistic practices within the school that echoed the larger socio-religious practices and help identify the distortions, manipulations and/or the reassertions in the sub context of education at local level. This, in turn, helped me understand the other hidden forms of learning and unlearning that takes place. Adolescents were found exploring the “other culture” through the rituals carried out as part of the extracurricular activities. To make a mention, one girl from a missionary school expressed that for her carrying the cross of the church is no different than cleaning the idols she worshipped back home. They were absorbed in these rituals as an act of play, overwhelming them and igniting the spirit of collective effervescence (Durkheim, 1912).

The citizenship training project always remained elemental in school education, whether through religious rituals or adoption of secular methods. But I found a mid-path being carved out by the adolescents to rediscover and celebrate both religiosity and secular on new terms. Be it the observance of Independence Day, annual day celebration of a missionary school within the premises of the church or holding fests at the school premises during Christmas and Durga Puja, the rituals seemed to lie on and move along a religio-secular continuum. And interestingly, the adolescent boys and girls moved along the continuum too, redefining religious practices in terms of their local culture and challenging the given meaning of secular or religious after relating it to their immediate field of experiences. The edgy and exploratory adolescent seems to soak in the spirit of

ritualistic exuberance and fun, enabling themselves to land on a multi-cultural site with unadulterated practices and corresponding belief systems. Behaviors exposing secular religiosities among adolescents also hint towards the identity-class nexus at play. For instance, I found a Muslim girl participating in the Navaratri celebrations at school and selling “firni” (a sweet dish typically prepared by Muslims on special occasions) in the school-organized “mela” Nevertheless, the universal ethics emerging from these rituals seem to shape the adolescents’ understanding of their own religion as well as other religiosities through ritual participation in the later. Thus, the rituals, whether secular or religious, with its cultural overtures and significations within the schooling practices help the adolescence to dialogue with themselves under the spell of effervescence. Thereby often leading to new meanings and negotiated rituals, breaking down the watertight structures of religious and secular ideals.

VII

While accounting for such pronounced training and moral reproduction through cultural practices and ideas, I found the negotiating self of the adolescent constantly sneaking in. The logic of socialization was reinstated, but with a compelling agency of the adolescent in place. Therefore, it was convincing enough to trace the reverberations that were displayed through embodied as well as disembodied adolescent selves. The discourse on adolescence that was elaborated at the beginning of the thesis has been further developed through lived experiences and imaginative pursuits of the adolescents in chapter 7. From the notion of “need-to-be-controlled” social category to a “trying-to-be-

independent” individuals have been traced through their personal accounts of role-playing and role-taking in several performative activities. A close dissection of the physical activities that the adolescents have always been expected to participate at the school under the banner of physical education (not necessarily sports) divulged how their selves come to exist through embodied representation of thoughts and feelings. The sense of body and its gendered implications on the adolescent personality have always been very deep-seated and determining. Thus recording their quaint voices in relation to the same and their ingrained notions of sexuality proliferates a fast-changing image of adolescence. The crisis seems to be deep and varied for adolescents, having to live up to the gendered body types and at the same time negotiate for a space where their bodies are not the sole indicators of their personality and identity. The struggle seems to be demanding, both for the boys and girls across socio-economic classes. Fraught with imaginations about their gendered roles and the consequent lived experiences, the adolescents seem to construct a self not without resistance. However, leisure time that these extra-mural activities render, often make room for new relations to grow and help cultivate strong affectual bonding between peers. It is through relations of friendship, transcending gendered practices, at the same time gendered differentiation mediated by other practices, that they learn to assert themselves as men- and women-in-making. Thereby, forging a strong desire for self-identity in relation to their embodied existences beyond the given classifications. Recognition of one’s distinctiveness and unflappable disposition becomes possible through strong association with the peers. Friendship becomes the foreground for exploring the social world in new light and constructing a self that can negotiate.

The girls and boys often recognized the parallel voices of their peers and treated them as qualifying messages for their everyday actions and thoughts. Reflection on man-woman relationship and stigmas or sanctions in that regard became spontaneous only through social interaction with the peers in the school and beyond. The established ideas of masculinity or femininity were questioned, partially accommodated and at times rejected through participation in extra-curricular activities along with the peers (belonging to same as well as opposite gender). Besides, it was through creative pursuits and imagination that the adolescent unraveled contrasting ideas about gendering, corresponding role adoption, sexuality and many other social concerns that are more often than not kept outside their purview of understanding. Poetries and paintings carved out by the adolescent boys and girls surface the not-so-subservient minds and bodies. Thus, the aesthetic immersion during leisurely hours in lieu of ECA and its consequent forbearance help lend agency to the adolescent self, constantly negotiating and assimilating with the larger social world.

VIII

As this research was constantly guided by reflections into and erudition on beyond-the-curriculum educational practices among a particular age group, theoretical and corresponding epistemological positions turned out to be eminent source of influence, if not determinant. Few natural assertions of already enumerated knowledge positions have been quite obvious and necessary. As I revisited the idea of cultural reproduction among the lower- and middle-income classes following Bourdieu's (1970) thesis on education and its

essential ramification with regard to social and cultural capital, I took a step forward and tried to locate the same reproduction in a newer socio-economic and political context. It is after Ulrich Beck (1992) that I have tried understand how the educational forces play upon the parents and their adolescent wards, making them experiment with themselves so that they can survive a risk prone and crisis ridden society. With globalization and neo liberalism setting its foot strongly in the Indian sub-continent from 1990, technological advancement, changing consumption pattern, transforming employment conditions and a move towards cultural pluralism, with its own limitations and reservations in a state of rising minority politics, were becoming but evident. Education for the “becoming” adolescent in such times had to witness some palpable transformations. Thus the notion of “risk society” and its ways of dealing with the insecurities and hazards of modernization was also tried to be dealt with while locating the corollary effect on education and its role in the lives of adolescents. However, in doing so the theses of critical pedagogues like Paulo Freire (1971), Ivan Illich (1971), and Henry A. Giroux (2005) were used as a canvas to locate the passivity that the education system is beset with. To mention in this league, some ideas of containment and reproduction of knowledge system in a hierarchical manner was surely seen but not without contestations and hope for innovation, if not total resentment and retaliation. Thus bringing into the foreground the work of Indian-origin thinkers and educators like Tagore, Gandhi and Sri Aurobinda, to name a few, and their institutionalized philosophies in the form of “Shantiniketan”, “Nai tailem”, and “Mirambika” respectively, one can still find the quest of critical thus democratic education alive. Through raising of eyebrows towards the mainstream modern

education within its own furlongs and experimenting with alternatives, especially through the avenue of extracurricular, few stark and pertinent cases of non-linear and non-subjugated teaching-learning processes have also been reproduced. And I believe the same is also taking place through popular cultural renditions via permissible ECAs within the give and often normatively sacrosanct space of schooling, thus disciplining. After all, the essence of education cannot be reduced to a capacity-building program for the market society or merely disciplining bodies and minds to that end; the dimensions of critical pedagogy, self-development, blossoming of creative faculty are inseparable part of the development of the adolescents as well as national development.

Deliberations in light of agency and thus making of the adolescent remained a very pressing engagement for the study throughout. Theoretical positions in understanding the adolescence have followed a major shift from G. Stanley Hall's work in 1900s to Margaret Meads work in 1920s and finally Nancy Lesko's recent perceptions about American adolescent in 2000s. In the same light and with reference to D. P. Mukerji's ideation with regard to the youth of India, this study has continuously struggled to find a definitional vis-à-vis a watertight category called the adolescent who could be characterized using some essential (or "ideal-typical" in Weberian sense) elementary features. Rather it is more through the existential narratives that they come to assert a state of 'being' and 'becoming' in any society. However, though there is no denying that the middle class preoccupation and prejudices around the grooming of their offspring that D. P. Mukerji suggested decades back have also been replicated in my findings, but the lack of energy and dynamism that he

noticed among the adolescents cannot be fully agreed upon. The changing circumstances and possible need for enterprise for making a living, and the increased period of financial dependence on the parents have helped develop some sharper and versatile negotiation skills among the adolescents. Thus the present-day adolescent is now living a prolonged childhood as well as a prolonged youth on both edges, whereby they are gaining better assessment of social and cultural forms in its specific age-outlined premises. Alongside, parenting too has been changing its course with longer years of fathering and mothering. Parents have also started to collaborate with their wards rather than remain mere providers or nurturers, as it helps mitigate the ordeals of merely providing without engaging for extended years. Hence these ideological, therefore theoretical, positions have helped me locate my work historically and also given a push forward to revisit them in renewed times in anew trajectory of knowledge production.

Any endeavor in this knowledge production exercise can neither be a compulsive attempt to make straight jacketed analyses nor be sealed from all sides. Therefore, I would like to see it as a project in a direction that invites further probing to find fresh and contesting viewpoints. The adolescence that comes to exist through intersection with varied age groups and multi-variate sites of socialization, independent of education, also invites deeper interrogation. Opening up new discourses from above and below remains a greater challenge ahead. The thrust from here could possibly move into tracing adolescence from a different vantage points, be it the rural, the migrant, the working class, or those in absence of parental guidance. Even perceiving them from their other sub-sites or -fields within the community, like peer interaction,

friendship bonds, leisure engagements or work life commitments that they possibly engage early to make a living, can all add to and contest the findings hereon. Methodologically too in those cases new ways of seeing could be brought into fruition. Dealing with the adolescence, the use of play and its sensory rumblings sent out through sound, smell and touch could be tapped and used as valuable source of information in order to make research on adolescent lives more integrated and comprehensive.

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