Chapter Five

THE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

In the preceding chapters we have discussed few things: the content of education, the educands and the educators. We found a mixed picture: the level of democratization and maturity of citizenship education varies from school to school, and the quest for citizenship could be well found in the schools, though many tasks remain unfinished. The discussion would remain incomplete unless we discuss the environment of the community of schools. This chapter therefore intends to study the school environment in inculcating citizenship education - to understand whether school have really become a miniature community. The underlying hypothesis is that the more the school is as complete as a community, the better would be the education for citizenship, for a number of reasons: (i) Even adult people find it difficult to motivate themselves for a particular cause, especially if the cause is likely to be realised after a considerable period of time. This is because after the initial euphoria is over, the hard and unpleasant aspects of the cause come to surface. Secondary education is a fairly long term activity of ten years. Moreover, since the focus of attention - the trainee citizens, are immature about the rigours of the extremely competitive world, and therefore, are often probe to make use of the easy options for immediate pleasures and comfort,
or to avoid discomfiture, notwithstanding the long-term consequences. As a supportive feature, the school environment should act correctly to motivate the pupils for the unpleasant but necessary causes to realise. The requirements for school effectiveness are summed up by Kerawalla and Pandya: In the teaching process, there should be clarity, enthusiasm, variety and task orientation. Teachers must be well prepared in their subjects, the evaluation process should be objective, valid and comprehensive with a sound feedback system, and the planning process should be participatory in nature. The relationship of the student with principal, teachers and peers should be warm, depending on rationality, democracy, fairness, impartiality, punctuality, orderliness and dedication to duty.¹

(ii) Both pupils, and the people who are most concerned about them - their parents, expect the education to help them settle into secure economic life in adulthood. The perception of the secure economic life is related to their socio-economic position and the life style they are acquainted with, as we shall see while discussing the citizen's perception about and experience in the school system. Most of the parents, again, like their children to specialise on science and commerce in their higher education, especially those belonging to middle and lower classes forming the bulk of citizens: 74 out of 120 respondents form both cities across all socio-economic
classes wished their children to study science or commerce after secondary schooling. At secondary level, they would therefore like their children in these subjects. Moreover, we have seen 80 out of 120 students in both Delhi and Calcutta across different socio-classes find science subjects (including Mathematics) of their first choice. We also have noticed the fact that in both the cities, textbooks on literature and social sciences make more contribution to citizenship education than those on science subjects. Education specifically for citizenship thus is not received with much enthusiasm either by guardians or pupils, though it is not intended to say that successful science students will not become successful citizens. What is pinpointed only one third of the total respondents under our study like subjects on literature the most, and due to various reasons. Despite the students in general, promise to be successful citizens, the role of school is contested by many agencies in this regard. Therefore, the school environment must be extremely supportive to the students to inculcate education on citizenship to make the impact deeper and intense.

(iii) Development in any human faculty needs motivation. Motivation needs optimism. Optimism requires the person concerned to have dreams: that things might be difficult today, but upon my conscious efforts, they could be better tomorrow. The school environment should be able to provoke
this dream among the young pupils, and at least provide some means to transform this dream into reality.

We never educate directly, says Dewey, but indirectly through environment. It is therefore prudent to deliberately design the desirable environment. This is to be done by the school, which fulfils three functions: 2 (i) summarizing the developments and experiences of civilization to date; (ii) elimination of unworthy aspects of the existing environment; and (iii) integrating and balancing various elements in social environment so that the pupils can escape the limitations of social groups in which they are born. There can be much debate on how for these ideals are fulfilled, but for our purpose, we must study both aspects of the environment in the Secondary schools: those which promote as well as those which hinder the education on citizenship in the Secondary schools. This can be done under two interrelated categories, which are by no means exclusive into themselves: (1) Physical Environment; and (2) Psycho-Human Environment.

1. Physical Environment

Physical environment refers to the apparently non-human aspects of the environment, which includes: the school infrastructure, availability of resources, and the surroundings.

Regarding school infrastructure, several things have to be noted. First, the school building - whether it is neat
and clean, classroom, canteens, teachers and principal's room etc. are well maintained. Taste is an important factor here, as an aspect of the "unconscious influence of the environment", which deeply affects the mind and character. "If the eye is constantly greeted by harmonious objects, having elegance of form and colour, a standard of taste naturally grows up". This criteria thus provides the right ambience for learning, thus making it pleasant. If this condition remains absent to a large scale, the situation becomes a depressing one and students may conclude that some people are not doing their duty, and also immune from any corrective action. This may hamper the growth of both rule of law and professional ethics. To review the actual situations, we may start with the schools. In Modern School, the buildings are neat and clean, with attractive architecture, classrooms are spacious, airy comfortable, and full of natural light. Students have cupboards to keep their bags, and separate chairs and desks. There are nice lawns with planned greenery. In St. Lawrence School, the buildings are neat and clean, classrooms are spacious, seating arrangements comfortable, but not as expensive as Modern School, and the architecture is pleasant. Visitors are forbidden to move through the corridors during class hours. Like Modern School, the teachers room is also quite pleasant in this school, and furniture are apparently more expensive. The Headmaster's room in this school, also looks better than Modern School. In Modern School's Canteen, fairly expensive
snacks are available. Snacks in St. Lawrence School canteen are not so expensive. In Vinay Nagar School, the building is neat and clean, classrooms are full of natural light and air, and reasonably spacious. The lawn is decently sized, garden nurtured with care and grasses mown evenly. The furniture are decent, though not expensive, teachers room is fairly spacious and neat, the principal’s room is well furnished with comfortable furniture and computer, which he himself describes as ‘Rashtrapati Bhawan’, and did not allow to instal an air conditioner. There is no separate canteen, as in Bidhan Nagar School, where the architecture is good, the school building is not unclean, classrooms not uncomfortable, but in some rooms like the one from which I collected data, there is no abundance of natural light. There is no lawn, but a concretised space to hold assembly. The teacher’s room is spacious, but natural light did not seem to appear all through the day in required abundance. Furniture are reasonably comfortable. The Headmaster’s room is spacious. In Government School, the building was not very clean, and in a small compound, roughly by my estimate, around 25 decimals, two schools sit: One on tents, another on a concrete building with asbestos roofs. I went to the latter one. The rooms were full of light and ventilation system was there, but no fans are provided, and classes go this way in peak summer. Students sit on the jute strips, and after the class hours, roll it back to keep in the teacher’s room. Little place is available, but concretised.
The teachers room was dark, stacked with many other materials like jute strips, untidy, with some furniture and there were also fans. The Principals’s room was spacious, furniture were comfortable and newly purchased, and a fan was there. In all, it appears to me that the Headmaster’s room was in relatively most unattractive shape in the richest school - Modern School. In Ultadanga School, the building is untidy, but classrooms spacious and comfortable. The teacher’s room is not quite impressive, so too the Headmaster’s room. The school is housed in a four-storeyed building.

Secondly, the school should be well endowed with library and laboratory. Article 11 of the Delhi Education Act stipulates for at least one fully equipped Science Centre for each schools for science education. Laboratory experience perfects training on science, which can be explained in terms of casual relation, and prefers 'reasoned understanding' to 'mechanical understanding'. Reasoned understanding is applicable to all similar situations whereas mechanical understanding is applicable to a particular situation. However, if the school is able to inculcate the basic teachings of science, then in future this can be harnessed into citizenship consciousness: that rights and duties are interdependent upon one another, that we can constantly shape our potentials and talents through rational action, that we together are responsible in creating a situation where everybody shall be able to live
a dignified life etc. Regarding the libraries, they should have a good collection of books which makes one socially sensitive - novels, serious articles and biographies of great people. In Modern School, the library is spacious, airy and have collection of books on a variety of subjects that will make even many college libraries in India proud. The collection even includes Laski's *A Grammar of Politics*: The teacher accompanying me said that few senior students borrow these books. The library was spacious in St. Lawrence School, but the collection was not as rich. Some science journals and books on literature are kept, but most of the books are text books and reference books - available in plenty. The librarian said earlier there was a rush to borrow fictions, a tendency now declined somewhat. Laboratories in Modern School are good, and also in St. Lawrence School. In Vinay Nagar School, the library is housed in a small room, not quite spacious, and there are books on various subjects, quantitatively lesser. Sometimes the library is closed, as the librarian was the only person in the department, who also had to undertake some administrative jobs. In Bidhan Nagar School, the library is a mere formality. There are more bookshelves than books, and they are however planning to move to a new library room. Laboratory arrangements in both the schools are decent. In Ultadanga School and Government School, libraries and laboratories are virtually absent.
Thirdly, each school should offer adequate sports facilities which involved excellent physical exercise, consumes less time and money, and are result oriented and collective effort. Soccer and swimming are the best games to the point. Except for Modern School, no other school provides training on swimming. The Nayals found sportsmen students as more intelligent, emotionally stable, venturesome, self-assured, socially precise and less frustrated, quite in contrast to non-sportsman students. Thus, "sportsman spirit influences the personality of our adolescents towards socially expected direction. So it is our moral duty to provide more sports facilities in our educational institutions". Participation in sports gives us skills and information about materials, tools and laws of energy. Sports gradually become a highly result oriented activity, when they grow more complicated. The skills and knowledge acquired makes pupil fit for future participation in work. Moreover, outdoor sports, and some indoor sports, is a collective activity, where rights and responsibilities are clearly demarcated for common ends. This creates a mental frame fit for future participation in community. Sports, again call for a synthesis between individual performance and collective efforts, a training necessary to prepare the educand to learn to harmonise own efforts with the social goals. Both Modern School and St. Lawrence School have large playgrounds to play soccer. In Modern School, students seemed more interested in cricket and equipments.
were plenty. In St. Lawrence School, both games were going on, and bargaining and mildly heated arguments were sometimes seen. In Vinay Nagar School, the ground was big enough to play a football match, and many footballers in Delhi studied here. The goalposts were recently installed and the school has established a reputation in football. Students in Bidhan Nagar School share the playground with the neighbourhood. In Government School, virtually there is no playground, and two students were seen playing gilli danda. In Ultadanga School, students are taken to a nearby club and play cricket, earned some reputation.

Fourthly, the school should also offer scope where it becomes possible to nurture talents in literature, music arts, paintings etc. to groom the sense of creativity. Except for Bidhan Nagar and Government School, all other schools have some satisfactory arrangements.

Fifthly, finance forms an important part in the school. Only St. Lawrence School finds the fees collected are enough. They also receive grants from charitable trusts and rotaries: 85% goes to pay the salary, 7.5% for scholarship another 7.5% for maintenance. In case of Modern School, deficiency is met by the society which runs the school, though a teacher said me that the school receives fat donations, sometimes to admit undeserving students. Vinay Nagar School meets deficiency by receiving some donations from the parents. In Bidhan Nagar School, deficiency is met by adjusting work between portfolios according to
priorities. Government School charges no fee, and government bears all the expenses. Ultadanga School sometimes withhold works, and receive donations.

Finally, the external surroundings. Modern School is situated in an elite area of New Delhi, where embassies of few African countries like Zambia, Ethiopia etc. and office of UNESCO are within walking distance. There are also other public schools around, and foreign-made cars could be seen quite often. St. Lawrence is also situated in a prosperous area of Calcutta, the surrounding is neat and clean, with institutions like SCERT, David Hare Teachers Training College etc. there. There is also a defence establishment nearby. However, though could not be seen from the school, a big slum is within walking distance. Vinay Nagar School is situated within a residential area of government employees, neat and clean locality. Many households have two-wheelers, some of them car, but a foreign-made car could rarely be seen. Vidhan Nagar School is situated within a newly developed, planned residential area, where many well-to-do people stay but not many send their children to this school. Both Government School and Ultadanga School are set amidst the slums.

2. Psycho-Human Environment

An extremely attractive physical environment must be supported by an equally conducive social or psycho-human environment - the psychological atmosphere of the school. As
Upendra Baxi in another context have shown that the psycho-
human factor, if not supportive, can scuttle a progressive idea.\(^8\) The major area where we can gauge the psycho-human environment are relationship between students and non-teaching employees, teachers and non-teaching employees and teacher-administration relationship.

First we shall deal with the relationship between students and non-teaching employees. By analysing questions 23 and 40 in Appendix I, we can get students' point of view. In Modern School, four students out of 20 call the school sweeper as Sir or Madam, ten call the affectionate word 'Bhaiya' (brother) and six call by name. Two disagree to the idea that the non-teaching employees deserve as much respect as their teachers, but 5 agree, seven of them strongly. Two respondents could not decide and another one did not decide. Four employees out of five said students co-operate with them. One however said, a gardener by designation, "We do dirty works like, cleaning, digging and what support and co-operation can we expect from the rich-kids?" However, three of those four elicit co-operation by requesting, one by threatening them. Four said that students wish them, one said that students only talk about business. In the school, a teacher asked the gardener to take a class to explain things. The children gathered around him to listen, and shown him due respect, calling Maliji. At one point, irritated by the unserious attitude of some students, he said in Hindi "All students do not come to study here. Some
come to have fun". The teacher asked them, in English, to behave themselves, as even the gardener could also understand. Employees in this school come to interaction with teachers at least 2/3 days a week, teachers converse them in friendly terms. All of them found teachers as co-operative. One teacher interacts with these employees almost daily, one teacher once a week, three teachers 2/3 times a week, four teachers 2/3 times a month and one once a month. For seven, the purpose is official, for two, what they call 'human relationship', for one both. The best way to elicit co-operation, one did not answer, other nine said factors like being friendly, co-operative, pleasant etc.

In St. Lawrence School, two students call the sweeper by mentioning sir/madam, one call by name and seventeen call 'dada' or 'didi' (brother or sister). Only one disagree that lower rank employees deserve as much respect as their teachers or parents, nineteen agreed, twelve of them strongly. Four employees agreed that students co-operate with them, another said three elicit co-operation by request, one by threat. All of the five responding employees are wished by teachers. Two interact with teachers everyday, two once a week, and one 2/3 times a week. Three teachers in this school daily happen to interact with these employees, two twice or thrice in a month, one two or three times a week, and four lesser than that. Five stated the reason as official, one as friendship, two as both of them, two else like "as a member of the school family. "The way to elicit
co-operation lies in manners, sympathy, politeness, friendliness etc.

Three students in Vinay Nagar did not mention how do they address the sweeper in the school. Eight call as sir/madam four as brother, sister etc, five call by names. Three students strongly disagreed, three disagreed, ten agreed, one strongly agreed and three could not decide on the idea that lower rank employees in the school deserve as respect as their teachers and parents. All five employees agreed that students co-operate with them, two of them by request, another three on the ideal of respect. All of them five are wished by students. They are also assured of co-operation from teachers, who talk about everything. As one senior employee said that there is no teaching - non teaching staff difference in the school. All of them daily happen to interact with the teachers. Seven teachers interact with the employees 2/3 times a week, one 2/3 times a month, one lesser than that, and one daily. For five the purpose is official, for four it is friendship, for one, it is both. One did not say on how to elicit co-operation, others emphasised on politeness, friendship, continuous interaction etc.

In Bidhan Nagar School, all twenty students call the sweeper as brother, sister etc. One could not say, but 19 agreed, fourteen of them strongly, that lower rank employees int eh school deserve as much as respect as their parents. Three employees agreed students' co-operation, one said
'sometimes' and one said there is not much interaction. The methods for three are request, for one threat. Students wish to two, talk about business to two and do not talk with one respondent. Teachers interact daily to four of them, once a week to one. To two, teachers wish, and only business talks to three. Four found teacher's as co-operative, one said according to necessity. Nine teachers interact with the non-teaching staff two-three times a week, one daily. To four the purpose is official, to four it is friendship, to two it is both. Co-operation is elicited through friendship, friendly relation, cultural function etc.

In Government School, there is no sweeper and students clean it up themselves. Normally, nothing is wrong with the practice, but it should have been made part of the curriculum and schools of other socio-economic strata should also do it. One strongly disagree, six disagrees, ten strongly agree, two agree and one could not say on the idea that lower rank employees in the school deserve as much respect as their teachers and parents. There are two non-teaching employees in the school. One does not happen to interact to them with children much, another receives cooperation when they meet, by request. They agree that students interact with wishes and teachers co-operate, though only business talk. Teachers interact in every working day. Three teachers meet the employees once a week, one 2-3 times a week, and one once a month. For three the purpose is official, for one friendship, for one both. One
does not know how to elicit co-operation, others emphasise on friendly persuasion, co-operation, politeness, respect etc. One staff does not like this job in depressing conditions. He was there for some technological reasons, not according to his seniority. He is upset that some teachers treat him with contempt, by calling him not by name, but by the designation - 'clerk'.

In Ultadanga School, four students mention the school sweeper as sir/madam, three call by name, and thirteen call as brother or sister. Three students strongly disagree, five disagree, six agree, three strongly agree and three cannot say anything to the idea that lower rank staff deserve the same respect as their parents and teachers do. All of them ensure that students co-operate, by themselves co-operating and requesting. Students wish them, they say. Teachers co-operate to all the employees under my study, and interact daily. Two teachers meet the employees daily twice or thrice a week, and one once a week. The purpose is a combination of official business and friendship. Good behaviour, co-operation and feelings are the way by which they elicit co-operation.

Another aspect of psycho-human relation is how teachers interact with administration. In Modern School, teachers co-operate with the school administration by doing their duties well, taking extra responsibility, and in a friendly manner. Five feel that in most cases school administration responds promptly to their professional and personal problems, for
three—it is often, and sometimes for two. In St. Lawrence School, teachers in a friendly manner abide by the rules and regulation. Eight feel that in most cases, the school administration respond to their personal and professional problems promptly, two feel the response as often. In Vinay Nagar School, the teachers co-operate with administration by maintaining discipline, and doing the duties assigned to them in a friendly way. School responds to personal and professional problems promptly to six teachers in most cases, for two sometimes, for two often. By following rules and doing duties seriously teachers in Bidhan Nagar School co-operate with school administration. Five teachers think that the school responds promptly to their personal and professional problems in most cases, three believe sometimes and two believe often. In Government Boys School, teachers co-operate with the school administration by following Principal’s instruction, and in ‘very good manner’. Two feel that the school responds promptly to their personal and professional problems in most cases, one said often, one sometimes and one never. One teacher however told me that these questions would require them to give answers against school administration, not possible within premises of the school. In Ultadanga, teachers by obeying instruction and maintaining discipline co-operate with the school administration. Four find the administration as sometimes responsive promptly to their personal or professional problems, one said the administration informally has given
them a lot of benefits, e.g., one is supposed to be in the school up to four O’clock, but can leave when the classes are over.

To conclude, like other chapters, the picture is also mixed here. School accommodating children from well-to-do socio-economic background offer better physical environment, and as far as students are concerned, they have cordial relations with the non-teaching employees. We already have discussed teacher-student relations in previous two chapters. Teachers in schools representing middle class or poor citizens have more cordial relations with non-teaching employees, except in the Government School, where it is possible to ascribe an employees' grievances to personal attitude and mindset. In all, no gernal theorisation is possible in the school environment.
References


