CHAPTER: 4

LOOKING THROUGH ‘SUCCESS’ AND ‘FAILURE’:
SELECT NARATIVES

The progress and development parameters of any society can be analyzed on the bases of its sufficiency of accommodating new thoughts and ideas in every sphere of the society whether it’s socio-cultural, political or educational. If a particular society is progressing towards the development then it characterized as to conquer from the rigidity, conservatism, superstitions and stagnation and it favors the scientific temper, power of reasoning and desires to move forward. That awakening or motivational desires of a particular society creates disruptions/confusions in the old set up, which gradually force the society to experience the revolutions and movements. Therefore, in that society, the occurrences of new ideologies and philosophies seem natural and bring positivity and create a new framework of ideas about man, society and nature, which actually challenged existing conceptions rooted in a traditional setup. For instance, the extensive change lead by French Revolution and Industrial Revolution moved away the past and served as a sure guide to the present. Similarly, ‘the age of enlightenment’ which highlighted the possibility to change the world through secular reasoning, so that man can free himself from dogmas and prejudices and create a new world, directly affected the Indian society as well. In result, pre-independent India experienced many revolutions and movements such as Bhakti Movement and many other movements enlightened the whole Indian society, which later on make us (Indian citizens) fortunate enough to cherish the independent India.

During the struggle for freedom and after attaining the freedom, national leaders, thinkers, and revolutionaries of India highly inspired the country’s development. Leaders like Raja Ram Mohan Roy applauded the possibilities English education offered, in
eliminating the social evils of sati, caste discrimination and dowry. The backward class leader Jyotirao Phule similarly wrote of the potential of British schools to ‘construct a new society’ and end ‘Brahmin domination’ by offering a window to liberal ideas. Mahatma Gandhi was relentless in his support for ‘basic education’ that would translate into practical use. And in terms of Jawaharlal Nehru the development of science and technology was the necessity for the progress of the country, so the discourses of the sciences should be supreme in the domain of education. Therefore, the foundation of new emerging Indian society and within it, the construction of national educational policies and commissions were basically the reflection of those inspiring ideas and thoughts. Accordingly, with the flow of changes society set certain norms and perceptions for its members and the larger amount of responsibility shifted to the Indian Educational System, where they were supposed to produce heavy number of scientists and engineers. Thus, automatically Indian Educational System began to support the establishment of hierarchization of knowledge or discriminations of knowledge inside the school as well as outside the school. Consequently, an individual’s success has started moving around the scientific disciplines. Therefore, before 90s; ‘the age of all zations’ such as liberalization, globalization, Mcdonaldization etc along with the Indian Administrative jobs/ Government jobs, occupations related to the sciences and technological streams became the priority of Indian students and their families. And, of course as nation was receiving positive results from those courses, Indian government, by welcoming new science and technological institutions like IITs and big engineering colleges, was encouraging students for those educational sectors. In a result, Indian government successfully succeeded in the establishment of the notion of ‘good education’ which was equivalent to the ‘science education’.

Then, in 90s Indian Nation faced many serious questions related to the liberalization and globalization. And again Indian educational system became one of the important targets of that period. With the boom of Business Process Outsourcing (BPOs), the globalized world phenomena, and economic liberalization new companies, new economic sectors and new professions emerged. For which the requirement of trained people in foreign languages, management skills in various aspects and supremacy of computers arise in that period. Therefore, students started approaching some new career
options and tragically the whole nation did not even realized the shift of educational meaning that is real knowledge to occupational/professional knowledge.

Today, despite India’s tremendous growth, according to the Indian entrepreneur Nandan Nilkani:

“We are a nation that has barely scratched its potential. Almost two decades after economic liberalization, the absence of critical reforms means that for a majority of Indians daily life continues to be a struggle- for the millions of marginal farmers unable to find alternatives to bare, hard livelihoods; for people living in slums for want cheaper housing; for families cobbling together their savings to send their children to private schools because our government schools are a mess.”

In all these societal disparities and inequalities, presently, education has been taken as a safe and secure way for the economic and social mobility. It has now started associating with the ‘status culture’. However, in this cycle of mobility and status, the agony and ecstasy, compromises and comfort abilities, and success and sufferings have become central theme of Indian educational system. Through the discussions of earlier two chapters, we have been observing the social existence of different educational aspirations and how the system of Indian schooling is reinforcing/restructuring these unequal aspirations among students. This chapter, therefore, is the inside and real reflections of eight students where through their detailed narratives I am trying to visualized the construction of two concepts- ‘success’ and ‘failure’.

With the second largest population India contains various economic and social disparities. Even after independence and with the jargon of neo-liberalism, the nation is still experiencing the fragmented and segregated environment, such as; at the broader view caste, class and gender based society. Therefore, the production of resources produced by the country is actually bracketed by these inequalities and the possibility to access them seems almost impossible to certain sections of the society, on the contrary it

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(accessibility of resources) comes very easily or naturally to some sections of the Indian society. That differentiation of the conditioning of the availability as well as accessibility of resources automatically creates competitive environment in the society. Behind this conditioning of resources, reasons are varies, such as some sections are aware of this competition so they know the appropriate ways to reach out at the right place, some knows it but cannot figure out the exact ways or they have to struggled for it, and third category of sections of Indian society, because of their societal and economic backwardness, unfortunately do not even aware about the competition or sometimes if through the governments’ effective schemes and initiatives, they become aware, they have to struggled much higher than other sections. In a nut shell, in this competitive outlook of the Indian society, education merely becomes an effective ‘mobility’ factor, by which people think, they can reduce the degree and intensity of their harsh realities of life. Where education has occurred in India, Andre’ Be’telle points out, it has acted as a ‘solvent’\(^2\) of barriers between caste communities especially in the villages. In his book Caste, Class and Power, Dr. Be'teille describes a Tanjore village where the primary school was situated inside the agraharam, the Brahmin quarters which the Dalit elders would dare not enter for fear of ‘polluting’ the place. But their children entered and left as they pleased, free of the terrifying and debilitating reluctance that their parents experienced. Moreover, these structured realities of Indian society ultimately revealed that how present definition of education is distancing itself from the real meaning of education and how society is defining certain notions for example; development, growth, progress and within it who is successful and who is not. Regarding to these notions of society, school children (as a new generation) suffers a lot. Because, in the invisible dominating slogan of the society; ‘the survival of the fittest’, they are not free to cherish the freedom of life and highly pressurized to understand the significance of limited options of successful life. Surprisingly, during my field work, one of the questions I most liked to ask the kids is what they would like to be when they grow up. The answers are varied- ‘engineer’, ‘doctor’, ‘teacher’, ‘policeman’ and increasingly ‘computer’ [sic]. But even those who had the rural background, one aspiration that they never express is ‘farmer’- their parents hope that the lives of their children will be different from the

\(^2\) Be’telle, Andre (1965), Caste, Class and Power, California: California University Press.
subsistence livelihoods that they as farmers have endured, and they and their children see these schools as their way out. Many different aspirations of education have revealed from students, teachers, and parents through my field experience, and in this sense, this chapter is a real reflection of the changing perceptions of education in present time. All fellow narrations are questioning the entire domain of education in various ways and reminding us to rethink about the real purposes of education in larger social perspectives. Every narration is binding with some title in the effort of reflecting children’s emotions and expressions in the realm of educational aspirations.

[1]

REDEFINING EDUCATIONAL GOALS: FROM CONFUSION TO CONTENT

Beginning with the experiences of Abhinav, a 12th class student of Kendriya Vidyalaya (who is now an alumnus of KV) clearly shows his anxieties and ambiguities of Indian Educational System. He narrated his experiences in his words. Abhinav says that I am the eldest of my parents’ three sons. I belong to a not so affluent middle class family. Currently, my parents are trying to run a catering business in Delhi, which is seemingly turning into one of the many failed business attempts. My father has tried his hands into several jobs and business ventures, all of which ended in failures. My mother, though a housewife, has till now actively participated in these business ventures of my father.

As far as my educational journey concerns he continues, I was never a “bad” student. Though I used to score average in school, I was highly interested in studies. It was just that I hated to memorize things. Sadly our education system was very much up against my kind of students and rewarded me with poor marks. Average scores was not my problem anytime in my school life. The problem used to occur only during parent-teachers meetings where my teachers will sings songs of my intelligence and then explain in worried voices to my parents that I was just not working hard. My father mostly never paid heed to my performance as such. He was more worried about my handwriting and often complained about (though it was among the best in my class). However, it was my mother who took my teachers’ complains very seriously. Consequently, every parent-teacher meet was followed by a home session on how important it was for me to study.
hard and become “somebody” so that our lives could be better. She used to say, “We ruined our lives but your life is still in your hand...work hard or you will suffer like us”. I always took her seriously and I understood the importance of me doing something worthwhile.

Things were pretty much same till I reached class 8th. I realized that I needed to score good marks in class. English and Hindi came naturally to me so I never worried about these subjects. Sciences were more about understanding the principles and I realized that what was taught in class was nowhere close to solving the problems. Our teachers were qualified (if we consider our education system) but treated books as bible. According to them, I needed to memorize all the equations and definitions (exactly as in the books). That was their mantra to score high. However, I found it very difficult to subscribe to their “ways” and “techniques”. I felt that their techniques of teaching/studying science (and for that matter any other subject) was founded on a wrong premise. That premise was that we needed to study to score high. Studying for knowledge was not the motive in any way. This was evident in the fact that many of the average students could fluently recite definitions but failed to understand the logic behind a mechanism or phenomenon. For example, once I asked one of my classmates to define a certain phenomenon. He eloquently recited the definition in one breath. Next, I asked him to explain the how and why of it and he was completely at loss of words.

I was aware of my cramming abilities (or otherwise) and thus decided to evolve my own way of study. I started reading on my own and tried to connect books to our actions and life around us. I tried to understand the why and how of science and finally it started to make sense. Now I did not even need to memorize definitions and derivations. The “mysteries” were now “revealed” and I could construct my own definitions and derivations became common sense.

The next mammoth pillars were arts. The very size of the syllabus was haunting for many. Our teachers had a very funny (though I felt exact opposite at that time) way of teaching arts, especially history. They will ask a certain student to stand up and read the whole chapter. The others were forced to listen to the highly un-tasteful writing of some sulking historian. Then, class over. Now it was our job to memorize the chapter and
“vomit” the whole thing in exams. Again, it was difficult for me to excel in these subjects given the high cramming requirements. I felt sad as these were pretty interesting subjects which were being taught in a way that almost every student hated them to the core of their heart. To counter attack the giants called arts, I decided to dig deeper into them. Our syllabus books hardly contained any information except for facts and dates. Thus, I borrowed books from arts students who were pursuing bachelors and decided to read them all. Soon I realized that arts are like sciences. The only difference being that science is governed by laws which are fixed, while arts are governed by ever evolving and changing laws. The conclusion was that I did not need to memorize history or geography. Instead I can understand them in the same way as I understood science. For example, while most students were memorizing the temperature, irrigation and soil requirement for growing a crop, say wheat, I just paid attention to the area where wheat was grown (whenever I visited our native place of Bihar state). The logic was that if I knew the area, I would also know the type of soil and temperature in that area. I was not a genius in any sense. The type of soil and area climates were also taught but in other non-related chapters. I was just inter-relating and connecting information which is sadly a non-norm in our education system.

Eventually, I scored very good marks in the following examinations (except in mathematics as I was still not clear why we studied that subject as a “subject”). However, I was then confronted with another problem. The expectations rose. Suddenly 80% was not good enough and my parents and teachers both saw a potential in me for 90% or above. By the time I reached class 9th, my father had already assumed that I will surely become a fine engineer. My mother was confident that I will make a very good doctor (especially because doctors can earn more than engineers) and everybody else thought that my natural career would in administrative services. Though at that time I was working hard to score higher and higher, my motive was still different from others. Competing in class and scoring high was fun to me. Concurrently, I was reading a lot. My reading was not limited to school books. I started reading anything and everything. Reading opened up my mind and gave a completely different perspective to life, education, and knowledge (blame the “books” I was reading). It triggered the creative spark in me and overnight I started writing poetries. Initially people took my poetries as
my talent. However, when I became more serious about it then the same people saw it as a deviation from the “path” and distraction from studies. One fine day I told my parents that I wanted to become a full time poet. My mother was very disheartened and tried to explain the struggles such a career choice might have in store for me (a few relatives also joined her to support her concerns). We went through some bitter moments and then eventually I gave up the idea of becoming a poet and completely stopped writing poems. It was a difficult decision but one which I was supposed to make (being the eldest and hence the responsible son of my parents).

I passed the 10th examination with good marks. So my mother thought that I could have easily got admission in some good school ’private’ school but lack of resources meant I had to study in the same school and again she also disheartened. Till that time I had not decided what career I wanted for me. However, it seemed that everybody else was very sure about “my” career- engineering. I tried to protest at that time and conveyed that I was not interested in medical or engineering streams at all. In a bid to tone down my concerns I was told that, “its ok if you don’t want to be an engineer or doctor…but take science and maths in +2...your options will be open...but if you take arts then you will have nothing to do in life”. My parents’ suggestion had weight but in my heart I was not fully convinced. Despite this I opted for science and maths in +2. Slowly the environment around me convinced me that engineering indeed was the best option. As a result, I joined the “commotion” and followed my fellow classmates and friends to each and every coaching centre promising admission in IITs. People around me ate IITs, spoke IITs and lived IITs.

It was not long until I realized that I had made a grave mistake. Within six months I had lost interest in studies. I was very sure that I did not want to become an engineer. I told my parents not to waste their hard earned money and stopped going to the coaching centers. I announced that I wanted to study mass communications. This news came as a huge shock to my parents. However, my father was not as disheartened as my mother. He said, “I don’t have any problem with your decision but whatever you do......do it with all your heart and work hard for it”. Contrarily, my mother was furious. She came from a family which had only seen doctors, engineers and IAS officers and thus mass
communication was not acceptable to her. Her concerns were based on the fact that my career choice had no surety that I will succeed. I understood that her concerns were genuine. Our financial condition was incredibly bad and she did not want me to suffer in future. She spoke at length about “others” who faced similar conditions and studied hard to become something so that they can live a good life. She said she wanted me to do whatever I wanted and study the subject of my choice, but added that poor people don’t have much of a choice in these things. The question was- what if I fail to succeed?

However, I knew that continuing meant a sure failure. I was sure I could do something in others fields but not engineering. Several relatives got to know of my decision and tried to intervene. As a result, I was forced to listen to their take on life and their philosophy on education/career (sadly used interchangeably). One particular relative was over enthusiastic to bring me back on “course”. He took a newspaper in his hand and said, “So you want to study mass communications…ok… write the headline of this news piece in 5 different and better ways”. I obliged and wrote the headlines in 10 different ways. However, he was not convinced (his intention was obviously to be not convinced). He said, “see..if you can’t write a simple headline in a better way, then how you will do mass communication”. I was amazed and angered at his reasoning. His only “qualification” on the basis of which he was counseling me was that his son recently cleared IITJEE.

With the pressure of clearing IITs and at that time everybody seems enemy to me. To calm my nerves I joined a cheap film making course during summer vacation. I excelled at the course and it gave me more courage to fight back. I was very confident now that I was making a correct choice. Immediately after completing the course I got two assignments to co-direct documentaries for UNICEF. I worked enthusiastically and completed the assignments. I was happy that now everybody will allow me to pursue the career of my choice. However, things were not meant to be that way. Though everybody appreciated my achievements, they added that these were just “good hobbies” and should not be converted into career. Those days were the most painful days of my life. I was lost in my own anger and pain. I could not blame my parents as they always wanted me to be happy and thus tried in their own way to help me achieve that happiness. On
one side I completely agreed to and understood their stand. On the other side, I could not
convince myself to give up my individuality and freedom. I was being torn from within, at
my own hands. When the school re-opened for the 12th class session I had decided that I
will not attend school anymore. By that time I was so frustrated that I did not even
wanted to pursue mass com. I just wanted to escape.

Day after day relatives and family friends would come and express their sorrow
on my state in front of my mother. They said they felt sorry that I was doing this to her
and my family. They said several things about the new generation who are sometimes lost
in their own world and do not understand the realities of life. They never said anything in
front of me because by that time I had developed huge dislike and disrespect for relatives,
which meant that their comments would be answered back with harsher comments.
However, my mother understood my pain and suffering. She never supported me vocally
and at the same time she never fully agreed to my relatives’ attacks on me. She knew she
had to achieve a balance between me and the society, which she handled exceptionally
well.

She asked me to resume school to which I agreed. Upon reaching school I was
called by the school principal who wanted to know where I was for the last 4-5 months. I
told the principal that I was sick and was advised bed rest for that period. The principal
took my excuse as genuine and allowed me to resume school. As I was leaving his office I
felt that I was doing things wrong again. I turned back and told the principal that I was
not sick and the doctor’s certificate was fake. I told him about my real problems. He did
not say anything and asked me to call my mother. When my mother arrived the principal
explained to her that there was no use pushing me to do something which I was not
interested in. Contrary to my expectations, the principal convinced my mother to let me
study according to my own will.

I was elated at the new development. However, I was not left with many choices.
The year was already over and I could only take admission in arts stream next year. So, I
decided to take the +2 exams with math and science that year. In that happiness I
prepared hard for the examinations. I took the exams and passed in all subjects but
Maths (I did not prepare for it as I still hated Maths beyond imagination). That same
year I took entrance examination for JNU and cleared it as well (though it was useless as I failed in +2).

I had lost two precious years but I was not sad. Next year I joined +2 with arts and enjoyed every bit of it. I wrote the final exams and scored 76%. I was very happy but my happiness faded when the cutoff list for DU came out. 76% was nowhere 80-90% requirement in DU. At that time I felt that I have lost it all. I fought with everybody and did it my way. Finally, no admission meant that everyone was correct and I was wrong. I was sure that if I would have written same kind of answers as our teachers used to suggest in class then I would have had easily scored above 90%. However, that meant nothing in the given situation. I almost felt like dying. Luckily, I had also appeared for YMC. The results were announced and I cleared it.

I am not happy because I got admission in YMC. I am happy because I was able to follow my own path. I am happy because I have achieved at least something out of the “everything” that I wanted to achieve. My parents are happy because I am happy. I had fought with them for this and sometimes even felt that they were wrong. Yes, they were wrong in their reasons but I always knew that they were never wrong in their intentions. They know that my career is still not sure and I might struggle to find a good job. However, they know that I am content.

The individual acquires a particular awareness and perception of the society in which he lives. And it is this understanding and attitude towards the social order which (in large part) constitute his consciousness. Thus, in the present time school education is perceived as capital, as an investment. A terrible anxiety can be seen among the urban educated middle class for the survival of the children in the competitive society and the experiences of Abhinav also showcasing these realities. All that he was intended to show was the memory of a long and painful experience, full of failure, frustration, anxiety and tension. He did not understand the actual justification of those surrounded realities but yes, he understood it very well that there’s no benevolent life until unless he breaks the cycle of failure, discouragement and frustrations.
In the words of John Halt, “this failure is avowed and absolute”\(^3\) which brings fear, anxieties and depression. John Keats in his beautiful poetic style also explains the mystery of fear:

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\begin{align*}
\text{When I have fears that I may cease to be} \\
\text{Before my pen has glean’d my teaming brain,} \\
\text{Before high-piled books, in charactery,} \\
\text{Hold like rich garners the full ripen’d grain;} \\
\text{When I behold, upon the night starr’d face,} \\
\text{Huge cloudy symbols of a high romance,} \\
\text{And think that I may never live to trace} \\
\text{Their shadows, with the magic hand of chance;} \\
\text{And when I feel, fair creature of an hour,} \\
\text{That I shall never look upon thee more,} \\
\text{Never have relish in the faery power} \\
\text{Of unreflecting love;--then on the shore} \\
\text{Of the wide world I stand alone, and think} \\
\text{Till love and fame to nothingness do sink.}\(^4\)
\end{align*}
\]

Fear is a simple reflection of an individual’s hidden image and to consider it merely an expression of human psyche can be a conservative thought because an individual’s expressions and emotions are result of social construction. For example,

\(^3\) Halt, J., (1968), How Children Fail, Harmondsworth: Pelican: 1.
\(^4\) “When I have Fears”, (1884), poem lyrics of When I Have Fears by John Keats.
earlier a child used to be live in joint family where he is very much attached with it and he formed his habits, emotions and thoughts in those protective surroundings of family members but now mostly children are growing up in nuclear families, spend most of their time in schools or coaching classes, and largely dependent on their peer groups therefore they build up their own understandings, ideas and habits which later on can be reflected through their personality or personal psyche. However, my point here is that to have fear is a very natural human behavior, as sometimes it leads towards some kind of constructive work but on the opposite side if its domination increases it is also responsible for the deconstruction of an individual’s human psyche. By emphasizing on the significance of socialization, great sociologist Cooley says:

*The process of socialization continues throughout life as the individual encounters an ever widening circle of groups into which he must be initiated. One of the first groups is genuinely outside the family is formed by his age peers. A useful paradigm for analyzing the consequences of group membership will illuminate the effects of this interaction school and peer group.*

Influence of peer groups in the making or constructing the notion of success and failure as family support seems more passive than active. As some students is highly influenced through their peer groups. Arjun’s father experienced the passivity of his parents in his school time, therefore he thought this is the best way to give proper space to one’s child and he ultimately did the same thing but this time his attitude almost created the danger zone when Arjun because of his parents’ passivity highly influenced through his peer group and after 10th as his best of pals were taking sciences so he also took that and ultimately suffered at least for two months and in first internal examination got flunked in math and that failure for academically good student caused depression and mental trauma. But was it really a failure act? As, Arjun said *I don’t think because only after that exam I realized my real interest which were totally in humanities especially in history and to change my discipline I have to request my principal and history teacher and at that time history teacher encouraged me (as for half yearly exams only 1 and half month were remaining) and almost all required syllabus was already covered but*  

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because of my real interest and hard work, I managed to scored 2nd highest and that’s the real victory/success with real zeal of realization.

Arjun is a 12th class student of Laxman Public School. Who is always been pampered by his family because he is the youngest in his family. Arjun’s father is a businessman in Delhi and his mother is a simple housewife. On the educational part his parents are simple graduates, later he specified that they are not even graduate as his father in his second year of B.Sc. started his business and her mother because of her marriage left her 2nd year of BA program in the same year. In his family his grandfather is an authoritative figure, who actually decided everything related to their children’s lives whether its marriage or education. So, Arjun’s father always felt that his father could not able to understand him and that was the main reason of communication gap between them which often lead much confusion in the family or sometimes peculiar silence. Therefore, Arjun’s father always prefers to give much space to his children to decide their life and taught them to be responsible for your every act and actions in life.

As Arjun said, “as far as I remember my father never interrupted in my life or never forced me and my eldest brother to do something. But he always says that ‘I am earning enough money to take every responsibility of my family because it’s my duty. Now it’s up to you that how you take your life, after all you are the one who’ll be most affected person from your own decisions of life.’ Because of this attitude of my father often my mother used to get very furious on him, as she thinks that children are not mature enough to take healthy decisions and sometimes excessive freedom is not good for their lives, for example wrong choice of friends can force them to develop bad habits, wrong choice of subjects can spoil their career and so on. So, in her views, this is a parent’s responsibility to keep an eye on their children’s lives. Therefore, two different philosophies of life often created clash between my parents and we (I and my brother) used to get benefit from them because by that time we understood very well that for which issue we should talk to whom. In that case, whenever I scored little low in examinations I preferred my father for signing my test note books and my mother used to pass cute smile on my act. Those liberties from my parents totally dig out the feeling of fears and boost up my confidence and annihilated the habit of self believes. Till 10th standard I was on
track as I used to share each and everything with my family and sometimes argued with them on some issues and tried many times to pursue their opinions. Because they never stopped me to do anything and even I did whatever I wanted to do but yes, without arguing with them I felt little conscious about my decisions be it a planning for an outdoor picnic or a movie show. But as I entered in 11th I developed a sense of over confidence in me and started demeaning my parents’ arguments and opinions. Because somewhere down the line I started believing that my parents do not know much about this hi-fi society, as they are simple, not very educated and belongs to a rural family background, do not understand English language and they are not that ‘smart’ as my friends’ parents. So I began to take every decision on my own and hide so many things from my parents, for example; whenever me and my friends planned for the late night movie shows, I used to make an excuse of late night group studies at friend’s place in front of my mother, because in my circle there were some girls also and I thought that my family is a bit conservative so they will object and friends said that ‘you are not doing anything wrong so there is no harm hiding these things’ and very easily I got convinced by their views. At that time I did not realize the growing influence of my peer group and how they are controlling my behavior, even due to this influence I had already taken a wrong decision to choose ‘sciences’ for 11th standard but till that time I could not able to see the repercussions of it. I remember when I was opting sciences my mother suggested me that this subject requires more hard work than other disciplines, so if you think that you like this subject than only go for it otherwise you’ll not able to put enough hard work in it. I got irritated on my mother’s point of view which is hinting that I am not a hard working student. But later by switching to humanities from sciences, I proved my mother right. By making a wrong choice of subjects I realized that to give your hundred percent in any kind of work a person should have interest in it.

Those were the hardest days of my life. Though, it started with good feelings, excitement and enthusiasm. Now we are the seniors and I was enjoying the ‘seniority’ of school. Almost my all friends were in the same section i.e. science section. Like every school even we were enjoying the attention of our school as in that section supposedly everybody is a distinction scorer. For example; in every section’s introductory session teachers used to ask about students’ percentages or grades but that particular question
does not exist for the science students as it is obvious that to opt science subjects one should have scored above than 80%. In my colony area, for our neighbors I was the intelligent child and they used to tell my parents that they are the lucky ones as they don’t have to struggle for their child’s admission in sciences and just because of this subject, in their eyes, my life is on the right path. Honestly speaking, I was also enjoying this whole environment, young children of my colony used to come to me for mathematics problem chemistry question etc. But that happiness or one can term as ‘illusive happiness’ did not exist for long, as I had also experienced the hard side of it. As days were passing my level of confidence also coming down. Even with huge amount of hard work I could not able to understand the ‘Physics’ and ‘Chemistry’. Simply the logistic side of these subjects was beyond my understanding and imaginations. I still wonder that how logic of science disciplines can be applied in real life, and why to understand the logic behind ‘time and space’ we need to memorize hundreds of equations. That inner opposition was not much powerful by which I can question the existence of the ‘high ranked disciplines’. Because, it’s only me or few other students who were facing difficulties otherwise the entire class was amazed with that ‘disciplinary knowledge’. Ultimately, one day my inner conflicts busted out and as usual I announced in my family that I am going to change my streams. But this time unexpectedly they all reacted in anger and scolded me like anything. My mother simply blamed that ‘I warned you earlier also but you did not pay any attention to my words. And now I understand the value of sciences then again you are deciding something else, because you do not want to do hard work so you want to pursue humanities.’ Suddenly from family to friends and my neighbours all were seeing many shortcomings in me and saying good marks of 10th standard were a fluke. In result, I stopped interacting with anyone but decided to stick with my decision, talked to my history teacher and with her encouragement took humanities and now enjoying my studies without any pressure. I feel relieved. I feel relaxed. I do not know about the future but yes, for now I am happy with my life and I think my parents also think in the same way.

These meaningful narrations are unsurprisingly preaching that “success”, as much as “failure”, is adult ideas which we impose on children. The two ideas go together, are opposite sides of the same coin. It is nonsense to think that we can give children a love of
“succeeding” without at the same time giving them an equal dread of “failing”. Children, who undertake to do things, do not think in terms of success and failure but of efforts and adventure. It is only when pleasing adults become important that the sharp line between success and failure appears.

[II]

EDUCATIONAL DESPAIR: A LOST WORLD

Here is Rajat, (a 12th class student of Commerce, Kendriya Vidyalaya, JNU) whose fears make him almost incapable of most kinds of constructive thinking and working. ‘I am anxious, I am furious and my friends say I am depressed’. I know that now this is the time when my hard work, intelligence and talent need to be appreciated through the entry of a big brand college like SRCC (Sri Ram College of Commerce), HINDU College or St. Stephens of Delhi. So, I am full of fears.’ He expresses. Earlier, whenever somebody asked me about my goal of life, I could not able to answer them and still I am the same because of the confusions. I have so many things in my mind and right now I cannot prioritize them. For example; sometime I want to be a singer, sometime I wish to be a writer and sometime a cricketer but as far as my choice concerns I never want to do anything related to academics. It’s not exactly the parents’ pressure but in reality I did not know how to choose between BIG SUBJECTS like mathematics, biology, commerce and economics, so finally I took Commerce in 11th standard as an optional stream and again planning to take it further. Aiming for BIG colleges does not an indication that I am a bright student. I am an average student with bad handwriting and who do not study above than two hours in continuation. Many times I failed in many subjects and of course from teachers and family members I faced humiliation for that also. Even after watching that Hindi movie- ‘Tare Zameen Par’, I felt as if it based on my story, not in terms of boarding schooling but in terms of low scorer, who was not at all interested in studies, my father is also very strict, we rarely interact with each other, I am very much close to my mother but above all in that movie the main lead character of that
child was exceptionally good at painting and I am not good at anything. Till today, I do not have any idea about my own qualities and interests. I always followed others opinions and views on every aspect. Now, planning for my college life is also decided by my eldest brother and father. My brother is hoping that big college will provide me enough exposure for my future. They asked me about my choice and future plans and in reply there was a long pause. This indecisive nature and faltering attitude of mine is the main concern of my family. I also agreed on it.

If I recall my childhood memories, my father (who is a lawyer and a very reserved kind of person) never asked us before buying a toy, or a book or assigning a tutor for us. We live in a joint family and sharing not so big house with eight members of a family, so regular noise and echoing of voices were natural in our house. But as soon as my father reached at home, there was a long deep silence arrived with him. He asked only few questions daily- 1) what was the result of your weekly test? 2) Did your tutor come today? 3) When is the next test? And the conversation ended there itself. Everyday almost same questions and almost same answers. For the requirement or desire of anything we used to approach our mother and then she conveyed it to him. In my father’s opinion that fear is necessary to control our behavior. Eventually it turned out into a habit (at least in my case). I have become a reserved kind of a person and never question anything. Whatever comes in my way I learnt to accept it. I was the quietest child in my class. My teachers used to complain to my mother that ‘your child takes lots of time while answering a simple question.’ My mother understood the problem and tried to make me understand that I should feel free. Many times I tried it also but I failed at that because of the wrong answer as I was not the bright, intelligent child. Teachers usually did not have much time to compel a student for giving an answer, so generally I sat in silence. Ultimately I grow up in that silence.

In standard 7th, a new history teacher came to teach us. In first class, with her formal introduction she asked us to introduce ourselves and I was the first one. For few minutes, I was numb, I was nervous and except my name I could not say anything. With her permission I sat and introductory session passed on to the whole class. Beyond my imagination, at last she again asked me to introduce myself. I was not prepared for that
so again took some time to express myself. But ultimately I answered. In the beginning of every class she preferred to discuss some queries related to the previous class by which she can pin point anybody of the class, for that we always had to revise our lessons and more than that I had to do some extra preparations for answers. Eventually I realized the change in me, now I began to put some questions in class, may be for the sake of impressions but I started giving answers also. Another observation was that that change in me was only restricted to that history class because in rest of the classes I was the same. In that year, history teacher was my favorite teacher and I scored pretty well also in History. Year passed away but nothing great happened in my life, history classes with the presence of history teacher was the only thin shining line in my dark life.

Often I think about my life, especially when my friends say that they want to experience that period/moment of life again. That does not mean that I never experienced good moments in my life but as far as I can recall old memories there’s nothing which is close to my heart and I wish that again. In the opinions of some of my friends I am hard hearted and in others I am a sadist. But that is true that nothing attract me very much. I do not dream. I do not think much. I do not desire for big things. Similarly, bad marks in examinations, ignorant behavior of my father and my teachers, nothing horrifies me much. I belonged to that category which does not deserve any kind of attention. Earlier I used to throw tantrums on all these issues but now I do not want to show my emotions to anybody. Nobody would understand what I feel or nobody actually care what I want so there’s no use showing my emotions. I remember how crazy my friend was to get ‘stars’ in every note book, she used to count them and ask me about my ‘stars’ which I rarely got. From childhood till today in my parents’ eyes mostly the blame puts on my handwriting for the low scorings. They still feel that my handwriting is the biggest hindrance in obtaining the good marks. Often my teachers also scolded for that and asked me to improve it. But nobody actually told me HOW? In starting days of my schooling I did not know the ways to improving my handwritings and now it's a habit even if I tried hard to improve it I usually failed at it. I accept all the drawbacks in me but for my bad scores or low marks at different times different things were to be blamed such as my poor English language, my not so hard working attitude, my laziness, my unfocused approach towards studies, my uninterested attitude towards life and so on.
Though, even I did not negate their wordings because seriously I do not know that what is good in me and what is good for me. I do not have the craving for anything. I am not exceptionally good in studies and also I do not like sports very much. I am studying because people around me feel that it’s necessary for ‘good-stable life’ and they choose the ways of desired life for me also. Now I am obliged to follow their ways so I am studying.

Out of the sheer confusion mindset whenever somebody asked me about my future plans I always pick up the lines from my friends and conveyed it to that person. My friend used to laugh at this attitude of mine. One day, a close friend of mine asked me what actually your interest is. I was like paused for a moment and then replied him back with full of honesty, “I do not know”. He said if you really do not know then please find it out. That day he was the one who forced me to think about it. I also took it seriously and tried to work on it, even I wrote all my desires on paper- all were common and little broad also, for example-wealthy and healthy life, respected status for my family etc. But I was totally clueless about what should be the appropriate way to achieve these larger aims. In these kinds of situations I feel as if something or some fear is restricting me, to come out of some type of bound. I do not know what should I do but yes at this moment I just want to feel free, I just want to answer all those people who think that I do not understand the significance of life and its precious meaning, I want to make my life more and more interesting. I do not want to live with fear, hesitation and restrictions.

On the name of the necessity of school education sometimes adults (that includes family members as well as teachers) destroy most of the intellectual and creative capacity of children by the things they do to them or make them to do. Therefore on the name of the secure and safe future of this competitive world, children are forced to learn some specific behavioral traits, specific language and specific knowledge. This forced specificity on children simply destroyed their ‘love of learning’ and convictions by encouraging and compelling them to work for significant and splendid rewards- stars, marks, tacked to the wall, ‘A’ grade on cards, scholar badges, for the noble satisfaction of feeling that they are better than someone else begin to infuse the variables of success in their personal attitudes. Through these school practices, the structure of school
encourages them to feel that the ultimate aim of all their activities and actions in school is nothing but to get good mark on a test, or to impress someone with their supposedly acquired knowledge. Adaptation of that particular attitude along with everyday school practices took already a longer way which generally dictates their thoughts and actions in life. Therefore, schooling processes kill not only their curiosity, but suppressed their cautious attitudes also and when they are supposed to lead their lives by persuading their decisions they experience the failure. And because, inherent silence has already become a part of children’s personalities so it seems really difficult to transform them overnight. However, it requires a radical shift from the commercialized education to the critical and rational aspect of education.

Similarly, John Halt also describes in his work,

“Years of watching and comparing bright children and the not bright, or less bright, have shown that they are very different kinds of people. The bright child is curious about life and reality, eager to get in touch with it, embrace it, unite himself with it. There is no wall, no barrier between him and life. The dull child is far less curious, far less interested in what goes on and what is real, more inclined to live in worlds of fantasy. The bright child likes to experiment, to try things out. He lives by the maxim that there is more than one way to skin a cat. If he can’t do something one way, he will try another. The dull child is usually afraid to try at all. It takes a good deal of urging to get him to try even once; if that try fails, he is through.’

[III]

EDUCATIONAL AMUSEMENT:

BEAUTIFYING PEDAGOGICAL RELATIONSHIPS

Other enlightening experiences of a student reveal some different dimensions of school education. Monika who passed her senior high school in the discipline of science

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from Laxman Public School, views that the best thing about school life is; it is burdenless and hassles free but the worst part is that you realize the value of school once you have left it. Every day in school is a fresh start, a new beginning. Being fully attentive in during the first period till opening of lunch in the second, the wait for lunch already begins, more so if it is physics class. By the end of the third class kids playing in the sports ground appears more interesting than the ongoing lesson. Fourth class is all about self control, waiting for lunch is a tough task. Although lunch is a fun filled affair, whether the break includes lunch is a different question altogether. Since our lunches are finished already the break is spend in gossiping and all other serious matter. Post lunch classes are just like early morning exercise regime both head and heart, are in different direction. By the last few periods all you have to do is to prevent your 10 kg eyelids from shutting down, pretending to be fully awake even if all you are doing is preventing sleep. Subjects’ practicals/ experiments are all about wasting time in not-so-sweet smelling labs. Actually they always stink due to some chemical leaks or the absurd reactions. Still they are relief to some extent because there is not much that we can do and no one exactly understands what we are supposed to do. It is more of a time pass than lab experiments except when the teacher is not in her best of moods.

School is a wonderful place, I feel, where success can be as little as escaping teacher on a bunk. Failure is quite difficult to explain. It can have different perspective to different people. For me it is not having the courage to try, nothing more nothing less. Yet failure is essential to success. It offers us lessons and guidance although they hurt us a lot. How can one mention school and not the teachers. I personally believe there are three kinds of teachers first, the one who really take this profession seriously and teaching is their passion. They make class worth attending. You can attend as well as enjoy their class in the last period. Secondly, the ones who pretend to be strict and serious but they are not very good at their job. They will teach you and by mistake if you have any doubt then only God may help you! They always leave the questions and doubts for the next class. Thirdly, well these are the categories of teachers who do not teach you any theory papers like Chemistry, physics and Biology, they teach creative subjects like music, dance etc. These classes are worth attending and well partly because you do not have to study and they are fun. All these categories of teachers leave their impacts on
students’ psyche in positive and negative directions. Often by the influence of a teacher student starts fantasizing with the chemistry experiments and develops his likings for smell of chemicals. On the contrary a student starts memorizing physics theorem because a subject teacher is not able to develop the subject interest in the class room.

Throughout my school life many teachers taught me but only few were able to leave their foot prints of their wisdom. One of them was my Physics teacher Mr. Ghansyam Sir. He not only taught students but also made sure that student is grasping what he taught. Although he used to teach Physics (the subject which I hated the most), he was one of my favorite teacher. I remember one incident worth mentioning here. Once while attending his lecture, I was quite inattentive, he might have sensed it. Suddenly he asked me to stand up and answer the question on the board. I was little more than clueless about the question. So I just stood still waiting for him to give an appropriate punishment. But to my surprise he started to explain the question without fretting. I was sort of relieved and though now I would not be shamed in front of the whole class. When he finished explaining I was almost ready to sit and relax but suddenly he asked me to explain the question again. Now I was in deep trouble but again without scolding me he explained the entire explanation again and thankfully the bell rang and I was never so relieved after listening to the sound of the bell. This incident really moved as well as inspired me. This was the turning point in my liking for the subject, Physics. After that class there was barely any class that he did not ask me any question during his class. Even though I was weak in the subject he always paid personal attention to me. This also changed my attitude towards the subject and I was able to pass the subject with respectable marks in my final exams.

One of the most influential teachers in my school life was my English teacher Mr. Peter Sir. English was my favorite subject but I never took English seriously before he started teaching us English. Because all other teachers never used to do more than reading out the text in the text book and merely translating into their own words. Peter Sir really used to explain what the context of the chapters was. He made us to think our own opinions rather than just copy and paste from the notes. I never found his single class boring. He used to explain even the writing session which we never took seriously.
even though it was the most scoring part. He used to explain us how to write long and short comprehensions based questions and how to score marks in them. Apart from all this he used to take separate classes to teach the fundamentals of writing and grammar, how to write the perfect answer. He used to prepare us for the exams in the class itself. The best thing about his teaching was that he never used to give us bound answers or explanations to a particular questions or phrases.

Mrs. Sangeeta Tyagi was one of the best teachers of chemistry. The best thing about her teaching was ‘her theory of relativity’ i.e. she used to explain difficult portion and concepts by relating them to our day to day life or some particular objects. She used to make simple one line sentences by which we can easily remember long and tough chemical series easily without much effort. For example, the following series-

“Sc Ti V Cr Mn Fe Co Ni Cu Zn”,

she made this particular sentence-

“I know this sentence does not have any sense or seems absurd but this was the easiest way to learn the basics. She was always clear about her concepts and theory. I still remember what all she taught me in class. She used to try different methods to make us understand difficult concepts. She used to give us systematic notes which were very precise, to the point and thorough with the NCERT books. There was no need to study anything extra except her notes.

In Monika’s life a Librarian ma’am also leave the impressive marks in her memories. She continued by saying that Anasuiya Ma’am was not actually my subject teachers but the librarian in the school library. I loved reading books since early age but she really forced me to take my hobby seriously. She suggested me some very insightful books which left an ever-lasting impact on me like- “The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari” by Robin S. Sharma and “The Alchemist” by Paulo Coehlo. She actually tried very hard to make me read “good books” rather than “childish books”, like “ The Famous Five”
and The Secret Seven”, but she never succeeded in separating me from my all time favorite “Harry Potter” series by V. K. Rowling. We shared a very special teacher and student bond and a common passion—reading. I would credit her and Peter sir for turning my liking for books into my passion. I even got the avid reader prize during 11th class just because of them.

She continues, school life is a time when we make best of friends for life. Friends add humor, fascination and beauty to life. There are few things more rejuvenating than sharing a belly bursting laugh with an old friend. Friends keep you humble when you get too self-righteous. Friends make you smile when you are taking yourself too seriously. Good friends are there to help you when life throws one of its little curves at you and things look worse than they seem. A person with three solid friends is a very wealthy indeed. I have my personal category to categorize friends that we have throughout our life. According to me there are three types of friends—firstly, the ones who are your “childhood friends”. You grow up with them, fall on them. You grow up together playing all the stupid games with them. They know all your embarrassing moments and silly mistakes of childhood. They accept you for what you are without being judgmental. You can always rely on them when you are in a mess. No matter where you are and what you became they will still be in contact. Secondly, the ones we meet during our pre-teens. They transform into teenager with you. You get together to do all “abnormally controlled” stuff together. Thirdly, the ones we meet during last few years of school. We mature together, become serious about life and start worrying about the respective careers and all other stuff.

In Monika’s life peer group has played a very important part in her life. In her terms, that is her identity as she believes that people known by their company. She is a much pampered child of her family which formed her behavior in such a way that sometimes reflects positivity and sometimes negativity and more often the inclination is towards the negativity. Earlier, she used to be very judgmental about things, easily got furious, could not take criticisms very easily and could not bear any kind of failure. Now she is not claiming to be perfect but yes! She has learnt to accept her shortcomings,
started giving importance to others’ wordings, and become more humble. For that she appreciated her friend circle.

[IV]

EDUCATIONAL ECSTACY: BREAKING THE BARRIERS

However, Success and failure during the school life goes hand in hand. When we get the admission in school in the nursery class we are entering a whole new world to explore. It is the first time that we are out of the lap of our parents and get to face the world on our own for at least seven hours. At this age we are not aware of the meaning of success and failure, in this phase of life success means to get a favor from someone like our teacher, friend or even our parents and on the other hand when we fail to do so it turns into our failure. This is the definition of success and failure at this age.

Now as we climb the ladders of our school life the definition of success and failure changes proportionally and depend on the way things happen in our life. For some this is related to the grades that are scored in the exams and for some it is the sports and other co-curricular activities. For Mohit, grades were never at the threshold of success and failure. It was the time when he was in class third or fourth. He did not know what is important in his life and what is not.

As he describes that getting new books in the new term, buying fancy erasers and pencils were the things that seemed to be very exciting and whenever I used to get old books from a senior to use in the new term I felt bad. Getting selected in the class cricket team or the school choir, being made the monitor of the class or escorting the teacher to the staffroom with her books was a moment of success.

These are the things that one can remember from this phase of life when he is standing above his peers and gets recognition from his teachers as well as his parents.

Life moves on from here when we leave the primary classes and enter the senior section of the school i.e class sixth or seventh. The most exciting thing for me was to get
rid of the itching shorts that we used to wear even with the blazers on in winters. As I was a senior now I used to wear full pants and looked at the juniors with pride as if they were nothing. I could use ink pen instead of the HB pencil and started coming to school on my own bicycle. Riding the bike without holding the handle was another feather in the cap. Becoming the class representative and the growing beard on the face gave the feeling of a grown up child.

So in short at this point of time the life looked to be promising but there was competition. The height mattered a lot, the taller you are the smarter you will be and you can shoot a basket in the ring without any trouble. Moreover your chances of getting selected in the Basketball team increases. Here arises the fear of being left behind in the race so daily practice was the solution and things were smooth again.

During the school life we get introduced to a new term which is called COMPARISON. It starts from home and continues till the end of our life. The favorite time pass of parents is to compare their child to the neighbor’s child or the so called relative’s son or daughter. For them the son or daughter of the neighbor is the most well behaved, obedient and intelligent child in the town.

Moving on to the further classes we feel more like adults as the barber starts applying the No. zero machine on our cheeks and we feel that now we are eligible to think and act like adults. Girls were attractive since class third but they seemed to be beautiful now. Entering class ninth means that we have cleared the childhood barrier and now we are the kings of the world. The board exams are approaching so as per our parents and the so called family advisors getting the right tutor is required and the COMPARISON theory says that the tutor who taught the neighbor’s child last year is the best one because he got good marks in exams but our plans are different. At this time our priority is to get the tutor where all our friends are studying and we convince each other’s parents to allow our friend to get along with us. By this time I learnt to ride the BAJAJ PRIYA scooter but I never took this to the market or tuition as my friends were riding on their new bikes but they never hesitated tripling on their new bikes which were their life.
The time flies escorting friends to tuitions and then to the nearby food joint and the results were out. I was amongst the toppers in the school and was the highest scorer in English. Sweets were distributed news papers acknowledged the effort and once the most irrelevant local newspaper page became a part of the scrapbook.

So high school is finally over and whenever I look back I find that it was the smoothest phase of life. All the people around us seemed to be good, there were no enemies, every problem had the solution and friends were like brothers from different mothers. But there is more to come as the school life is not yet over and my parents decided to change my school for senior secondary school.

Now the calculations have started and the so called family advisors have come into action.

Evening tea has got only one topic that is ME. The intellectual group of my school went for a 2 year exile in KOTA or DELHI for JEE preparation and the COMPARISON theory says that I should do the same. Another clause of this theory says that I should get admission in the best school in the city and prepare at home. Finally the latter won and I got admission in the one of the best school of Delhi- Ryan International School. Some of the old friends came along and some were left behind so it was a moment of transition. But I did not know how to get emotional.

The fear and anxiety of entering a new school where some famous monsters lived changed into fun filled laughter and enjoyment in just one month. This is the time which I can tag as the sweetest as well as the toughest time of my life where we have so much to do but no direction to go. But these thoughts came to my mind just before exams. “We had the potential but we are not utilizing it” was the famous quote at the time of results and group studies were never successful. Crushes and crashes, evening games, roadside fights and meetings which were never implemented were the part of the resume. Careless attitude was at its peak.

The favorite past time was playing basketball and cricket in the evening. As mentioned earlier success and failure were never in terms of marks for me but playing for a sports team was always a matter of pride and success and failure matters a lot in this
case. I was a regular member of the school Basketball team and also represented the
district team once. An average player but played well enough to be in the first five and
that was success for me. Being a part of a winning team always makes you a winner and
hence successful. I got selected in the school cricket team which was going offsite for a
tournament. Did not get the chance to play in the eleven for the first two matches and the
failure thing prevailed in my mind as less deserving people were playing in there. The
fear busted in the evening practice match and because of the performance and some good
friends got to play the last match, the team was sinking when I came in scored
exceptionally well with 7 sixes, one of them peaking to the fifth or sixth floor of the
building nearby. For me this was the height of success that I achieved at that time. The
team lost, I also felt bad but at the end of the day I proved myself.

So, at that stage of life, the most important thing for us to prove ourselves in front
of others and overcome the fear of losing in front of our friends and family. There were
questions asked but not to me the only thing that I got was praise and recognition. This is
the time when we start feeling good about ourselves and the careless attitude prevails.

Now the exams came but luck is not always on our side. Got an average result but
I was happy as I was prepared for the worst and all of the friends were lying in the same
group. Again the neighbor’s child won. Speculations and calculations started again and
the time to face the real world was again there after 14 years. So in short the nursery
time had come again.

Till date I don’t know what I am doing and what I will do and same is the case
with most of the people getting out of the school life but one thing is certain that it is the
schooling that we get determines the way we look at things in life. So bottom line is that
“SUCCESS IN SCHOOL DOES NOT ALWAYS MEAN SUCCESS IN LIFE AND
FAILURE IN SCHOOL DOES NOT ALWAYS MEAN FAILURE IN LIFE.”

With the shared experiences of Mohit, it is evident that he is an independent
thinker. He is hopeful, enthusiastic and optimistic for life. He is of course confused about
his future discourse but he is fearless and free from all inner inhibitions. By which,
mostly his personality appears as a constructive, creative and productive whether it’s a
basket ball match or a unit test of school. I watched some of his performances at the
playground, where definitely he was struggling for the winning position till the last
moment but if results do not come up to his expectations he never seemed furious, or
irritable. Same with the case of his chemistry unit test, where he was enlisted amongst the
low graders and the subject teacher with her full anger was trying to advise them to be
more serious about their studies. Again unlike other students Mohit was a bit relaxed.
Automatically, his impression on me revealed his disinterested and non-serious outlook
of life. Out of curiosity, during our interactive session I asked him about his dreams of
life, in a second he replied, “Given a choice I want to be a player- basket ball player or a
cricketer, if not so then any career will be fine for me until unless my parents will be
satisfied with my life style.” I asked, “What do you mean by good life style?” He said, “A
life where I would be earning good income for availing best facilities, best education and
best health to my family.” He continued that my parents are doctor, owning their own
hospital and we are a family of six members (including parents, and four siblings), both
my sisters are also pursuing medicals for their graduation, my brother, who is younger to
me is in class 9th in another school. Our parents always give us the opportunity to
experience the best life, be it getting education in good school, traveling around the
country or pursuing our own interests for future. They never insisted or forced us to
follow their dreams, they only advised us that by following your own interests and
deciding your own path of life, we just want our children to live life comfortably and
happily. Whenever they suggested something I and my siblings always murmured their
tag line of them- ‘be responsible for your actions and decisions’. So, when it comes to me
I also believe that they are right and I should respect their advice.

On Mohit’s relaxing attitude, I simply asked him, “Don’t you afraid of failures
and admonishment of your parents? Or you have become habituated of it?” he smiled and
said, “it’s strange for others but I do not remember when my father last asked about my
marks or grades and my mother she asked about it but never question my capabilities and
talent, my sisters used to tell me that enjoy your life don’t spoil it running after some
grades. That did not mean that they did not care for me, they do care but their ways are
different. I remember one incident when on my mistake my parents were called for an
urgent parent meeting by my sports teacher and he complained about me as I fought with
one of my classmate during the practice session of basket ball. My parents were badly furious on me, my father on behalf of me, apologized to my teacher and to that boy also. After that he took me to the home and did not talk to me for that whole day. At dinner table, when I said, oh! Come on dad that’s normal why are you not talking to me, he stared at me and told me, ‘if you are not realizing your mistake then there’s no point to talk, and sharing my embarrassment with you.’ I was speechless and then narrated the whole incident; they were listening to me very quietly and then pointed my mistakes also. There are many more similar incidences when I actually did blunders but I never hesitated in sharing them with my family. Therefore, friendly attitude of my parents encouraged fearless attitude and free spirit in me. So, even if I lose one of the very important matches or scored bad marks, I never see any need to hide it from my parents and because I shared it they always compel me to think about the alternatives.

In school, I never got any scholar badge, never represented my class as a class monitor, besides a good player never become a captain or never see my name on the board of toppers but still in my parents and my friends opinion I was the best and they were/are quite hopeful for my future also, as they say I am a fighter and there’s no way which can pull me back from fighting in life. One thing of my parents which always encourage me the most is- they prioritize my participation over the winning position which is my real strength.

Self realization is the essence of true education and freedom of space appears as a central feature of its achievement. Some students like Mohit are fortunate enough to experience it in the foundations of family by which the prevalent structured inequalities comparatively have very minimal or negligible effect on them. Therefore, this category of students becomes real successors in their life, because despite following the established notions of success and failures, they are courageous enough to set their own parameters of success. Like Krishnamurti emphasized knowledge through the self knowing factor in two way philosophy- going inward and understand himself. The other is going outward into society and engaging with processes of society. The inward revolution that Krishnamurthy saw as being essential for social transformation implied that “we must begin with ourselves. In this process of self knowing, intention is very important. That is
'the intention must be to understand ourselves and not to leave it to others to transform themselves or to bring about a modified change through revolution...’'7 It is the individual’s responsibility to bring about an inner transformation, which may then perhaps affect the world at large. He (Krishnamurti) also emphasized that ‘education is today a movement of knowledge that conditions the mind. It is a movement not only of the acquisition of knowledge during school, college and university but throughout life.’ Therefore, by these life-affirming movements one comes across different worlds such as technological world, the world of computers, of knowledge, the physical world with its all complexities, social world with its web of relations and psychological world with its conflicts, confusion, beliefs, dogmas etc. instead, the movements sometimes conflicted and confuse with each other. Through these experiential realities, one explores himself by what is known as ‘man-making’ true knowledge which opens the door to the divinity.

In the process of ‘man-making’, along with the valuable role of family school education has successfully catered the central and pivotal focus of the society. Indian society’s total concentration of economic development has highlighted the remarkable shift in the educational sector where education has started been labeled as informative baggage which is highly influential for the economic and social stability. Society thus becomes “schooled”.8 Education comes to be understood by corporate actors according to the schooling rule: education is a certified teacher teaching a standardized curricular topic to a registered student in an accredited school. The nature of schooling is thus socially defined by reference to a set of standardized categories the legitimacy of which is publicly shared. Ivan Illich criticized this pertinent meaning of the education in the contemporary society where he came up with an alternative to the schooling and emphasized on “deschooling society”. For him, schools are repressive institutions which indoctrinate pupils’ smoother creativity and imagination, induce conformity and stupefy students into accepting the interests of the powerful. He says, “One is ‘schooled’ to confuse teaching within learning, grade advancement with education, a diploma with competence and fluency to say something new”.9

In continuation, he highlighted the prevalent existence of the ‘hidden curriculum’ which he opined dangerous because it leads to the physical pollution, social polarization, psychological impotence and modernized poverty. Schools directly or indirectly reproduce the series of myths such as hierarchical knowledge. Therefore, students learn to internalize with these myths of institutionalized values. He believed that schools evolves logic of its own; it is not a ‘dependent variable’, it is futile to believe that a change in the politico- economic system would alter the functioning of schooling, because ‘schools are fundamentally alike in all countries. Hence, what is desirable to appreciate the ‘revolutionary potential of deschooling.’

[V]

EXPLORING EDUCATIONAL MEANINGS THROUGH THE VOICE OF SILENCE AND DISILLUSIONMENT

Today, the authoritative character of education is known as a ‘school’. School education as an institution instills the values, morals and knowledge in pupils. The institutionalized values school instills are quantified ones. School initiates young people into a world where everything can be measured, including their imaginations, and, indeed, man himself. But as Illich describes in his text- ‘Deschooling Society’:

“Personal growth is not a measurable entity. It is growth in disciplined dissidence, which cannot be measured against any rod, or any curriculum, nor compared to someone else’s achievement. In such learning one can emulate others only in imagination endeavor, and following in their footsteps rather than mimic their gait. The learning I prize is immeasurable re-creation.”

Neither learning nor justice is promoted by schooling because educators insist on packaging instruction with certification. Learning and the assignment of social roles are melted into schooling. Yet to learn means to acquire a new skill or insight, while

10 Ibid, 1984: 45.
promotion depends on an opinion which others have formed. Learning frequently is the result of instruction, but selection for a role or category in the job market increasingly depends on mere length of attendance with performance. The individual requires a base to prove his talent and abilities which gradually tighten the grip over the job opportunities and those who acquire their designated professional positions ultimately flourish the most. And the rest trap into the cycle of the humiliation.

A failure cannot be describe in terms of any figurative idea, while generally it understood as- the loss of hopes, creative block, and thrashing interests. Therefore, on the contrary when an individual sees hopes, feels the power of imaginations and recall his own interests, he considers himself as a winner. Therefore, high salary, high score, and high professional position simply create a myth about an achiever.

Shamit, an 11th class Commerce student of Deep Public School always enlisted among toppers, and enjoyed appreciations from everybody. So he has all the reasons to be pleased but my conversations with him highlighted different side. Here a piece of poetry by a language student Sarfaraz Siddiqui (he has done his M.A. in Chinese language from J.N.U.) explains this inner conflict or confusion of a child magnificently.

\[ I \text{ burn the candle at both ends,} \]
\[ I \text{t was difficult tasting bitter truth,} \]
\[ I \text{ have been condemned to the fires,} \]
\[ I \text{ have got cold feet…..} \]

Shamit, since his childhood is enjoying the success in terms of first position/rank in the class. His parents come from a middle class family, his maternal grandfather was a
bank employee and maternal grandmother was a simple house wife who had no education at all. Shamit’s mother- Mrs. Urmila, used to live in one room government flat with a family of seven people. Mrs. Urmila’s father was the only earning member in the family, naturally he could not afford to send all her children into an English medium school and because in small town of Uttar Pradesh all government schools were Hindi medium school, so Mrs. Urmila’s parents decided to send all three daughters into government school (including her). Her brothers got the privilege to study in an English medium public school, as her parents thought that boys have to seize the opportunities for work so they should be prepared accordingly and girls simply have to marry and ultimately become housewives, therefore attaining vernacular education in government school was supposedly girls’ privilege. Just after schooling Mrs. Urmila’s elder sister got married, so at her time for the simple reason; for further college studies; she had to become the revolutionary in her family. Her father in a very straight and impolite way conveyed to her that he could not support her college studies and for that she should look for the alternatives. Mrs. Urmila managed to complete her graduation in the discipline of History through the tuitions’ fees. In her region, she always felt that her Hindi medium schooling can attract more children for tuitions. After her graduation again she had to face the same marriage question but this time her revolt was simply denied by her family and she got married to a doctor, who encouraged her for further studies and Mrs. Urmila now proudly says that “I am a Ph.d holder in the discipline of History and like my husband I also put Dr. before my name.”

Shamit’s father, who is by profession a doctor and a fighter in his son’s views as he also, had crossed various obstacles of life to reach at the present level. Mr. Uday (Shamit’s father) comes from a rural background and is eldest of his three brothers, his father was a farmer and mother was a simple house maker. She did not have any formal education but in a true sense she was a modern lady with her broad mindedness, farsightedness and a true learner. Mr. Uday said that now I and my wife are educated enough to understand the value of education and we can guide our children while making decisions for their future, at our times most of the population of our parents’ generation was not fully conscious and aware about the value of education and its proper channels, besides many difficulties they successfully managed to shape our future; that is a real
success in my views. Today, as a parent often I feel that how should I convey my children the value and significance of our original roots which lies in our village, how should they communicate in a village dialect, how should they learn to work at field. In this process of transforming the norms and values of our family, often I fail as a parent. Because on the name of the necessity of providing facilities, we can see the major factor of detachment among our children, they find hard to relate the rural realities with their urban experiences and victimized by the forces of the supremacy of modern education. Mr. Uday accepted that in the establishment of the authoritative character of modern education parents are also responsible for the situation. For example: Shamit continued, “I remember in my childhood my father always made it a point that we spend our Sundays in our village home, which was one and half hour away from west Delhi. There, like others family members we did everything including the work at the field. Sometimes even for the Monday tests I had to prepare it there only and as usual after 8.30 pm in our village there was no hope for the electricity, so I used to study in the lamp light also. For that many times I argued with my father also but he simply refused for any change of his regular Sunday plans. At that time I considered him as a stubborn and rigid personality but now I feel that it was necessary to develop the rational and logical thinking, by which we could able to form our own understanding about everything, like every village practice is not the outcome of superstitions, conservatism and rigidity similarly every practice of urban life cannot be considered as the result of modern, scientific and logical enquiry. For the welfare of the people as well as for the overall development of the country a balanced approach should be followed not only by the government policies but through our socialization patterns also. He said if a child is experiencing the facility of twenty hours of electricity then how can a child be sensitive towards the condition of the Indian villages where people have learnt to live without the electricity. I do not mean that to make them understand we should not avail the available facilities to them, but there are many ways by which we can make our children aware and sensitive about the harsh social realities. And this cannot be taught merely through the school texts but it can be conveyed through some experiential school projects.”

Shamit’s parents are very clear in their thoughts. They value the education and its related aspect. They are nurturing their children very consciously. For example; his
mother was totally against the tuition classes and always dreamt to send her children in a ‘high-fight’ English medium school, so she prefers to teach her children by herself and get them enrolled in a big school. Even for her children’s studies Mrs. Urmila did not join any job after her Ph.d and now as she thinks that her children are mature enough to manage their studies so she started her business and become a very active member of Amway business. His father believes that children are very young for taking any kind of decisions so its parents duty to decide their course of actions. Therefore, for Shamit it’s always his parents’ decisions that what should be followed by him whether it’s a choice of school or a choice of optional subjects in 11th standard.

Shamit says, “I do not even remember that any point of time I have questioned the decisions of my parents, I always followed their words and I have succeeded very gracefully also. So naturally the question of questioning them was never hit my thoughts. As far as my duty was concerned towards my future, I used to think that it’s only my hard work which can pay me back. Therefore by following the footsteps of my parents I have become a hard working student whose name always comes in the list of toppers. With my performance everybody seems very happy around me. My parents never faced any kind of embarrassment in the monthly parents-teacher meet. With overall performance my family is quite hopeful for my future. So, ‘I think’, I am a successful student and till today enjoying my success also.” Even during the conversation I was also forming the opinion about Shamit as an achiever but his last sentence of our conversation simply put a pause on my thought process and forced me to ask him a question;

I asked him that take one name from your class who is an achiever in your opinion?

He replied, “Shashank”

I asked, why?

He said that as far as I remember he takes his own decisions. Yes, of course he has never been enlisted in the toppers’ list, many times his parents called up by our class teacher for an urgent meeting. Like me he has also chosen the discipline of Commerce as an optional subject for 11th standard but the only difference is he himself decides his own
way for the future and I took this course because my parents think that it is the upcoming
demanding filed of career. In my views Shashank is the risk taker, a firm believer in his
thoughts, transferred from a mischievous boy to a mature individual but I am still the
same who is totally dependent on others points of views. Here I am not negating the
significant role of parents but I am appreciating the freedom and the free spirit. Now I
can understand that sometimes the overprotective environment of family can over shadow
the real self of a child. For that matter if a child scored even 100% marks in a subject his
real self cannot flourish easily. For instance; I rarely questioned in my class room
because I was always conscious for my toppers image, I used to think that being a topper
I should not have any queries, as in everybody’s opinion I know each and everything.
Gradually it developed into a habit and after that till today I am scared of questioning
things. If a teacher is putting an argument in front of us then for me that was the final
statement on that issue. Even in our school teachers’ eyes those who put many questions
they are the weaker section of the class. As they (weak students) do not understand
anything easily so by asking various questions they try to clarify their understanding of
the topic. For that matter many times teachers also got furious on them and asked them
to revise the whole chapter. For the whole class those anxious and irritable behaviors of
our teachers were considered to be very embarrassing. Therefore, in my class the
numbers of intelligent pupils were quite high as accept few students nobody dare to
question in class and because I was the quietest among them so managed to maintain the
first position in the class also. Yet, Shashank always got good marks but by pointing out
many questions in the class, he generally became the victim of subject teacher’s bad
mood although those scolding could not make any difference in his habits. Today, that
criticality and questioning ability is the main requirement of our Commerce discipline
and at this stage instead of sheer memorization of disciplinary facts, for the deeper
understanding of the discipline we need to develop that reasoning ability. Since the
childhood my hard work and all my techniques of scoring good marks are closely
associated with the memorizing the disciplinary facts/information, I never realize the
importance of the power of questioning, therefore now with the huge syllabus, almost
every day I am struggling to understand my subjects of Commerce discipline, for which I
had to take out four to five hours for self-study. And Shashank, with the same bundle of
huge syllabus seems quite relaxed because he was never in favor of the memorizing techniques of studies, he tried to understand the textual facts first and then believe in explaining those things in his terms. Even to judge a student’s success in terms of marks/percentile he is obtaining the third position in the class and these days my name is nowhere in the list. My parents have their own reasons to be furious on me and that is also true that every day I am breathing in the smoke of suffocation but the reason is not at all my present low scores, it’s the burden of a myth; a myth of a image of brilliant child which I was carrying since my childhood. Unlike the feeling of depression and failure, I am actually relieved and relaxed, as now I understood the meaning of real education very clearly and by highlighting my mistakes, I am hopeful for my future also.

Shamit feels that for his present situation his teachers are also responsible, because they never questioned his silence in the class. They never encouraged him to question their arguments. They always rush to finish the prescribed syllabus. He clearly states that it’s not students who consider the criteria of marks as a denominator of success; it’s only the adults’ criteria which are imposed on students. We all actually grow up listening few tag lines from adults such as- if you want to achieve something great like; want to take sciences or admission in a good college than try to score above than 80% marks, this world is full of competition so if you want to make your so sure secure position in this world than do hard work for good marks and so on. Therefore, students are forced to put all their energy to score good percentage in the school examinations and feel afraid in breaking the fix parameters. So, they start thinking that success, hard work and achievements all can be describe only in terms of good marks and the dualism of education- philosophy and practicality of education, create confusion in the entire structure of schooling.

A pupil experiences many influences in his life which sometimes make remarkable differences and often it’s a teacher who inspired the child very much. For that matter teacher taught relationship plays very important role in a student’s life. Teacher’s thought provoking ideas give space to the children to think, to imagine, to explore and to feel the joy of learning. Philosophically, terms like divine, sacred, moral and ethical values are associated with the image of a teacher by which students respect his authority.
or power and simply believe in his words. Through teacher’s involvement with texts and school children’s activities they derive the deep meanings of logics, reasons, science, and rhythms that slowly encourage them to understand the power of relatedness where they learn to relate textual knowledge with the physical, natural, material and societal world. But sometimes this teacher taught relationship differs from its philosophy and the gap between a teacher and his students becomes really widen and artificial where a teacher holds the authority to claim the highest source of knowledge of particular subject and believes that students lack appropriate knowledge of the subjects. This relationship of powerful and powerless actually ruins the joy of a learner’s journey as he (the student) is not allowed to question that authority and gradually he crushes his critical ability and the power of reason. On the contrary, sometimes teachers’ empowering words bring students closer to the ideology of the education and help them to reflect the meaning of education in their own lives. So, the role of the teacher can be seen as a vital denominator for the successful or failure candidature.

Similarly, in modern complex societies textbooks play a crucial role in shaping children’s mind. When children study different subjects for different disciplines they actually experience those disciplinary subjects in the school curriculum. When they study Tagore’s poems, Gandhi’s thoughts on truth, Newton’s law of gravity, and about civilization in their books, they actually experience those thoughts and ideas to advance their knowledge. Every discipline has an important role in enhancing and shaping the knowledge of the child. The hierarchy of disciplines in school education is an actual fact, so, the moot question that arises here is that besides these disciplinary boundaries how children experience social realities through text books. Generally, we perceive textbooks as reliable source of information or merely a source of written information but the significance of textbooks are beyond that informative character. These textbooks inculcate the critical, intellectual, sensible and emancipator values in the children’s mindset. School textbooks create uniformity in the school curriculum. For example, in the schools, students come from diverse sections of the society but they all study the same books at the same level and on their basis, they are evaluated through the examination pattern. Despite, maintain the uniformity at the schooling level, children
create an intellectual-communicative environment through textbooks where they develop their understanding and derive different meanings of different concepts.

But knowing the importance of textual knowledge, especially in today’s world schools do not comprehend it and even they merely consider it as an informative knowledge which is necessary for the skilled labor. Though, in this process of the necessity of education, to realize the importance of the relatedness or depth of the knowledge has lost his space as teachers mostly encourage the bookish language instead of the real/actual meaning of particular concept. Therefore students always feel the heaps of difference between what they study in classroom and what they practice in real life. For example: a physics student who studies electricity and currents in his physics classroom, find really hard to relate it in practical real world. This huge gap of theory and practice creates tensions in pupils’ mindset which leads to disinterest in texts and imposed grip over the discipline. In result, some students who manage to cope with the new trends of memorizing knowledge, scored good marks and ultimately tagged as brilliant minds, on the contrary others known as slow learners and not so intelligent minds as for instance, they try to understand the significance of war in the making of our country and fail to memorize those important historical dates.

In many ways, school breaks down children’s convictions that things make sense, or their hope that things may prove to make sense. They do it, first of all, by breaking up life into arbitrary and disconnected hunks of subject matter, which they then try to “integrate” by artificial and irrelevant devices. Furthermore, we continually confront them with what is senseless, ambiguous, and contradictory; worse, we do it without knowing that we are doing it, so that, hearing nonsense shoved at them as if it were sense, they come to feel that the source of their confusion lies not in the material but in their own stupidity. Still further, school cut children off from their own common sense and the world of reality by requiring them to play with and shove around words and symbols that have little or no meaning to them. Thus we turn the vast majority of our students into the kind of people for whom all symbols are meaningless; who cannot use symbols as a way of learning about and dealing with reality; who cannot understand written instructions; who, even if they read books, come out knowing no more than when they went in; who
may have few new words rattling around in their heads, but whose mental models of the world remain unchanged and, indeed, impervious to change. The minority, the able and successful students, we are very likely to turn into something different but just as dangerous: the kind of people who can manipulate words and symbols fluently while keeping themselves largely divorced from the reality for which they stand; the kind of people who like to speak in large generalities but grow silent or indignant if someone asks for an example of what they are talking about; the kind of people who, in their discussions of world affairs, coin and use such words as megadeaths and megacorpses, with scarcely a thought to the blood and suffering these words imply.\footnote{Halt, J., (1968), \textit{How Children Fail}, Harmondsworth: Pelican.}

Again John Halt argues, “We (teachers) encourage children to act stupidly, not only by scaring and confusing them, but also by boring them, by filling up their days with dull, repetitive tasks that make little or no claim on their attention or demands on their intelligence. Our hearts leap for joy at the sight of roomful of children all slogging away at some imposed task, and we are all the more pleased and satisfied if someone tells us that the children do not really like what they are doing. We tell ourselves that this drudgery, this endless busy work, is good preparation for life, and we fear that without it children would be hard to “control”. But why must this busywork is so dull? Why not give tasks that are interesting and demanding? Because, in schools where every task must be completed and every answer must be right, if we give children more demanding tasks they will be fearful and will instantly insist that we show them how to do the job. When you have acres of paper to fill up with pencil marks, you have no time to waste on the luxury of thinking. By such means children are firmly established in the habit of using only a small part of their thinking capacity. They feel that school is a place where they must spend most of their time doing dull task in a dull way. Before long they are deeply settled in a rut of unintelligent behavior from which most of them could not escape even if they wanted to.”\footnote{Ibid, 1968: 78.}

This desire of escapism from schooling is prevalent among many students and Radhika is one of them. She simply hates studies. She is studying because others say that
it is necessary to have basic education. Radhika is an average student who just passed her 9th standard from Laxman Public School. She lives in a joint family in Chattarpur area of the Delhi city. Her father is a businessman and her mother is a house maker. Later, during the conversation she revealed that she likes ‘fashion world’; anything related to the term of fashion she likes it, whether its clothing, cosmetics, jewelry and modeling. She always dreamt of becoming a model but in her terms because of her ‘traditional and conservative family’ it’ll be remain a dream.

The importance of education has not much space in her family, especially for girls. Marriage of girls is the biggest concern of the family. She has been seeing that after touching the age of 18, the marriage proposals are bombarded on her elder sisters and no smoke of revolt can be observed in the family, as people are being socialized in that way only. Girls are supposed to learn all kinds of household work, they can study or they are allowed to study till the time they will not receive any kind of marriage proposals. On her education she says that “now I am studying in an English medium school because my family thinks that these days groom’s family demands English medium girl and so why only LPS (I asked her)? Because all my brothers study there so again my family thinks that it’s safe to send me to that school.” There were the large containments of sadness in her statement. Though, family traditions through their socialization process, often represses the child’s desirability, interests and happiness. However, in that case a child in search of happiness largely dependent upon school education. Some children find their space to construct their dream world in school and for some the degree of repression has risen day by day. Radhika belongs to the second category as till today she cannot form her opinion that why she is actually studying? Or what is the importance of education? Or is she really wants to pursue her further studies? She says that my parents never bothered about my marks, they do not even know about my unit test schedule, they rarely attended my parents-teacher meet (on behalf of them my uncle used to attend monthly parents-teacher meet), and they always provide me best facilities. Despite the very less interference of my parents I am hesitant and scared of them. I am comfortable and free only in my peer group. Like my family they are also concerned about my small desires and unlike them my teachers believe that I have some talent. My friends always encourage me to have some goal in my life. They advise me for further studies. They
suggested me to follow my interest. Only because of my friends I like the place called ‘school’.

In school, she continued, on the name of routine and discipline everything is so boring. In every class, teacher comes and simply conveyed the textual message to students. They rarely experiment with their teaching style to enhance students’ interests in particular chapter. Yet, they expect students to be innovative and imaginative but while imposing these expectations, they simply forget that without understanding the particular concept how one can be innovative while making the project. For instance; I remember, we studied about the ‘solar eclipse’ in 6th standard in the discipline of Geography and we asked to do a project on it. Mostly students simply copied the diagram of it from the Geography text and submitted it. I also did the same. On it, our teacher got furious on us because she could not see any extra effort, any imaginative work in the project, so she punished the whole class and asked us to do that again. Mostly students with the help of their parents or tutor managed to do that quite differently but I again did it in the same way this time little more neat and clean. My teacher was happy with the performances of my other classmates and she gave them A, A+ etc. I was the only student who fused her mood with the bad submission of my project, she yelled at me, tagged me with big words like IDLE, NON-SERIOUS, and so on. She ordered me to make it again and said, ‘till the times I will satisfy with the project you have to make it’. Genuinely, I draw the same diagram four times but fail to reach at my teacher’s expectations.

Ultimately, she asked me, ‘why you are not able to make it?’

I said, ‘because I do not understand the meaning of eclipse?’

For a moment she was quite and after that in her views I was always a slow learner or a back bencher who is not at all interested in studies. But she did not explain the meaning of ‘solar eclipse’, and till today while seeing the picture of solar eclipse I can recognize it (as I draw it four times so I remember it) otherwise I do not know the geographical details of it. This is not the end of the story there are many more incidences by which the adjectives of slow learner, idle, non-serious and back bencher were attached to my name. Like, for the discipline of Civics in standard 5th we used to
memorize that India is an ‘independent, democratic, and secular country’ and at that
time those words were difficult to memorize (at least for me) so while explaining about
India, I always missed the term ‘secular’ and teacher always suggested me to revise it
carefully but never explain the meaning of secularism in an easy way. Therefore, by that
time, as a ‘poor student’, I was already started attending extra classes where I was
trained to sharpen my memory power because even in those extra classes my queries
were remain the same without any explanation. Attending those ‘extra classes’ were the
sign of my ‘failure’ which force me to live with the humiliation. Being friendly with some
intelligent students of the class, the impact of that labeling with my name was strongly
affected my inner self and confidence. Initially I hesitated to go to the school, tried to
make excuses for staying at home and gradually I followed those ‘tags’ and became non-
serious, lazy and back bencher. Today, I do not have any interest in studies because I
know that whatever we study in class rooms, it is just a way to achieve the promotion for
the next class. Otherwise nobody would care for students like me in terms of real learning
or actual understanding of the subject.

Being a ‘back bencher’ she has observed the formation of sitting arrangement of a
class room. With her interesting observation she explains that how does the sitting
arrangement highlight the label of a student. For example; an intelligent, hard working
and serious students always prefer to sit in the front row of the classroom and those
students who are just opposite to it prefer to sit in the last rows, the middle order of the
class room is the mix combination of both categories. She claims that mostly teachers
follow this perception, so when they see that an intelligent child is sitting in the last row
of classroom they clearly suggest him/her to sit in the front row from the next class or
even to punish a back bencher child they order him to sit in the front row. She anxiously
pointed out that nobody ever asked me to sit in the front row, till today I am a back
bencher. This popular demarcation of the classroom is a reflection of the constructing the
notions of success and failure, as a student feels great when a teacher prefers him/her to
be in the front row or vice versa. In that sense, she expresses that if I do not consider
myself as a failure than definitely I am not a SUCCESSFUL student also.
School tends to be a dishonest as well as a nervous place. School teachers are not often honest with children, least of all in school. They tell them, not what they think, but what they feel students ought to think; or what other people feel or tell them they ought to think. Pressure groups finds it easy to weed out of our classrooms, texts and libraries whatever facts, truths, and ideas they happen to find unpleasant or inconvenient. And teachers are not even as truthful with children as they could safely be, as the parents, politician, and pressure groups would let them be. Even in the most non-controversial areas their teaching, the textbooks school teachers give to the children present a dishonest and distorted picture of the world. Worse yet, they are not honest about themselves, their own fears, limitations, weaknesses, prejudices, motives. They present themselves to the children as if they are the final authority of transferring the information, all-knowing, all-powerful, always rational, and always right. By this they favor the creation of this myth about themselves which not only affect students but later on themselves also. Students begin to learn that not answering or answering in a wrong way is an offence; they do not suppose to do it. If they cannot able to answer any question than considering their acts they named as ‘failures’.

[VI]

REALIZING EDUCATION AS A POSSIBILITY: A PASSIONATE AFFAIR

Success is something that everyone aspires for. The notion varies from time, space, society and individuation. Every society has some defined parameters for success at different times, which again differs for people belonging to different categories age-wise, gender-wise as well as social position-wise. For students, marking their place in schools and universities by attaining good grades consider to be the major indicator of success which highlights that they are stepping forward to secure their future. This increasing security perspective of Indian Education system is overshadowing the larger purpose of education such as knowledge, transformation and enlightenment. Similarly, labeling of students has become a prominent part of the educational system where a
“Good student” is a label that individuals are taught to consider the ultimate aspiration in life from very early childhood. There are also pre-defined ways of being a good student. If somebody deviates from that, doesn’t matter whether he or she is right in whatever he or she is trying to establish, they are immediately labeled as “failed”. Probably the reasons behind these denominators are the need for the best work force for the neoliberal India or believing in the survival of the fittest which is manipulating aspirations of young India.

Indeed, another narration of a student also reflecting as the valuable illustration of the contemporary Indian Educational system. Aditya (a 12th class student of Ryan International School) who had been a student of physics had the habit of looking up the international scientific journals, simply out of the genuine interest that he had for his subject. In this process he got acquainted with some new methods of proving certain theorems in physics which were very different from the methods they were taught in the class room and also not much appreciated among teachers. He felt tempted to do those methods during his 11th class final examination. He was “rewarded” with a second class despite had written all the answers correctly, thus deserving a first class. The reason simply had been that he had dared to do something which was different from his textual knowledge. This example of him matches with the experiences of many others who think and therefore act a bit differently from the prevailing educational norms. This suggests that “success” is something which has to be contained within the norms of educational system.

Interestingly, receiving certificate knowledge is not the indication towards an individual’s success until it converted into the more utility form in terms of high finances and social positions in the society where positioning of the society may be determined through the conjugal relationships in patriarchal societies (like India) or through occupational attainments both are narrowing down the ethics of education and favoring the gender differences of the society at the same time. For example many above female narrations in earlier chapters have shown that their education is totally directed from the perspective of marriage and if they succeeded in marrying a suitable high packaged male than they (those girls) are also marked as achievers. Though here, I am not entailing my
project into the expansion of feminist philosophy but I am also not falsifying its concrete practical examples in doing philosophy in/of /for education. Feminism, precisely provides us an insight towards a way of rethinking the “usual”.

Similarly, it also hints necessity to understand the vitality of this debate for sociologists/ social science researchers, by which they can relocate the situational groundings of aspirations of female children in the structure of school education and reexamine the correlation between feminist ideology and educational ideology in terms of practice and theory.

Beyond the gender instrumentality, our existing educational system also emphasizes what all can be regarded as “doing something”, all the rest, however much rigor they might require are simply “nothing”. In this regard, Aditya’s mother Mrs. Leela, shared one of her experiences, she narrates, a very famous theatre personality in Kolkata had a daughter who decided to get married to one of the members in their group. This member had also been earning popularity as a brilliant actor those days. This guy was so dedicated to theatre that he decided to leave his job in between, so that he could devote all his time improving his theatre performances. His devotion to group-theatre was quite marvelous and well-appreciated by the audiences. But as soon as their wedding date has been fixed, the father had to answer some vague and abstract questions while inviting people. One day he had been to one of their relative’s place. This relative was a very old lady who usually stayed at home and unable to move anywhere due to her old age. Therefore we can assume that the connectivity with the outer modern world for her was almost negligible. But her impromptu and genuine question raised father’s eyebrows as while receiving the invitation first she showed her happiness for the couple and upcoming celebration of the family though she understood very well that due to her ill-health perhaps she was unable to be a part of the ceremony, then she showed her deep interest of knowing how the prospective son-in-law was. Very obviously she asked what he does, to which the father replied “nothing”. The lady, quite surprised at this answer, said “what do you mean by nothing? Does he sit at home for the whole day?” The father immediately said ’No! It’s not the case; he studies about theatre, practices song and...”

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dance, and attends rehearsals and makes stage performances.’ The lady got even more
surprised and asked “He does so many things, and you are saying he does nothing?” The
father really got ashamed of the way he had nullified everything that his prospective son-
in-law (who is also one of his most favourite and beloved student) does with so much
devotion and commitment.

Yet, this insightful experience of Mrs. Leela again visualized the significant
creation of success or failure in our society where doing something (as per the
economical standards) or nothing get ingrained in us through the value system and
various socio-economic scenarios that our society compels on us and we become so
prompt to judge our own and somebody else’s success or failure in terms of a few
restrictive parameters.

Aditya is 12th class science student and keenly interested in learning guitar, he
wants to become a guitarist not a scientists or engineer. Though, he also likes physics but
his dreams lay in the field of guitar. In his views, being a middle class child, he and his
parents cannot take risk over the profession of Guitar; therefore he has taken sciences as
an alternative or a secure option for the future. With sciences he has planned to make a
good entry into the good colleges of Delhi and then there he will try to flourish his talent
in guitar. He says that pursuing my school education in a big school of the city, cannot
negate the risk factor associated with the middle class boy. Even, for my parents, my
guitar interest was the only motive to get admission in my present school. Because for
these kinds of facilities such as learning western dance, western music and sports like
tennis and cricket etc, big schools actually help to encourage the students to flourish in
these areas of learning. From providing good teachers to organizing stage performances
with media coverage these schools are beneficial for the students especially for those who
want to convert their hobbies into career.

Aditya’s parents are not into the professional music but yes they have major
interests in music. After returning from their work, they both prefer to hear the music
with the sip of tea. That is the way of their relaxation. His mother sings very well Bengali
songs and has a very deep interest in R.D. Burman’s songs. As Aditya describes, my
mother kept a small music system in our kitchen and as soon as she arrived at home it’s
very much obvious that system will get switched on. I and my sister have grown up with that music system and now even sitting inside in our room, with the type of songs we can easily guess that what our mother is actually doing. For example; when she cooks or does any household work, she prefers some sprightly numbers of R. D. Burman’s at high volume and when she wants to relax, she listens Burman Sahab’s (as my mom calls him) soft songs. With her likings automatically I developed the liking of ‘instrumental music’ as in all Burman Sahab’s songs, you can observe the various experimentations with musical instruments which results into a very beautiful and soothing rhythm. Indeed, guitar as a music instrument appeared the most attractive instrument to me, because I found it very energetic and yet stylish also. I remember, in my 3rd standard, whenever my parents asked me for my needs or discussed about my birthday gift, I only utter a word- GUITAR, GUITAR AND GUITAR and very clearly I mentioned that I want a real one not a toy form of it. My father was trying to convince me that first you should learn it then we will surely buy it for you. But I was quite adamant. Finally after three-four days of my stubborn behavior, my parents simply surrendered to my decision and bought a black color guitar for me. That day was the most memorable day of my life. I was feeling like a rock star. I named it as an ‘AD Rock Star’. After that every evening I was busy with my AD Rock Star and merely playing with strings of guitar, I could feel that I was creating some musical sound. My parents were also appreciating me but behind their appreciation there were some worries also- worries for my studies, worries for my career.

After few weeks, one day as my father stepped into our house he starts shouting at me and warning me that if he will hear the noise of those strings again, he will throw it away. In the evening when he calmed down he tried to make me understand the importance of education. He suggested me not to hamper my studies because of my hobby. He says that it is true that you are very much interested in learning guitar and for that matter only we preferred this school also but he conveys that my first priority should be my studies and I should concentrate on it only. In his views, a guitar can be used as a mode of relaxation. At that point, I also agreed with him, therefore, till the time of my 7th standard, I fully concentrated on my studies and got good grades also. Meanwhile the interest of my guitar ‘which was just a hobby in my father’s opinion’ was left behind. The aspiring rock star turned into a studious student. But destiny took its turn and gave me
another chance to relive my dreams and desires. On our school’s notice board, I saw a notice for the ‘Inter School Cultural Competition’ and for that those students are interested in performing in that competition they asked to join their required classes after school schedule. Whole day I was tensed and forming my sentences to convince my parents but when I mentioned about those classes without taking a minute they got agree. But my father again mentioned that do not forget that we cannot afford prioritizing your studies over anything, so be careful. By valuing his words, I also promised him.

I enrolled for music classes and choose one instrument – guitar. At that time I felt the same way as I felt when I first got my own guitar as a birthday gift. Whole night I was waiting for the next day. I remember that morning was little different or may be morning was like any other day but I was different. I was full of enthusiasm, energy and excitement. After regular school schedule, we as participants called to the committee hall. We went there. There were three teachers assigned for all the students. Following the line, they were asking for our areas, so I told instrumental music - guitar. On that basis, some groups have formed. Then suddenly our music teacher asked, “Those who have some kind of training please raise your hands.” Except five students (including me) all had some training. Because, that preparation was for a competition, therefore our teacher suggested us to have at least basic learning of the instrument. I was almost shattered, I was sad. Then again the same teacher came to us and said that we can take lessons in school with that preparatory group but could not participate in the competition. I was bit relaxed and felt better. The learning session started from the next day. With my parents’ permission I joined a music school also and started taking guitar classes at the weekend. And because, I was warned not to keep aside my studies so the pressure of studies along with music classes were quite high but because I was enjoying my life so even with the hectic schedule, those were the best days of my life. I remember, that year I was not allowed to take participation but my teacher said to all the beginners, ‘no need to be disheartened and I promised that you all will perform in the annual function of the school.” that appreciation from a teacher was very encouraging to all of us especially for me. She became one of my favorite teachers, not because she used to appreciate me but because she was always full of hopes and taught us to live with the joy and happiness. Her inspiring personality motivated me and I gave some best
performances at school level. Now my school knows me as a ‘guitarist’ and my guitar by its name-‘AD Rock Star’. After the completion of that preparatory session, I became more serious about my guitar as I have realized my real interest and happiness in guitar. However, now I have my clear notions and thoughts that after my 12th I will definitely give a serious shot to my passion. At this point of life, that realization for me is a success.

The dilemma of Indian educational system is clearly reflecting through above narration where the entire knowledge system (within economical, political and societal upheavals) is confused about what should be essential taught in the classroom and what can be avoided for further. Though, the school curriculum is biased about certain fixed and structured parameters of knowledge. The notion of curriculum, an essential body of knowledge, would be absurd even if children remembered everything school teachers “taught” them. We don’t and can’t agree on what knowledge is essential. The man who has trained himself or enlightened himself in some special field of knowledge or competence thinks, naturally, that his specialty should be in that form of knowledge which is also required as an integral part of curriculum. The European classical scholars want Greek and Latin taught; the historian shouts for more history; the mathematicians urge more math and the scientist more science; the modern language experts want all children taught French, or Spanish, or Russian; and so on. Everyone wants to get his specialty into the act, knowing that as the demand of his special knowledge rises, so will the price that he can charge for it. Who wins this struggle and who loses depends not on the real needs of children or even of society, but on who is most skillful in public relations, who has the best educational lobbyists, who can best capitalize on events that have nothing to do with education, like with the establishment of multinational companies in the 90s, Indian educational system felt the need of introducing the some popular European languages in the school syllabus. Therefore, Indian government without even visualizing the vitality of these language courses in the structure of education compels schools to make them as a compulsory language or an important part of the syllabus.

The idea of curriculum would not be valid even if we could agree on what ought to be in it. Knowledge itself changes. Much of what a child learns in school will be found, or thought, before many years, to be untrue. The remarkable difference can be
seen within the same discipline, such as; in ancient times economics was taught as ‘Arthshastra’; where economic trends and facts both were totally different. Than the syllabus of economics took a different shift at that time of highest deflation of 1930s, the theories and facts were totally changed and the economic theorists mostly emphasizing on the ‘welfarism’ of the social world. And then in 1990s the whole world was debating on the new emerging concepts like-globalization, liberalization and neo-liberalization. And now we can see that the whole new discipline has emerged i.e. ‘Commerce’, and due to the emerging demands, the discipline is getting popularity in the domain of education also. Moreover, we cannot possibly judge what knowledge will be most needed ten years from now.

How can we say, in any case, that one piece of knowledge is more important than another, or indeed, what we really say, that some knowledge is essential and the rest, as far as school is concerned, worthless? A child who wants to learn something that the school can’t and doesn’t want to teach him will be told not to waste his time. But how can schools say that what he wants to know is less important than what school want him to know? Schools must ask how much of the sum of human knowledge anyone can know at the end of his schooling. Perhaps a millionth. Are schools then to believe that one of these millions is so much more important than another? Or that our social and national problems will be solved if we can just figure out a way to turn children out of schools knowing two millions of the total, instead of one? Our problems don’t arise from the fact that we lack experts enough to tell us what needs to be done, but out of the fact that we do not and will not do what we know needs to be done now.

It is not subject matter that makes some learning more valuable than others, but the spirit in which the work is done. If a child is doing the kind of learning that most children do in school, when they learn at all-swallowing the words, memorizing the information and to have fear of examinations; he is wasting his time, or rather, schools are wasting it for him. This learning will not be permanent, or relevant, or useful. But a child who is learning naturally, following his curiosity where it leads him, adding to his mental model of reality whatever he needs and can find a place for, and rejecting without fear or guilt what he does not need, is growing—in knowledge, in the love of learning,
and in the ability to learn. He is on his way to becoming the kind of person we need in our society, and that our ‘best’ schools and colleges are not turning out, the kind of person who, seeks and find meaning, truth, and enjoyment in everything he does. All his life he will go on learning. Every experience will make his mental model of reality more complete and more true to life, and thus make him more able to deal realistically, imaginatively, and constructively with whatever new experience life throws his way.

Above mentioned some narrations of students clearly reflect that the idea of painless, non-threatening coercion is an illusion. Fear is the inseparable companion of coercion, and its inescapable consequences. Often that fear brings out the depression, anxieties and ambiguities but sometimes it also turns out into the constructive form for some children. The structure of schools and teachers, school curriculum and pedagogy as its variables play a significant part in the ‘man-making’. But besides it we cannot negate the influence of family socializations and the other influencing factors of the society such as media, economy of the particular society, social and political world. Therefore, in a society where every moment we; citizens are breathing in an unequal world, it is difficult to set such big notions of success and failure. But here my main argument is that school education should sensitize to the importance of free learning and it should also promote the love of learning through various possible ways.

My next chapter, with concluding remarks, is a compilation of my whole research project where I try to pose some arguments on the bases of findings of the study. It also provides a scope to think about the alternative queries and answers in the realm of school education and its prevalent changes.

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