THE DYNAMICS OF CHILDREN'S PLAY IN URBAN CONTEXT:

A STUDY OF THREE SELECTED SITES IN DELHI

Thesis submitted to the Jawaharlal Nehru University

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for

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Declaration

I declare that the thesis entitled **"The Dynamics of Children's Play in Urban Context: A Study of Three Selected Sites in Delhi"** submitted by me in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy is an original research work and has not been submitted so far, in part or full, for any other degree or diploma of any University/Institution.

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Certificate

This thesis entitled as **"The Dynamics of Children's Play in Urban Context: A Study of Three Selected Sites in Delhi"** submitted by Rituraj Sharma, to the Centre for the Study of Social Systems, School of Social Sciences, Jawaharlal Nehru University, for the award of the degree of the Doctor of Philosophy is an original work and has not been submitted so far, in part or full, for any other degree or diploma of any University/Institution.

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List of Abbreviations

AC	Air Conditioner
AAP	Aam Aadmi Party
BHK	Bedroom Hall Kitchen
BMW	Bayerische Motoren Werke
CBI	Central Bureau of Investigation
CCTV	Closed Circuit TeleVision
COVID-19	Corona Virus Disease, 2019
CPTED	Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design
DDA	Delhi Development Authority
DMP	Delhi Master Plan
FAUG	Fearless And United Guards
GK	General Knowledge
GTA	Grand Theft Auto
IME	Intensive Mothering Expectations
ICT	Information and Communication Technologies
IT	Information Technology
JNU	Jawaharlal Nehru University
KV	Kendriya Vidyalaya
MLA	Member of the Legislative Assembly
NCR	National Capital Region
NFS	Need For Speed
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
NIMHANS	National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences
OLED	Organic Light Emitting Diode
PPP	Public Private Partnership
PUBG	Player Unknown's Battle Grounds
RWA	Residents Welfare Association
SAP	Structural Adjustment Plan
SBM	Swacch Bharat Mission
SDMC	South Delhi Municipal Corporation
SHUT	Service for Healthy Use of Technology
SMS	Short Message Service
TV	Tele Vision
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

List of Tables and Figures

Table 1: *Summary of the timeline of the study.*

Figure 1: *Coolie Camp (Site 1), DDA Flats Munirka (Site 2) and Sector B and C of Vasant Kunj (Site 3) showing the specific localities taken under the study. (Source: Google Maps, as on 28 November 2020).*

Figure 2: *Simplified map of the field encompassing the selected sites (which I traversed in the company of children while exploring their geographies of play- explained in chapter 3). [*Not to scale]*

Figure 3: *A view of Coolie-Camp from the distance at Nelson Mandela Road. Picture taken in early 2019.*

Figure 4: *Glimpses of life from Sewa Camp and Shiva Camp. Picture clicked during the summer of 2017.*

Figure 5: *Newly constructed DDA flats Munirka, a 1976 photograph (Source: Seth, 2016).*

Figure 6: *Cars parked on the internal lanes of DDA Flats Munirka- depicting the affordability of its residents. Picture clicked in spring 2018.*

Figure 7: *One of the gates of Munirka Enclave- kept closed and secured with barbed wires.*

Figure 8: *Munirka Vihar, entry-exit gate at Baba Gang Nath Marg. Picture clicked in winter 2019.*

Figure 9: *DDA flats Munirka in 2019, well-guarded by entry-exit gate with strict timings. Picture clicked in winter 2019.*

Figure 10: *Indicative board by the residents' welfare association of Munirka Village. Picture taken in Winter 2019.*

Figure 11: *Children, while filling up the buckets with water; splashing and playing with each-other. Picture clicked on a summer evening of 2017 at Coolie-Camp.*

Figure 12: *Chandan, taking care of his youngest sibling while his other siblings and neighbourhood friends are playing along, on a sunny winter morning at Rock Garden, Munirka. Picture clicked during early winter of 2018.*

Figure 13: *Disha, holding her young sibling while counting on the swings' ride and waiting for her turn to hop on. Picture clicked at DDA flats Munirka park in spring of 2018.*

Figure 14: *Children from Coolie Camp showing their delicate plants at DDA flats Munirka park. Picture clicked during the summer of 2018.*

Figure 15: *Representative image of consumer child. (Source: Buckingham, 2011)*
Figure 16: *Children engrossed in technology: Representative picture of cyber-child from the field. Pictures clicked in the winters of 2018.*
Figure 17: *Simplified map of the field showing spatial location of the selected localities and the neighbourhood.*
Figure 18: *On a summer afternoon of 2017, non-resident children trying to climb on a fallen tree at Vasant Vatika Park.*
Figure 19: *Cricket match (of all boys group) on a Sunday morning during winters of 2018.*
Figure 20: *Munirka Rock Garden in Summer (above- picture was clicked during morning hours where people on jog and a few carrying necessary supply of milk and vegetables could be seen; below is the picture of children playing on swings during early afternoon) of 2018.*
Figure 21: *Children climbing up tree and plucking berries, other side children playing on swings installed at Munirka Rock Garden on summer afternoon 2018.*
Figure 22: *Gubbare wala- vendor selling air filled balloons of various shapes at Budh Bazar weekly market, on a summer evening in 2018.*
Figure 23: *Entry –Exit gate of DDA flats Munirka at Baba Gang Nath Marg. Picture clicked in winter of 2019.*
Figure 24: *A view of Coolie Camp alongside Nelson Mandela Road. Picture clicked in the winter of 2019.*
Figure 25: *Children from Masoodpur village at one of the parks at Vasant Kunj C3 on a summer evening in 2018.*
Figure 26: *Potential Playground behind Police Colony Vasant Kunj Sec C. Picture clicked in the summer of 2018.*
Figure 27: *Children's bags balanced on seesaw while they are having a quick ride at swings installed in the park at another side. Picture clicked at one of the parks at DDA flats Munirka, on an evening during spring 2018.*
Figure 28: *Children from Motilal Nehru Camp playing at one of the parks at DDA flats Munirka. Picture clicked on an evening in spring 2018.*
Figure 29: *Chungi made by children by cutting cycle tyre-tube in rings and tightened together in a bouncy ball-like manner. Picture clicked in spring 2018.*
Figure 30: *Children playing stappoo and younger ones are sitting on the staircase and enjoying the game. Picture clicked during afternoon hours in spring 2018.*
Figure 31: *Children playing Titli in one of the lanes of Coolie Camp. Picture clicked on an afternoon in the summer of 2017.*

Figure 32: *A group of women sitting for conversation while their grand-children are playing in the vicinity. Picture clicked on an afternoon in spring 2018.*
Figure 33: *Two children making paper boats after a rainy morning, while another one playing with the young child in a walker. Picture clicked in the afternoon hours of the rainy season of 2017.*
Figure 34: *Four girls proceeding for their play while the young boy teases them. Picture clicked on an afternoon of summer 2017.*
Figure 35: *At the foot-path, Nelson Mandela Road, children preparing to fly kites on a rainy afternoon in 2017.*
Figure 36: *Above- Footpath used as multipurpose space by residents of coolie-camp. Below- the divider on road and its fence as space for putting up clothes. Picture clicked in Winters 2019.*
Figure 37: *Cars parked in Munirka Vihar on a weekday. Picture clicked in the summer of 2018.*
Figure 38: *Cars parked on a regular day at DDA flats Munirka. Picture clicked in spring 2019.*
Figure 39: *Earlier open, but now enclosed- a space turned into parking for two-wheelers at DDA flats Munirka. Picture clicked in spring 2018.*
Figure 40: *Modified open space, turned into exclusive parking for RWA members. Picture clicked in spring, 2018.*
Figure 41: *Temporary setup for converting open space into parking. Pictures from DDA flats Munirka clicked during spring 2019.*
Figure 42: *Display board at one of the parks in DDA flats Munirka depicting its regulatory body- RWA under PPP scheme. Picture clicked in summer of 2018.*
Figure 43: *One set of swings is locked up at one of the parks in DDA flats Munirka. Picture clicked in spring 2018.*
Figure 44: *Another park locked up at DDA flats Munirka. Picture clicked in spring 2018.*
Figure 45: *Different boards displaying instructions to use the respective parks and gardens. Pictures from different parks of Delhi, collected from 2016-2019.*
Figure 46: *Beautified space under Munirka flyover. Picture clicked in Winters 2019.*
Figure 47: *Maharaja Surajmal Park behind Vasant Vihar bus stop. Picture clicked in the summer of 2018.*
Figure 48: *Internal park of DDA flats Munirka on the way to Laxmi Market (towards Canara Bank Munirka) Picture clicked in the summer of 2018.*

Figure 49: *One of the parks at DDA flats Munirka alongside the main road Baba Gang Nath Marg. Picture clicked in summer 2018.*
Figure 50: *One of the parks at DDA Vasant Kunj C 3. Picture clicked in summer 2017.*
Figure 51: *Representative picture from Khajan Singh Swimming Complex. Picture clicked in summer 2018.*
Figure 52: *Play area in one of the shopping malls in Delhi. Picture clicked in summer 2018.*
Figure 53: *Family of three- mother, father and the child; all busy on their respective smartphones. Picture clicked in winter 2018.*
Figure 54: *Representative picture of Pokemon (Source: Google).*
Figure 55: *Poster image of Indian action game-FAU-G, launched in November 2020. (Source: Google).*
Figure 56: *First one is the wristband of fast-track brand and other three pictures showing children wearing variants of such wrist band and digital watch.*
Figure 57: *Representative pictures from Raahgiri Day (Source: EMBARQNetwork)*
Figure 58: *Set of swings installed at the US-Mexican border (Source- Herring, 2019).*

Contents

Declaration i

Certificate ii

Acknowledgements iii

List of Abbreviations vi

List of Tables and Figures vii

Chapter 1 Introduction 1-69

1.1 Studying Children, Childhoods and Play: An Interdisciplinary Approach

1.2 Point of Departure

1.3 Research Objectives

1.3.1 Research Questions

1.4 Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

1.4.1 Social Class: A Defining Feature of this Study

1.5 Rationale for Choosing the Capital City, Delhi: Introducing the Field

1.5.1 Neo-liberal and Class Character of Delhi

1.5.2 The Classed Neighbourhoods: Selected Localities and Spatial Strategies of Housing

1.6 Methodology

1.6.1 Social Constructionist Perspective: Understanding the Marginalised Status of Children

1.6.1.1 New Sociology of Childhood: Shift from Research On Children to Research With Children

1.6.2 Timeline of the Study

1.6.3 Selection of the Sample

1.6.4 Data Generation Strategies: Methods and Techniques

1.6.4..1 Rapport Building and Briefing about Research

1.6.4.2 Redefining Adult-Child Relation: Inverting Down the Power-structure

1.6.4.3 Negotiating the Research-Space by Shared Vocabulary

1.6.4.4 Stranger Adult (Researching) with Children

1.6.4.5 Insider and Outsider with respect to Childhood as well as Class Positioning

1.7 Ethics in Research With Children

1.8 Dilemmas Encountered in the Study

1.9 Limitations of the Research

1.10 Organisation of the Thesis

Chapter 2 Setting the Stage: Understanding Children and Childhoods 70-152

2.1 Childhood as Social Construction: Framework for the Study of Childhood/s

2.1.1 What is a child? Uncovering the Categories of Adult-Child

2.2 Historically Tracing the Concept of Childhood

2.3 Childhoods in Indian Context

2.4 Ideological Politics of Discourses around Childhood

2.5 Contextualising Play and Work

2.5.1 Popular Views on Play and Work in Indian Context

2.5.2 Merging Worlds of Work and Play in Children's Lives: A Continuum

2.6 Classed Childhoods: A Socio- Structural Category

2.6.1 Monetary Consciousness amongst Children

2.7 Contested and Customised Childhoods: Cultural Politics around Global and Local Childhoods

2.8 Childhoods and its Multitudes: Competing Imageries of Children and their Childhoods

2.8.1 Happy and Playing Child Construction: Linked with Play and Delinked from Work

2.8.2 Street Child versus Sacred (Schooled) Child

2.8.3 Innocent and Shy as Outdated; Clever, Smart and Independent as New Call for Children

2.8.4 Consumer Child

2.8.5 Cyber Child: Loss of Innocence

2.9 Tailoring Childhoods: Role of Parenting in Construction of Childhood

Chapter 3 Cityscapes and Children's Geographies of Play: Spatial Description of Selected Localities with respect to Children's Play 153-241

3.1 Zones of Possibilities: Selected Public Spaces of Interaction from the Localities

3.1.1Vasant Vatika Park

3.1.2 Rock Garden, DDA flats Munirka

3.1.3 Budh Bazar: Wednesday Weekly Market

3.2 Contesting Spatial Claims: Rigid Realities of Interaction at the Selected Localities

3.3 Visibility of Children in Outdoor Spaces and their Play Preferences

3.3.1 Vasant Kunj (B&C)

3.3.2 DDA flats Munirka

3.3.3 Coolie Camp

3.4 Street: A Space that Embodies Endless Possibilities

3.4.1 Street as a Socialising Space and Potential Play Zone

3.4.2 Street as Parking Space: Stories of Car Abundance and Scarce Open Spaces

3.5 Power-Politics: Converting City's Commons into Inaccessible Zones

3.6 Public Parks as Disciplining Sites: Stories of Instructed Usage and Aesthetics

3.7 Stranger Danger Syndrome: Felt Need for an Extra Eye for Supervision of Children in Risky Zones

3.8 Under-utilised Parks: Un-popular Fenced-off Spaces

3.9 Paid Play-Services on Rise: Parental Preferences towards Structured Activities

3.10 Google Play: Gateway to the Virtual World of Play and Gaming

Chapter 4 Timescapes of Children's Play: Dense Intersectionalities of Schooled Routine and Structured Lives 242-285

4.1 The Advent of Clocked Environments and Meticulously Scheduled Lives

4.1.1 Lives Planned or Unplanned? Classed Understanding of Time

4.1.2. Prioritising Education over Play: Learning Schooled Routines

4.1.2.1 Recovered from the Rupture: Coming Back to the New Normal

4.2 Digital Watch: A Desirable Accessory Enabling Children to Keep Time

4.3 Accelerated Pace of Life: Concerted Cultivations Leading to Harried Leisure

4.4 Structured Imagination of Play: Playing freely is actually Killing time

4.5 Everyday Routine of Children: Is there something called Free-time?

4.6 Time Dimensions of Play (and Work)

4.7 Time of Childhood: Re-tracing Culture of Childhood over Time

Chapter 5 Conclusion 286-299

Selected Bibliography 300-322

Appendices 323-329

Chapter 1

Introduction

The most mundane and ordinary appearing categories often reveal the complexities when explored in depth. Children and childhood constitutes one such category. Understanding childhood is a very complex terrain, as it is an inescapable experience that every individual has gone through and these experiences then unfold into multidirectional understanding of childhoods. To capture this multitude, Nandy (1997) puts it simply as, "there are as many childhoods as there are families" (p. 56). Therefore, the enquiry about children and childhood, due to its complex nature demands thorough grounding in time and space.

The current ethnographic research, studies in-depth the nature of urban children and their experiences of growing up in the city (and their childhoods), by enquiring about their play in the 21st century. It is important to state here that this work is neither the description of the kinds of play (or games and sport) that children are engaged in, nor is the work a detailed survey of children's play from the selected localities. However, the work by contextualising children's play sociologically, explores the socio-cultural and economic variants that shapes their play configuring their lived experiences in the city and thereby their childhoods. For this, *play*[1] is taken as the window to explore about the nature of children's lives across socio-economic classes.

Play and *schooling* are two major realms with which children and their childhoods are associated. This association is considered as normal rather, a *desired* one. Anything which does not fit into this association or falls outside this normal is labelled as *problematic*. For

[1] The play under exploration constitutes children's understanding of different sorts of leisure activities from watching TV, reading independently, playing games online, getting cricket coaching and so on.

example: association of *work* with *children* and of *play* with *adults* is considered undesirable connection[2]. So, picking up from this taken for granted association of children with play and schooling; this study has selected children, who are enrolled in school, to explore about- the nature of play and their childhood. The present research can be seen as an extension of my previous i.e. M.Phil. research which was on playschools (Sharma, 2015). My previous research looked at the normalised early schooling of young children in a schooled setting of playschool. Exposure to the functioning of the playschool informed the study that even at the very early age say 2 years old, children's lives are structured and they are made to *work* as per the developed routine at the playschool. Being in an institutional setting, no doubt one has to be bound by its rules and regulations, say following a particular time slot for play, lunch and educational activities and so on. There at playschool, at times even play was also instructed and supervised by the teacher, leaving no scope for children to play or to spend their *leisure time* as they wish. Primarily, it is this observation that left me with many unsettling questions around children's play, their routine in general leading me to take up this enquiry about their growing up experiences in the city- as the basis of the present enquiry. Therefore, I have selected neighbourhood settings on the basis of different socio-economic characteristics to understand children's play and their lived experiences.

Schooling constitutes the major part of children's (my respondents) day to day routine. Other educational activities say after school tuition, coaching, hobby classes and so on makes children's lives highly packed and structured as per the set routine by the adults (parents or teachers). *Time* figures out as a major factor which shapes children's play. For example- availability of ample time may enable children to play for longer duration otherwise play might be carried out just as a filler in between more important activities say mostly scholastic and educational activities.

[2] This association is elaborated in chapter 2.

With respect to play, the dimensions of space and time are integral. Space and time act as deciding factors shaping play say-where to play, which game to play, with whom to play, how long to play and so on. Availability or non-availability of outdoor spaces results in specific play patterns, games and so is availability of time. On the other hand availability of time or rather shortage of time emerged as another feature in shaping children's play- where children remarked they do not have time to play, or are too busy to think about play or play in real sense. Usually, the relationship between children and play is considered as a casual one. But the remarks from children saying- "I don't play actually", "do not have time to play", points towards an emerging way of life resulting in *the culture of busyness* (Karsten, 2005). In this scenario, the primary question arises- do children have free-time? Do children have the opportunity to carry out play? How do children make way for their play (and leisure activities) in such a packed schedule? Are the lives of children belonging to different socio-economic classes, structured and packed alike or are there any variants? What understanding do the children (and their respective families) have with regard to play, work, education and so on? How do children navigate for selecting potential play-mates and play resources within their home and neighbourhood spaces? How do children perceive and engage with their neighbourhood with respect to their play activities and in general (during COVID-19 pandemic as well)?

The core motivation for me is to study children, their routine, and their activities in an unstructured setting to see- is it that the institutional setting which is restricting their free-time, play opportunities or is it that the structured routine of children is the *new normal of childhood* in our society? Due to this reason I have selected three different localities, say *neighbourhoods* for the study and not a school, or sports academy or any other such structured setting. The basic questions are that- are children's lives so structured that they do not get free time for playing freely? Or is it that they do get free time but spend it doing a set

of activities that I am translating into as *structure*? What kind of play and leisure activities do children indulge into? What kind of play preferences do children growing up in urban areas of developing countries- India have? Situated in neighbourhood (the residential locale) and home space, this work explores the choices that children make in their day to day lives with respect to their play (and leisure activities). Play is understood in this research as a voluntary act; which is not instructed, is not time and space bound and is played for leisure purpose only, not like the one in sports academies or played for achieving specific goals. The work aims to explore free-flowing past-time activities of children belonging to various socio-economic classes. For example: in this work, a child tied up with cricket academy is not counted as play rather is seen as another instructed activity, whereas a child casually may be roaming with friends but voluntarily or playing in park unsupervised or uninstructed is counted as play.

Public spaces say street, public parks and the intimate home space are the sites where children's choices of play and play preferences are explored. In the context of Delhi, and other metropolitan cities, rapid urbanisation has introduced a new set of conditions for children. Availability and non-availability of open playgrounds, safe and child-friendly spaces, rapid construction in the name of development, preferred living in gated communities, rising levels of pollution, crowded spaces, vehicular traffic have altered the way children access public spaces for play, in cities. Now, it is no more the casual way that children can play anywhere and with anyone. On the pretext of safety, young children are not allowed to go for play to distant places. Keeping their safety in mind they are also briefed about not to talk to strangers, not to be friends with anyone. Overpopulated cities that have accepted anonymity as the new way of life provides limited opportunities of sociability for children, which are often supervised by adults. Insulated spheres of residential complexes and neighbourhoods now hardly provide any chance to find play-mates from one's own locality.

The trips to their neighbourhood friend's home (if any) are often restricted in the wake of timings, distance from one's house and so on. Diminishing trust amongst people and fear from the unknown has made children also extra-aware and distrustful of strangers who try to be friendly with them. The spontaneity and joy of carefree playing is now getting replaced by institutionalised, organised play at sports academies and in the form of paid-services. It is not to deny that children don't get any chance to play but the way their play has got modified in such a scenario establishes the need to study it. The role of market and technology are crucial in shaping children's play in the city's neo-liberal context. Lack of open playgrounds and other safe play spaces are compensated with rise in commercial fun-spaces like museums and children's world. The institutional set-ups are in demand say the sports complexes, playschools, play area/corner at malls and other such commercial play-spaces. But this again is very much based on the notion of exclusivity- who is accessing these spaces? Earlier public playgrounds that used to be available to everyone now are replaced by commercial play spaces exclusively for those who can afford it. This lack of open play spaces is actively replaced by technologically equipped indoor spaces; that are also *safe* since, are covered with CCTV (Closed Circuit TeleVision) cameras. Also, the increasing grips of globalisation, the use of electronic media and digital technology made available to children has drastically changed play patterns, where earlier more time used to be allotted for outdoor play has now been replaced by indoor play. During COVID-19, the spike in online activities including education as well as e-gaming has been registered (elaborated further in chapter 3).

In Indian context, children's rights to protection, nutrition have been in the forefront. But there is hardly any empirical research done that focuses on understanding the issues and play patterns of children living in urban areas. Current study proposes to bring forward the larger understanding of *childhood* in contemporary times through the exploration of various

issues and dynamics that inform children's play in urban centres. For sharp focus, socio-economic variable, i.e. *class-membership* (of children) is the primary focus.

In this study, child is conceptualised as a social actor[3], as an integral part of the society his/her experiences are to be studied keeping intact the social setting around. This reason has directed the selection of three localities taking *class* as a variable into account. No doubt other variables such as caste, gender, religion, ethnicity and their huge intersectionality are equally important; but to keep the focus of the study *class* factors and class driven differences or similarities in children's play patterns, routine and experiences of children growing up in the city, are explored. Play is a lens through which children's lives (across the three selected localities) are explored and understood in this study. Therefore, this research aims to study how children's lives (from three different socio-cultural and economic backgrounds) are getting shaped in the backdrop of Modernity, Globalisation and Urbanisation. Through the explorations on play, the larger aim is to chalk out the characteristics of childhood in neo-liberal times in India.

The sites for the study are the localities selected from the capital city, Delhi, India. It provides a global urban experience to its residents including children. With up-market shopping complexes, sports academies in vicinity, multiple options for taking up numerous hobby classes, increasing educational competition, children in Delhi are experiencing world all together in a different way[4]. Here even young children are well-versed with using mobile-phones (with the internet), know how to download and play new games. Children are not unknown to the virtual world rather are very well in tune with it. Given the kind of opportunities and resources which find easy access to children, it is important to ask here that- do children prefer to go out and play in parks or other public spaces? Is it that public

[3] The categories of 'child', 'adult' are dealt in detail, in the methodology section of this chapter as well as in chapter 2.
[4] In comparison to their peers of similar age group, located in rural settings of the country.

spaces are in a way inviting to children or is it that the virtual world of gaming allures them more? In terms of children's class location, how does their play experience, preference for certain leisurely activities over other activities (say studies/ education) get defined? With the nature of public spaces available what are various opportunities of *sociability* present for children? How far is the availability of playmates in and around their housing complexes and in the neighbourhood settings- is an important factor for children when it comes to play? Therefore, the *dynamics* refers to globalisation, migration, changing family structure, increasing educational competition and related changes in society. Changing society at large, changing family structures, how new members of the society make sense of their world and how children negotiate with their day to day routine and especially *play*.

As this study is about children's play preferences and patterns- children constitute major research participants. Children of 6-14 years old, all enrolled in school[5], are within the familial sphere[6] participated in the study. By taking children as primary research participants the work includes participant and non-participant observations of children's play, casual conversations with children and adults (parents). A comprehensive account of children's play patterns and preferences from different socio-economic backgrounds are generated by detailed ethnography of the select localities and of children's play. This in a way can be said as a *study with children*. We often see children from the lens of an adult and discredit their viewpoints labelling as childish. But this study puts forward children's voices by adopting *New Sociology of Childhood*[7] (James & Prout, 1997) as its primary perspective and methodology.

[5] This study has not covered 'out of school' children.
[6] This study has not covered children living on street and orphaned children.
[7] As discussed with detail in subsequent sections of this chapter.

1.1 Studying Children, Childhoods and Play: An Interdisciplinary Approach

Why does one need to study childhood? What does a potential study with children and about childhood add to the existing knowledge? How does the exploration of what constitutes children's world informs about the existing society? What is the role of children's play? What part do children play in society? What are the roles and responsibilities assigned to children by adults? How a study about childhood and with children can illuminate us about the existing structures and functions of society?

In order to understand childhood first we must look at the conceptions of being a child. Who is considered as a child and why? In general we all know what a child is; we all have been once or still continue to be a child with our distinct experiences and memories of childhood. Mouristen (2002) mentions,

> Everyone has a childhood in his or her baggage, with the memories, the knowledge, the attitudes, the sensory and cognitive mind-sets this involves…some long for childhood, some are stuck in it, some seek to be rid of it. Whatever the case may be, one does not escape the fact that one has had a childhood. (pp. 37-38)

For some being a child is just a matter of physical size, age, mental development but for some being a *child* is qualitatively very different. The understanding of child and childhood varies from society to society. Every society constructs its own view of child and childhood. History of childhood informs us that how the concept of childhood has varied during different epochs. Childhood could be regarded as a modern construct that provides it a special space in society. The notion of childhood as a distinct phase of life didn't develop until the 16th century. Aries's (1962) work has proposed that childhood has undergone the process of social construction. Studying medieval paintings, literature, philosophical and religious tracts and letters, Aries (1962) concluded in medieval society a child was considered as an adult as soon as s/he could live without continuous attention of mother or caregiver.

Aries (1962) mentions it was the time when childhood was equated with innocence. The discipline of anthropology has also contributed to the study of children and childhood. Work by Margaret Mead (1928) *Coming of Age in Samoa* established the necessary grounding to study lives of children and adolescents. But this arena has not further taken up in sociology and anthropological studies as a central point of enquiry.

Archaeology of childhood informs us about children's presence, their role and importance in sustaining societies and passing on the culture through one generation to another. Childhood is an important phase through which a society replicates and sustains itself. It can inform us about the progression of a society. Notions of children and childhood/s varied across time and space (Muller et al., 2019). Kamp (2001) says that, "we should not expect that a society will possess a single definition of childhood, independent of gender, class and other social attributes" (p. 26). Also, the way children and their related material culture is represented, memorialised can be explored via following archaeology of childhood. Crystallisation of the understanding around contemporary childhood, boundaries (if any) between *child* and *adult*- how these are shaped, negotiated and re-negotiated over time can be uncovered via tracing these notions historically. What meaning does *being a child* subsume? What does it mean to be a child in contemporary times? What are the roles, responsibilities, restrictions and privileges pertaining to children that are laid down in society which determines children's lives in totality? The understanding of being a child, according to Muller et al. (2019), points out the role of particular social, cultural and religious context revealing the multiplicity of childhoods. Contrasting it with Western historical setting, Muller et al. (2019) maintains that, "social processes of class and status (along with the) social ideology of the family" (p. 1) are the deciding factor in ascertaining understanding around childhood. Therefore, ascertaining how children are being portrayed and treated as in a society- as equal members or dependents- reveals children's location and the society's norms

of and about children. Kamp (2001) informs us with the ubiquity of children (in physicality) but makes us aware of the absence of children from anthropological writings by invoking the picture of a lively village, as:

> Picture a village that you know well- modern, historic, or prehistoric. Paint in the physical setting. Next sketch in some dwellings and other manufactured features. Now add the residents. What do you see? The village pulses with life. Depending upon the time of day and the cultural mores, men and women are probably moving around conducting their daily affairs, but children are almost certainly visible. Perhaps there is laughter, perhaps there are tears, but certainly there are infants and children. Now recall the archaeological descriptions of a time and place with which you are familiar. Where *have* all the children gone? (p. 1)

Kamp (2001) in her work shows that children's presence is plainly neglected in various studies conducted under various disciplines at different periods of time. Children and their role in society have always been in periphery rather than considered an unimportant variable. The segregation and side-lining of children and their role primarily is based on the *age category* which holds them unimportant in the adult eye. "Childhood, youth, adolescence, adulthood, and other terms commonly used to denote age, are like gender categories, cultural constructs" (Kamp, 2001, p. 3). Activities that children do, be it work related, care-giving or for that matter play, all being treated as inferior and are not given the centre stage and due attention.

Studies in traditional sociology and developmental psychology, with their ontological assumptions added the view that children are passive and childhood is a developmental stage and is a universal phenomenon. Woodhead (2013), on the other hand related this model with the developmental discourse put in place by the discipline of psychology. Children are often understood in terms of what not is a child. This results in perceiving a child as in the process

of becoming an adult, rather than being in their own right. Qvortrup (2002) mentions that such a treatment of children by adults establishes them as dependent beings who must be associated with schools and are given necessary care. Mouristen (2002) reasons out that the modern understanding around children and childhood emerged with the establishment of modern school and the bourgeoisie nuclear family that assigned distinct roles to children. The concept of childhood actually benefits the bourgeoisie, by creating a well-educated workforce to work for them. The modern concept of childhood thus is, "a result of the whole great project of education and institutionalization that the bourgeoisie constructed to ensure that children grew up as useful as well-regulated adults" (p. 17).

Spotting the miniscule attention provided to childhood and related researches, Lillehammer (1989), argued that analyses have mostly occurred "primarily focussing upon the adult centric world" (p. 89). Based on children's perceived dependence on the adults, children's role, recognition and their social agency has been restricted. The most problematic issue which still is restricting children's and their related research to come out in forefront is its routine categorisation or rather as a sub-categorisation within women's studies as "singular entity" (Muller et al., 2019, p. 4). "Children, like women", according to Crawford and Lewis (2009) are called "muted groups" (p. 7). Pointing to this lack of seriousness towards childhood in academia, Crawford and Lewis (2009) notes it as a supreme irony that, "(being) a universal experience… (it is) relegated to the margins of academic consciousness" (p. 13). Recognising the longstanding discrimination of children and childhood studies within disciplinary spaces, Muller et al., (2019) acknowledges that the archaeology of childhood should be more than just documenting the presence or absence of children. It must explore the subtler means of understanding the concept of childhood rather than just stereotypically representing in a static manner the relationship of children vis-a-vis adults through material artefacts. All childhoods, according to Muller et al. (2019) are both

"individual and contextualised" (p. 2) depicting a child's personal experience, and circumscribed by the levels of economic, social and cultural relationships.

Later on, studies about children and childhood took a turn demonstrating children as social actors. Children are part of society and being active members they too influence and in turn gets influenced by the ongoing transformations in society. It is time to admit that children are both producers and consumers of (material) culture and are therefore fundamental to the understanding of societies and cultures (Baxter, 2008; Kamp, 2001; Lillehammer, 1989, 2015; Muller et al., 2019; Schwartzman, 1979). "Children are not just a part of society but, in many respects, inform it and are at the core of it, reflecting the adult gaze and constituting the aspirations and beliefs of society" (Muller et al., 2019, p. 11). The notions of what constitutes a *child*, the relative locations of an adult and child in society, their roles and responsibilities are critical to the understanding of societies. A true understanding of societies and their cultures therefore demands the study of children.

But it is important to be noted that the discourses around children and childhood are embedded in Eurocentric context (Raman, 2000), which demands an exploration in Indian context, keeping the social constructionist approach. India having the largest young population in the world, adds weightage to the study of children and childhood in Indian context. There exists very little knowledge on Indian childhood in the academic sphere. Given the diversity of Indian population on the basis of class, caste, religion, gender and so on, multiple childhoods take shape. Referring to macro processes and economic changes like immigration, breaking up of joint-families Kumar (2006, 2016) points out the diverse childhood experiences in the context of India. Till now we only have some literature on Hindu male children and their childhood experiences, and the vast diversity of multiple Indian childhoods and issues and concerns revolving this theme are yet to be explored.

Balagopalan (2011) also acknowledges the establishment of multiple childhoods and regards it as an epistemic shift that is made possible through social constructionist approach.

Balagopalan (2011) through the concept of multiple childhoods urges for a rich and engaging historically located and socially dense portrait of children's lives in India. Along with social and historical contexts, including the issues of modernity, capital, while interrogating multiple childhoods can then bring both micro and macro changes happening and issues influencing children's lives. Thereby both local as well as global discourses on childhoods can be merged. We know that given the diverse nature of society of ours there is not a single understanding of childhood. In the context of various social-settings and communities the multifaceted reality of children and childhood must be explored to understand various issues that children face today. Langner and Korbin (2007) writes,

> Studies of children and childhoods are the next logical steps in a more inclusive view of culture and society. In this more inclusive view, rather than privileging children's voices above all others, it is more productive to integrate children into a more multi-vocal, multi-perspective view of culture and society. (p. 242)

Study with children, reflections on childhood in urban space, the way children are growing up in their respective spaces under the purview of family, in school, on street, in other institutional settings, speaks about their socialisation. It is this socialisation that shapes their world view. This study with children, on and about childhood then is a small window which opens up the processes through which an adult is made into an adult. Different disciplines and researches have shown that how growing up experiences culminate into the later personality of an individual. Similarly, with respect to the generation of children living in urban spaces in the environment marked with class distinctions (and other inequalities), heightened consumption patterns, unregulated and unfiltered market and media influence, engulfing images from virtual world and so on, is all influencing children's lives in totality.

Such a study informs us about the *New Citizen* of tomorrow. Their engagement with *work* and *play* would depend on their worldview which in the process of growing up, children imbibes. The kind of education they receive, the career choices that follow, the notions about *good life*, their preference for living in a particular locality is all defined and decided in this course of progression. Childhood experiences solidify into and as societal values in the long run. How these children would turn up as adult members of society, how they would participate in politics, understand their role, think of the world would all be decided by their childhood experiences. Therefore, this study in a way is a contribution to the understanding of contemporary society by studying children (in urban context). This particular study by exploring children's play, uncovers children's world across classes. It is important to understand the growing up phase of children, as it would reveal to us what it means to be a child in the 21st century, in the urban context?

Play is a part of the socialisation (Hughes, 2010). There is a complex and "circular relationship" (Kamp, 2001, p.19) between play and culture. Kamp (2001) reiterates that "cultures...structures the pastimes" (p. 19) of children; it can further allow them to be mobile or very well limit their mobility. By setting the cultural rules of being in a particular space at a particular time, segregating children in terms of class, caste, gender, ethnicity; societal rules are moulding children's lives. In certain cultures, after attaining a certain age, playing of girls and boys together is not approved. Kamp (2001) informs us about the important linkage between toys as means for play and availability of playmates as, "when children are isolated from playmates, toys become more common" (p. 20). At times owning a toy also provides a sense of security, ownership rights to children. Relationship of game and culture, according to Kamp (2001) is "complex" (p. 20). Foregrounding the need for research related to children and play, Kamp (2001) points out that there has been little effort to discuss what play can reveal about the socialisation process or about social values and organisation of the social

world in general. Questions related to children and how they constitute their world and day to day activities like- are children consciously strategising their activities or are just following instructions in an adult dominated sphere? How is the selection of playmates done? Is their play highly sex-segregated? Do variables like class, class also figure out in their choice of play, play pattern, play-space and choice of playmates? Is play separable from work? needs to be explored. Relevance of "social setting" (Kamp, 2001, p.26) and societal norms which allows children (of different genders, class, caste religion etc.) to get together or restrict their presence in different space, granting or restricting opportunities of being in larger or smaller groups all together impacts children's lives and in a way constitutes their worldview.

Many researches have established the importance of play in a child's life. A child's play serves an important function as mediator, which facilitates cultural transmission between the child's world and the adult world (Lillehammer, 1989, 2015; Schwartzman, 1979). To further state Lillehammer (1989) notes that,

> The child's play is not a question of leisure and spare time away from a daily routine; it is an expression of the child's labouring to grow up. The child's play is a document of cultural and historical significance, one aspect of the child's world which is fundamental to the adaptive process of children. (p. 95)

In a highly specialised sphere of society where each and every space, and time gets fragmented and a pre-decided routine is to be carried out, in that scenario- what does it mean to have a play time, or study time according to children? A study of childhood, focussing on play and work can reveal these tensions of adult and children's world. How, a certain activity say education is considered important and another i.e. play is not considered worthy when seen in comparison to education? My work overlaps the larger themes of such politics of adult defined rules in society, market, child and adult interface. It reveals the striking impact of *schooled education* (Illich, 1971) which with extreme form of educational pressure has

created a very strict regime of time. A huge boundary or say duality has been established between play which involves creative ecstasy and directed work which should be regarded as pressure, performance in competition which must not be seen as an enjoyable job. Children growing up across (socio-economic) classes tend to follow such a fragmented understanding where, too much of play is considered a *waste of time* and similarly work is considered an activity which must not be playful. These two are considered as strictly separate domains.

Now the question is that with such a strict regime, growing up in such a structured and bounded rather schooled environment, what kind of *New Citizen* is in the making? Certainly such restrictions would give rise to an alienated self, for whom doing a 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. job which includes continuous work devoid of any kind of creativity or joy, would be normal. With distorted notion of work, would also accompany distorted notion of play or leisure, where relaxation would mean mindless consumption- of different consumer goods and services like one dimensional man (Marcuse, 1964). This dichotomy would result in a deeper alienated society where people would live their lives in distinct spheres of play or leisure, work etc. It is time to reflect on such a way of living whereby right from childhood children's lives too are strictly and increasingly structured.

1.2 Point of Departure

Studies on childhood in the past have been dominated with the standpoint of psychology. Impact of children's play on their individual growth in various spheres say language development, empathy, reduced level of stress and so on used to be the question of focus. Also, anthropological studies (as discussed in the previous section) did talk about childhood but its central theme being the cultural transmission and socialisation of young children.

But the proposed research focuses on children's play that is not instructed, not time and space bound, say the one in sports academies or played for achieving a goal. In this

context play is regarded as a non-formal endeavour where children would indulge in any activity on their own in order to relax themselves. This could range from watching a cartoon on television (henceforth TV) to hide-n-seek to *kabaddi* or maybe gadgetry play. Children belonging to different communities, age, class, religion may have different understanding attached to play. Also, notions of *work* and *play* may differ with respect to children from different classes (and other variables like gender, age etc.). For some children, the scholastic activities like writing, reading, painting might appear as *work* and not play whereas for some it might appear as relaxing and therefore joyous like play. Dealing with these ambiguities of work and play, the proposed study explores children's understanding of play across various socio-economic backgrounds. Qvortrup (1991) directs our attention towards increase in academic engagements which ends up burdening children. Scholastic work at times includes a high degree of control over other activities of children including play. These restrictions are of various range including curbing of playtime. Forcing the child for studies has been reported as a common phenomenon for the middle class (Oke et al., 1999), while Viruru (2005) relates this to the sense of insecurity which pervades the Indian middle class. Having been into the structured setting of school and then the same being followed inside home where again *time* is divided into play-time, tuition-time, dinner-time etc. demands an exploration on- how children's play (and their everyday lives) are constituted? Are children getting opportunity for playing as per their will? Or are they supposed to follow the very instructed and structured forms of activities as in various sports academies? Also, in urban space where every inch of the city's space is efficiently utilised and often exploited for commercial purpose, are children getting access to various play-spaces? What do these play-spaces include? Are these equally accessible to all children or does there exist variation in terms of children's social status, age, gender, religion, caste and so on?

Changes brought in macro level by globalisation, urbanisation, heightened opportunities for career and education, increased rates of migration and changes in overall lifestyle are explored at micro level via children's play. Play being the prime focus of research, children's play in the selected localities of Delhi is explored. Maintaining play as a focal point the study presents a larger understanding of contemporary childhood and various discourses of universal and multiple childhoods, disseminated through multiple processes like globalisation, migration etc. Keeping the time span allotted for research, with limited focus the study has taken into account the diversity of children by selecting them from various localities of Delhi. Therefore, the strength of the study lies in its synchronous aspect where it has explored childhood/s of three different classes at the same time and space locale, making the study comparative in nature.

1.3 Research Objectives

- To explore the very idea of *play* and *work* in the lives of children from different socio-economic and cultural backgrounds.
- Through the lens of children's play, the attempt is to explore contemporary discourses of childhoods say *global childhood*- that is perpetuated through international policies on children, through market, media and internationally produced and circulated toys versus *multiple childhoods*- by locating it in the very social and cultural fabric of India.
- To locate children's experiences of growing up in Delhi; in the backdrop of macro processes like urbanisation, globalisation and various changes in the family setting and lifestyle brought by these.
- Taking children as *active* participants, to explore various strategies and negotiations that children make in their day to day life in order to claim their right to play.

1.3.1 To achieve the above-mentioned objectives, the research focuses on following questions.

- What constitutes *play* and *work* according to children (from various socio-economic backgrounds)? How do these figure out into their everyday lives?
- In the city's setting, amongst various groups does the ideals of child and childhood are informed with global childhood perspective or with particular social and cultural contexts?
- Are children's lives getting structured, across classes?
- What is the impact of technology, toy market, abundance or scarcity of toys and other resources have on children's play?
- How do children adapt to and negotiate for their play in everyday routine? What kind of play and where to play- do children prefer?

1.4 Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

For the study, the defining variable that has been taken is *class*- the socio-economic membership of children, to explore the nature of their play. Children's class membership is ascertained on the basis of their (respective family's) residential location. People's choices of education, lifestyle, and occupation could all be understood in the backdrop of one's class location. Who takes home where? How preferences for residential complexes are defined based on different factors say availability of *good* schools, hospitals, shopping centres, safety etc. and what role does the real estate pricing serve as one's address speaks it all- directly yet indirectly for one's position in the social class ladder. To have a home comprising 4-5 rooms, garden- a property of several crores depicts one's ability to maintain a high-end lifestyle. It is not to undermine other variables say of caste, gender, age and so on; but in the urban context in the backdrop of economic liberalisation and globalisation with the current study, I present

that class, acts as a major factor influencing children's (and inhabitants) experiences in the city.

In the sections below the relationship between class, childhood, play (sports), housing and preferential residential space is elaborated further.

1.4.1 Social Class: A Defining Feature of this Study

The question of social class has served as a crucial category in the Social Sciences. Established scholarship (Marx, 1848; Weber, 1978) on social class informs us about diverse frameworks through which social structures could be understood. Through empirical research, the questions of class relations and reproduction of class were explored in the light of market situations (Bourdieu, 1984; Giddens, 1981; Glodthrope & Lockwood 1963; Veblen, 2007). With the Neo-Weberian model, Giddens (1981) has also classified market capacities in three levels namely-

- Ownership of property (with respect to the means of production)
- Possession of educational or technical qualification, and
- Possession of manual labour power. (p. 107)

This categorisation can lead us to simplified classification of social class in the manner- upper, middle and lower class. Giddens (1981) in a way opened up the avenues to understand class dimensions via ways of living, education, career and behaviour patterns. The similar conception of class (and stratification) was also elaborated by *class-habitus*, concept given by Bourdieu (1984), demonstrating how through lifestyle patterns, class is being reproduced in day to day life. In leisure studies, Veblen's (2007) work also emphasised the importance of lifestyle and consumption patterns as a symbolic representation of one's class location and status. In the backdrop of economic liberalisation, the cultures of leisure intertwined with consumption patterns of the upper and new middle classes, which directs the preference towards luxurious facilities and residential spaces in urban spaces are established

by various researches (Brosius, 2010; Fernandes, 2006; Karsten, 2007; Mathur, 2010; Srivastava, 2015).

Linking sports and social class, Bourdieu (1978) demonstrated that how a universe of sports activities finds its place in social imagination and how social conditions play a significant role in the process of its social acceptance. He questions, "how is the demand for 'sports products' produced, how do people acquire the 'taste' for sport…as an activity or spectacle" (p. 820). The entire network of modern sport, Bourdieu (1978) establishes that must be understood in its historical and social culture of specific time and space. The shift from informal (and folk) games and leisure to professionalism and sport finds its roots in the "educational establishments meant for bourgeois' society" (p. 823). Bourdieu (1978) reiterates that how dominant classes continued their dominance by putting forward another criteria of achievement as an alternative to "academic achievement" (p. 826). This sports culture and preference for institutionalised training was registered in the context of DDA flats Munirka as well as Vasant Kunj (elaborated in further sections of this chapter and chapter 3). Spending over leisure activities in the wake of absorbing the soft skills and adding to one's personality development i.e. in learning discipline, was the most cited reason by many parents, for their child's membership to one or the another sports academy (elaborated in chapter 3 and 4). Bourdieu (1978) writes, "[g]lorification of sports as the training ground of character…implies a certain anti-intellectualism…sport like many other practise, is an object of struggles between…social classes" (p. 826). Sports like golf, polo, skiing, horse riding, mountaineering etc. involves symbolic gratification, by presenting it as a distinctive exotic activity, out of the reach of masses.

Researches in context of childhood have established how the class (i.e. socio-economic) positions have a bearing on their experiences. Be it children's education, play, co-curricular activity, their understanding of time and space- all in totality gets influenced by their class

membership. Children's childhoods in this way can be understood, as a function of their class locations. Lareau (2011) in her work details out- how children's childhoods- their education, play understanding of space and time; family-time is all shaped by meticulously planned parenting strategies originating from class locations (elaborated in chapter 4). Similarly, Sen (2014 a&b) in the urban middle class context of West Bengal charts out children's every-day lives and their leisure preferences focussing on the role their class positioning plays.

It is worth noting that childhoods of Global South are often presented and talked about in relation to class positioning embedded. For example while representing undernourished children, children on street, issues of child labour etc. By invoking directly or indirectly, childhoods of Global South are therefore often problematised; presented as in need to be *rescued;* assessed against the standards of Global North. But in this work, the idea of taking class as the fundamental variable is to chalk out the every-day trajectories of children's lives without either problematising or glorifying them. Instead, the study critically examines the normative images of childhoods in the context of children's everyday lives in the city. This work explores and discusses how the understanding of class gets percolated down to children's lives, evident via their play via different cultural forms. The conceptual framework that binds this study is twofold-

- ***Child-Adult, Play and Work:*** Explorations on the dynamics of children's play makes it imperative to deal with the categories of play, work vis-a-vis conceptualising the categories of child and adult. With the "New Sociology of Childhood" (James & Prout, 1997) this framework and the associated discourses are discussed at length in the light of the generated data with children in chapter 2.
- ***Neoliberal character of the City, Space and Time:*** Lefebvre (1991) has conceptualised how time and space constitutes an inseparable entity. He writes, "space implies time, and vice versa" (p. 118). Children's play is a function of space

and time as depending on these two it is highly varied. There are multiple conceptions of space according to children ranging from space for studies, work, play, transportation, public facilities and so on. Here for this study, the focus is on the usage of the available geographical space by children in their neighbourhood. How a space is being perceived as *potential play space* or *leisure space* by children? At a particular time, power dynamics is at work which makes a space physically or mentally available or not available to children (and individuals). For example: a vacant parking lot may act as potential play space for children, but when a vehicle is parked it is not available for play. The intersectionality of neo-liberal class character of the city, enmeshed with the urban design that is allocation of space with respect to housing, open spaces, the facilities available in neighbourhood all impacts play. Therefore, a study of play requires an exploration in space and time as well. The located-ness of this work in urban context, by taking up three distinct localities of South-West District of Delhi based on their class character is explored (discussed in sections below as well as in chapter 3 and 4).

1.5 Rationale for Choosing the Capital City, Delhi: Introducing the Field

City is a vast conglomeration of people, places and spaces. It is very difficult to bring up a singular understanding of the city. Rather than studying it in its totality, a city can be best understood when looked at from different vantage points focussing on spaces, temporalities and even from the perspective of its inhabitants. There are different modes and ways to understand a city. One of the ways of understanding a city is by studying its people; the residents who inhabit the very space of the city. Also, it is important to mention that the city shapes people and in turn people shape the city and spaces in which they live. Baviskar (1998) referring to Delhi mentions, "a metropolis is, by its very nature, [means] many things to many people marked by composite cultures and multiple life worlds" (p. 3101). Here in

this study, the city's spaces are explored from the perspective of children with respect to their play. To capture that multiplicity, children of age group 6-14 years old, from three different but geographically proximal neighbourhoods are selected for the study. These neighbourhood localities can be largely classified according to the *class* character of its residents.

According to Chakravarty and Negi (2016), "Delhi…has found itself transforming from a minor outpost in the global economy to an important regional node with 'world city aspirations' embedded within one of the world's fastest growing economies" (p. 1). Planning in Delhi since independence has taken many routes that have shaped the neoliberal urbanisation further enhancing uneven development of the city. Post- independence, land development and spatial planning in the city proceeded through a centralised institutional arrangement Delhi Development Authority (henceforth DDA). Bringing out successive Delhi Master Plan (DMP)- which is a legally-enforceable document, DDA outlined the arrangement of land use, provisions of infrastructure for various beneficiary publics. Thousands of hectares of land have been assembled by DDA primarily from rural inhabitants of the hundreds of villages in and around the city and later developing it for housing and various commercial purposes (Chakravarty & Negi, 2016). The selected localities under the study are also developed on such accumulated land of villages and thereby developing residential flats of Munirka and Vasant Kunj on the acquired land. The tensions and successive claims over the space of the residents from the gated communities and of the villages are part of day to day contestations which reflect even in children's usage of their neighbourhood spaces (described in chapter 3). These contestations then club the city spaces into disputed localities (Desai & Sanyal, 2012) from the perspective of its residents.

1.5.1 Neo-liberal and Class Character of Delhi

Neo-liberalism must be understood as the socio-cultural paradigm, which paves the way for different ways of lifestyle in the wake of globalisation. Chakravarty and Negi (2016)

writes, "neoliberalism now shapes urban spaces in deep and diverse ways, that cannot be predicted on the basis of 'western' experiences" (p. 3). The corporate and capitalist world-systems in terms of city-planning got integrated onwards to the 1990s with globalised alignments. Wengoborski and Singh (2013) have described the shift in city planning from "*rationalist phase* of 1950-60, to *cleaning-up phase* of 1970-80 to *neo-liberalist phase* (emphasis original) post 1990", that projected a futuristic vision of a "world class city" (p. 151) for Delhi. Wengoborski and Singh (2013) traces the development of Delhi by focussing on different master-plans set up aiming towards zoning of the city, which from time to time has eliminated people and grouped them as per their *class*. They write, "together with numerous private land colonizing companies, the government acquired vast areas in the west, the east and in the south of the city and created housing colonies and, moreover, transformed areas inhabited by 'tribal communities' into middle-class neighbourhoods" (p. 152). The selected localities for the study that is Vasant Kunj DDA, DDA flats Munirka are part of these developed middle-class neighbourhoods, whereas Coolie-Camp portrays the un-serviced squatter settlement that came into place amidst these high-end residential spaces gradually. The second master plan that was drafted in 1985, notified in 1990, known as DMP (Delhi Master Plan- 2001) again brought with it similar grouping and segregating ways of defining the city spatially. Wengoborski, and Singh (2013) writes, "…the DDA concentrated on constructing spaces…that catered predominantly for the emerging middle classes" (p. 156). Kumar (1999, cited in Wengoborski & Singh, 2013) depicts how open lying fields of the then village being appropriated by DDA which later turned into upmarket and civilised residential enclaves with appropriating the adjacent area as recreational spaces for the residents of middle-class colonies. Kumar (1999, cited in Wengoborski & Singh, 2013) describes:

> [T]he South Delhi medieval village Hauz-i Rāni…was suddenly surrounded by the middle-class housing colonies Saket and Puṣhp Vihār…When the Delhi authorities acquired the land surrounding Hauz-i Rāni and the DDA started constructing the housing colony Saket in the mid-1970s, half of the area of the *hauz* was turned into a sports complex. At first, this sports complex was nothing more than three large fields without any barriers, thus the area was accessible for both Hauz-i Rāni villagers and Sa-ket residents (and)…children from Saket played football against their Hauz-i Rāni peers…In 1990, however, the DDA constructed the 'Saket Sports Complex', with facilities for more up-scale sports like badminton, squash, tennis and aerobics…DDA engineers…saying that the facilities were oriented towards the middle-class neighbour-hood of Saket." (p. 156)

For the selected localities and adjoining villages, the similar course followed whereby portions of Vasant Kunj and Munirka acquired by DDA were developed as up-market residential spaces with green patches later developed as sports complex, for middle and upper middle class residents (that is clients). Adjoining villages say Kishangarh, Masoodpur, Munirka Village, Vasant *Gaon*[8] and so on were left struggling without even getting the equitable services as their equals from middle and upper middle class neighbourhoods. Provisions for aesthetically functional spaces including parks were made available to the DDA residents and not to the village population. In a similar instance, the green patch of land besides the Coolie Camp at Nelson Mandela Road, was also fenced on the pretext of aesthetic reasons and saving the DDA land from further encroachment from adjoining slums. This DDA park earlier had no boundary and was used by children (and residents) from Coolie Camp, Kusumpur, Sewa Camp and Shiva Camp. But later during the year 2018-19 the boundary wall was constructed and this park was made out of the reach of children and

[8] *Gaon* is a colloquial term for village.

residents from adjoining slums. Post 1990's the urban and rural divide within the city's spaces became starkly evident with drastically othering the rural as well as the poorer population of the city (Wengoborski & Singh, 2013). These contestations still prevail as both set of the residents the early dwellers as well as those inhabited the DDA land later on- firmly emphasise their right to occupy and use the common spaces including the green patches- parks, streets and other public spaces. A vision that is marked keeping in mind the *global capital* has turned city's commons into the spaces for consumption and *class specific-recreational* and *cultured* units (elaborated further in chapter 3). The latest Master Plan for Delhi-2021 (DDA, 2007) further heightens such consumption oriented occupancy of land and commons. It proposes *user pays* facilities and *public-private partnership models* for managing and upgrading physical structures, which are already appropriated by the residents' welfare association in many of the DDA localities. An instance of this appropriation I registered at DDA flats Munirka, where common park spaces are usually kept locked up in the name of maintaining the aesthetics or to check its usage by the children (and residents) from adjoining low income neighbourhoods (elaborated in chapter 3). In public-private partnership, such politics of locally influential people could be registered who occupy these commons in the name of maintenance and beautification and does not allow it for the general usage.

1.5.2 The Classed Neighbourhoods: Selected Localities and Spatial Strategies of Housing

Srivastava (2015) demonstrates that "spatial strategies" are significant pathways through which social processes are both "expressed and experienced" (p. xxi). How *class* locations direct urban residential patterns are well established in various researches (Castells, 1997; Sandhu, 2003; Soni, 2000). A new spatial hierarchy of spaces thus emerges on the basis of classed positioning of its inhabitants. Chalking out the history of housing development in Delhi, many researches (Baviskar, 1998; Chakravarty & Negi, 2016;

Hosagrahar, 2007; Legg, 2008; Srivastava, 2015) demonstrated how the slum clearance agenda crystallised into class-specific housing. Later on, this nexus between middle class activism and "spatial-bureaucratic 'realpolitik'" (Srivastava, 2015, p. xxvii) was further carried forward with the conception of DDA, which *acquired and developed land*, as described in earlier sections of the chapter.

The localities selected for the study comes under South-West District of Delhi. The broader region that comprises the field of enquiry covered under the study stretches alongside Nelson Mandela Marg and Olof Palme Marg. In the figures below the specific sites are shown as Coolie Camp (Site 1), DDA flats Munirka (Site 2) and Vasant Kunj- sector B and C (Site 3). The broader region includes-

- **Coolie Camp**- pockets of Kusumpur Pahari, Budh Bazar, Sewa camp, Shiva Camp
- **DDA flats Munirka**- Munirka Enclave, Munirka Vihar, Munirka Village (Budh Vihar), Motilal Nehru Camp
- **Vasant Kunj Sector B and C**- Kishangarh Village, Masoodpur Village, Rangpuri Pahari and shopping malls- Ambience, Promenade and Emporio

These specific sites, closely merging with the adjacent regions together constituted children's exploratory pathways of their play, therefore are taken into consideration.

The selected localities are chosen, keeping in mind the socio-economic composition of its residents[9]. Loosely these regions can be classified into three broad categories where Coolie Camp- categorised as the squatter settlement, DDA flats Munirka being the middle income group and Vasant Kunj Sector B and C (which also houses villas as well as DDA flats) being the upper income group. Though there are not strict boundaries and every locality houses a mixed population in terms of class and culture composition, but still the class

[9] By not asking directly, but by segregating the housing owned, the rent amount, localities as per facilities as well as according to the educational status, employment and expenses of particular residents revealing their lifestyle.

distinctions and day to day negotiations were evident and reported during the research phase. In order to assess the socio-economic capacity of respondents variables like the nature of their housing- is it owned or rented, if rented then the amount of rent that is paid, educational qualifications of parents, job profiles if shared, their shopping activities, enrolment of children into schools with specific fee structure, enrolment into various hobby and sports training were few ways by which this distinction was made. At DDA flats Munirka and Vasant Kunj, B and C sectors, majority of people with whom I had interacted had their own houses. In the maps below the specific locations of the selected localities are shown

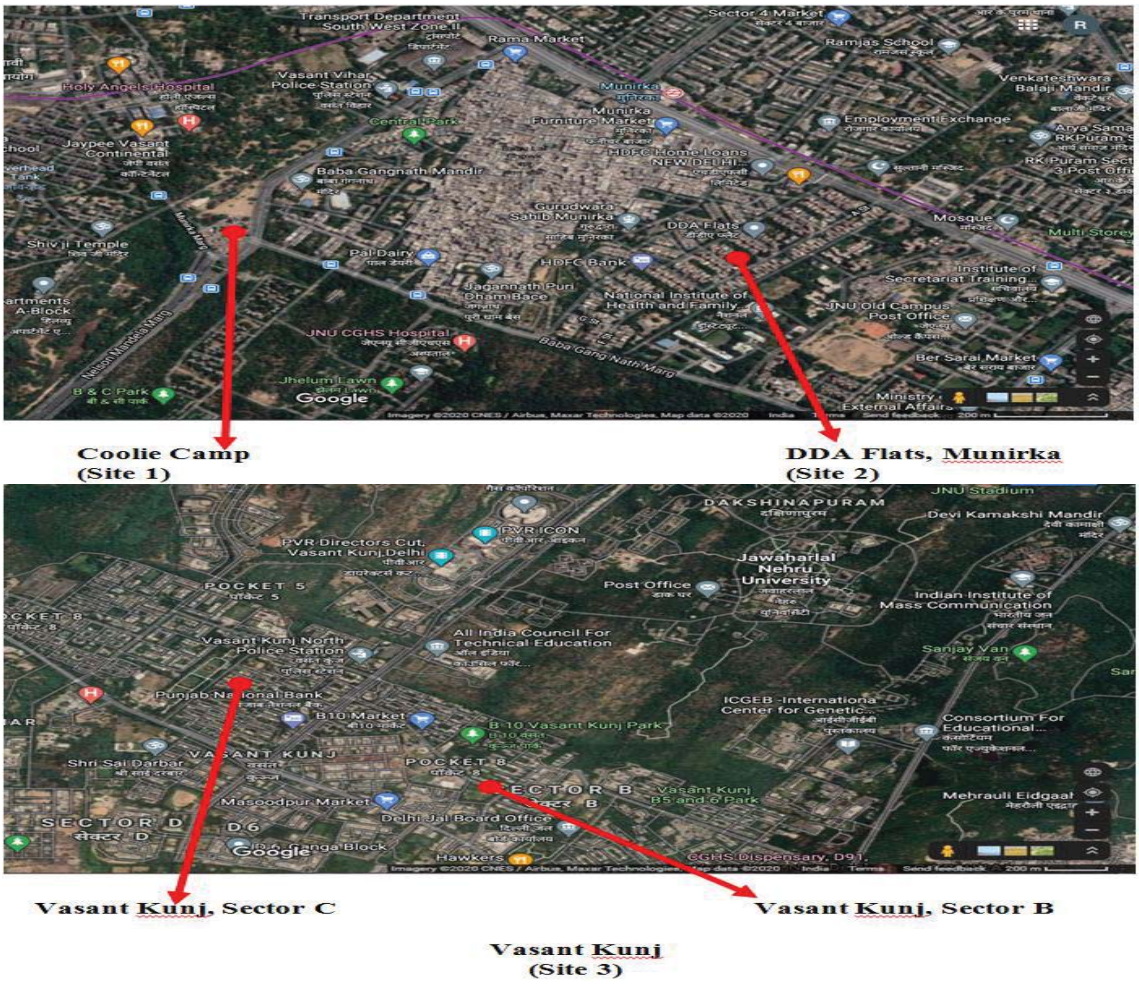

Figure 1: *Coolie Camp (Site 1), DDA Flats Munirka (Site 2) and Sector B and C of Vasant Kunj (Site 3) showing the specific localities taken under the study. (Source: Google Maps, as on 28 November 2020).*

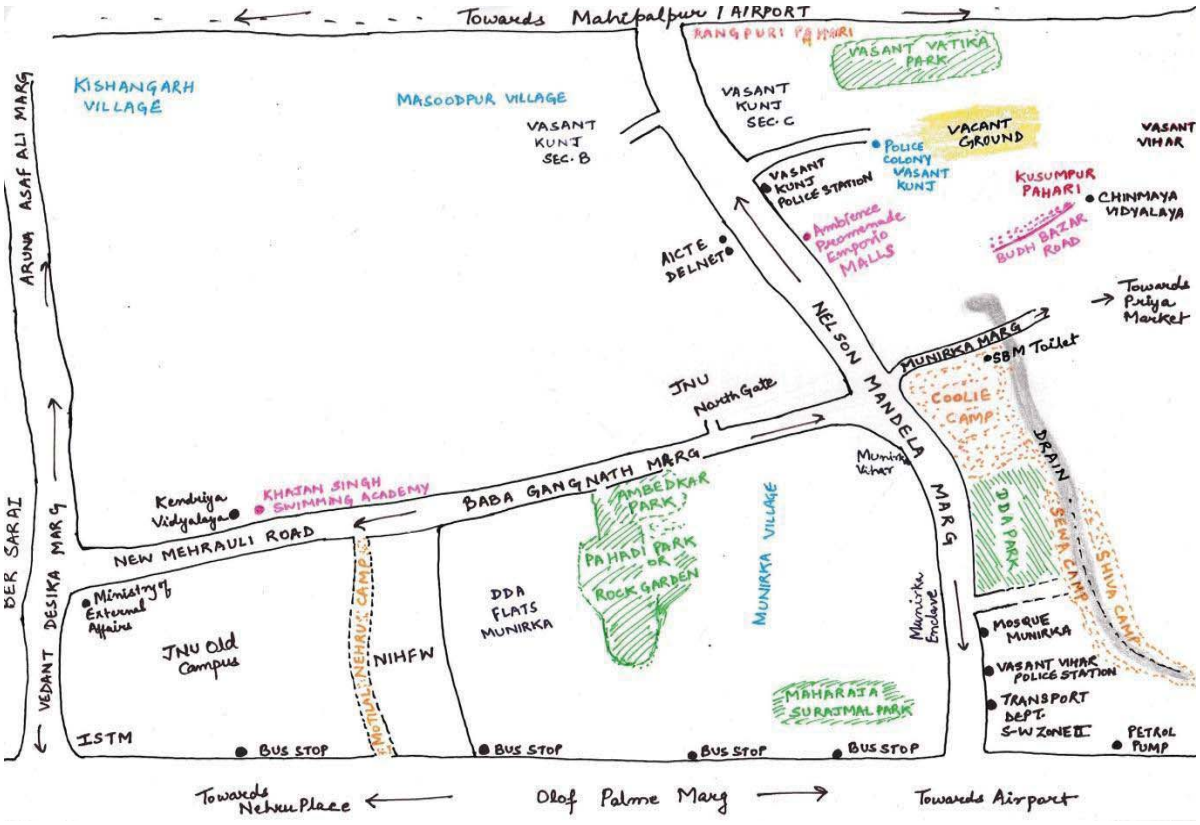

Figure 2: *Simplified map of the field encompassing the selected sites (which I traversed in the company of children while exploring their geographies of play - explained in chapter 3). [*Not to scale]*

The selected localities and adjoining regions are described below tracing the growth with respect to its residential locations.

Site 1: Coolie Camp

Figure 3: *A view of Coolie-Camp from the distance at Nelson Mandela Road. Picture taken in early 2019.*

Coolie Camp is a non-notified, *Jhuggi-Jhonpri*[10] - a squatter settlement, that is located on the Nelson Mandela Road, close to an up market cinema complex (Priya) surrounded by posh localities like Vasant Vihar, Vasant Kunj and Munirka of South-West District of Delhi. The slum houses approximately 500 households consisting of migrants mostly from neighbouring states like Uttar-Pradesh, Rajasthan, Bihar and even from the southern part of the country. Built on more than an acre of land owned by the DDA, at its posterior side covered by the *naala* (drain) fed by sewage from nearby commercial and residential blocks of Vasant Kunj and Vasant Vihar, this slum is an example of spatial claims to the city by the migrant population. In a belligerent manner, Ghosh (2009) mentions Coolie Camp as "illegal- a stark case of land grab in the heart of the city, less than 500 metres from the police station" (para. 4). Pointing at the encroachment of DDA land and the forest patch by the slum residents, Gosh (2009) quotes a resident of Vasant Vihar saying, "[w]hen I moved here 20 years back, there were just two houses but look how it has grown. Some of it was removed when the road was widened but to compensate, it has started extending backwards towards the hotel" (para. 6). Aged members of the camp informed me that to mark its expansion, when the Nelson Mandela Marg got widened up- a boundary wall was drawn to demarcate the border.

The houses here are of varied types and sizes. Many are made double-storeyed now and painted colourful but many are still single storeyed. The drains inside the slum are open and not covered, during the rainy season the flow from the drains goes wider, at times the water entering into the homes. Leaving narrow by lanes, houses are constructed in a very small space which at times make it dingy and poorly ventilated. Also, often there is hardly any passage or window left for ventilation as the majority of the houses share each-other's wall and are built back to back not leaving any space in between. The lanes and bylanes of

[10] *Jhuggi-Jhonpri* is a colloquial term for slum.

the camp are *pucca* (cemented). The size of the home (rooms) however at times even descends to 6 by 6 feet. But most of the houses have basic infrastructure including electronic appliances, say coolers, washing machines, some have air conditioners, many residents own bicycles and even motorbikes. As far as occupation is concerned, people from this slum work as domestic help, as plumber, labourer, sweeper, masons and seasonal construction worker. Some families own small shops of junk sellers, of tea and snacks. There is a tyre shop, a junk-seller (*kabadiwala*) and several tea and snacks shops alongside the Nelson Mandela Road.

Women mostly are associated with NGOs working in the area have learnt sewing and tailoring work, beauty parlour work, and some young girls are appointed as instructors at education and learning centres running by various NGOs in the camp. Women also do freelance sewing, tailoring and knitting work from home. As far as their economic status is concerned, living in Delhi in the posh locality and earning even 15,000/- rupees per month makes them feel poor as they do not own home, can't manage to lead a lifestyle which they see people living in vicinity dwell upon. The household income here ranges from 4000 to 15,000/- rupees per month. Since, majority are labourers and have no steady income source, their earnings also gets dried up and at times they hardly have savings to run their home and day to day expenses. Their income has risen but along with it the living-cost; which affects children's educational prospects. Income as a variable is considered to locate them as per their economic status, but not to define their aspirations.

In the year 2017, the Member of Legislative Assembly (henceforth MLA) of Aam Aadmi Party[11] (henceforth AAP) has provided the assistance in installing drinking water tap and public toilet under Swacch Bharat Mission[12] (SBM). But with the erratic supply of

[11] Ruling party in Delhi.
[12] Swachh Bharat Mission is a countrywide mission initiated by Government of India in 2014 to curb open-defecation.

drinking water, the residents have to rely mostly on water tankers. These water tankers mostly arrive at odd-hours when adult members are out for work. Since, the lanes and by-lanes of the colony are very narrow (at times 2 or 3 feet) that the tanker cannot be brought inside and often gets parked at the main road. Therefore, the water is supposed to be fetched in small plastic buckets or jerry- cans by making multiple rounds mostly by the teenage girls and young children of locality and women, occasionally men (if around and if willing). Fetching water for home is considered and classified as a task to be done by girls or women. But, occasionally, one could see men and teenage boys fetching the water showcasing their muscular strength in their friend circle.

In comparison to Coolie-camp, Kusumpur holds a reputation as a notified slum. There exists a strange hierarchy between the two which even the children have absorbed when one of the child from coolie-camp shared, "*hum thode dino mein yaha se jaane wale hain peeche pahadi ki side, yaha gande log rehte hain, mere papa ne bola tha waha pe banana naye dost yaha ke baccho se mat baat karo*" (in a few days we are about to shift to back side on the ridge area, dirty people lives here, my father has asked me to make new friends there and not to talk with children here). Located behind the CBI colony (Central Bureau of Investigation) in Vasant Vihar, the settlement is believed to be around 40 years old which started getting in shape during the time of emergency. Residents of Coolie Camp, face the fear of imminent departure as are perceived as nuisance by the people from their privileged neighbourhoods who continue to take every step to evacuate this area. Similar tensions also characterises the buffer zone that is *Budh Bazar* (Wednesday weekly market) which is accessed by the residents of Coolie Camp, Kusumpur Pahari and Vasant Vihar. This weekly market serves the residents of nearby localities but does not serve as a socialising site for different *classes* (described in chapter 3).

Shiva Camp and Sewa Camp, located behind the Vasant Vihar Police Station, can be entered through one of the by-lanes at Nelson Mandela Road. Spread alongside the drain these camps depict extremely precarious and risky terrain which is part of *everyday* lives of children (and other residents) living there. This settlement had an open drain running parallel to the houses and the entry-exit set up to the respective homes was made by putting bamboo, ladder or tin sheds over the drain as a bridge. Also, one could see the dense networks of electricity wires hanging over the drain some of which were even used to hang wet clothes. In the pictures below, an auto rickshaw and an open pedal rickshaw can be seen, over which children were playing freely, without worrying about time or without being hurried to wrap up their ongoing activity.

Figure 4: *Glimpses of life from Sewa Camp and Shiva Camp. Picture clicked during the summer of 2017.*

Site 2: DDA Flats Munirka

DDA flats Munrika constitutes the oldest residential gated colony in the Munirka region. Proposed in 1970, the gated colony with more than 1500 apartments symbolised the well organised modern settlement which often was demonstrated to dignitaries visiting the Capital city (Seth, 2016). Launched under the high purchase scheme of DDA, the allotment of flats started in 1974. Describing the open fields and lush green environment of Aravali range, a senior citizen recalled, "…we used to play cricket in the fields here". Explaining the space crunch linking it to the resident's *capacity to afford better*, an old lady remarked, "*dekho jab pehle bani na ye jagah, this was for lower middle class family. They had provided only scooter garage (in the buildings), now people have got 3-4 cars*" (see when this place was constituted, it was [imagined] for lower middle class families [of that period-who could afford two-wheelers only]. They [DDA] had provided only the scooter garage in [with] the building, but now people have 3-4 cars). This lady- a resident in the DDA flats Munirka reasoned the parking of vehicles on the street as a positive sign that people are able to afford more and therefore having more than one car. She rather hinted at the poor planning and lack of vision on the part of DDA, which could not imagine that in future people may need more space to park their four wheelers as well.

Figure 5: *Newly constructed DDA flats Munirka, a 1976 photograph (Source: Seth, 2016).*

Figure 6: *Cars parked on the internal lanes of DDA Flats Munirka- depicting the affordability of its residents. Picture clicked in spring 2018.*

To accommodate service professionals like army personnel and civil servants, in the 1980s two other gated residential spaces came into being with around 200 flats each namely Munirka Enclave (in 1982) and Munirka Vihar (in 1984), under the self-financing scheme of DDA (Seth, 2016). Out of all the three gated colonies of the Munirka region, Munirka Enclave is now considered as the safest. As it does not allow unauthorised outsiders to enter the compound[13]. The security guard at Munirka Enclave informed that to regulate the strict entry, only a single entrance (and exit) is used- which is in front of the Vasant Vihar Police Station, and other gates remain closed throughout, making it the most secured gated compound.

Figure 7: *One of the gates of Munirka Enclave- kept closed and secured with barbed wires.*

[13] This data is generated from the interactions with the security guard stationed at the entry-exit gate of Munirka Enclave. For this study I tried contacting the MERA (Munirka Enclave Residents' Association) members and other residents but could not gain entry into the compound, to talk to the residents despite showing my authorised identity card from JNU.

On interacting with the residents of Munirka Vihar and DDA flats Munirka, I found their views resonating with the views of the security guard of Munirka Enclave. Both Munirka Vihar and DDA flats Munirka being accessible to the general public and to the residents of Munirka Village are perceived as relatively unsafe. Therefore, even despite having the parks installed with swings and open gym, one could hardly see resident children playing in the parks, and are not even encouraged to do so by their parents as well (elaborated in chapter 3).

These modern gated colonies are often in contestation with their neighbourhood residents of Munirka Village. Sharma (2016) notes one such instance where the cut in the median in front of gate D of DDA flats Munirka (at Baba Gang Nath Marg) counted as the site of contestation. Residents of DDA flats Munirka claimed that, "the gap allows easy access to the colony's internal roads and 'outsiders' (mostly villagers) use them as shortcut to reach Old Palam Road [Olof Palme Marg]" (cited in Sharma, 2016, para. 6), whereas the residents of Munirka Village protested this move claiming their right over the space.

Figure 8: *Munirka Vihar, entry-exit gate at Baba Gang Nath Marg. Picture clicked in winter 2019.*

Figure 9: *DDA flats Munirka in 2019, well-guarded by entry-exit gate with strict timings. Picture clicked in winter 2019.*

As per the popular legend, "Munirka is believed to get the name from its 15th-century *mansabdar* (Mughal-era administrator) Munir Khan, who, under debt, had to give away his land to Chaudhary Ruddh Singh Tokas in 1446" (Seth, 2016, para. 2). Munirka village, once comprising the area spanning Vasant Kunj, Vasant Vihar, RK Puram, has today been restricted to a small part; as the farm lands were acquired by the DDA. Khajan Singh, the international-level swimmer from the region, (cited in Seth, 2016) describes that he learnt swimming in the stream which used to flow between Vasant Vihar and Munirka that later got blocked due to the development of the (gated) colonies. He describes that people had a "sense of unity and brotherhood back then" (Seth, 2016, para. 3). But now, with coming up of the gated colonies, the tensions have heightened in the region. With the discontent, a resident of Munirka village at Rock Garden shared similar story about the region mentioning, "*zameenein thi hamari, sarkar ne sab leli, hamare paas kya bacha, ar ab hame hi nahi puccha jata, koi suvidha nahi*" (these were our lands, all were acquired by the government, what are we left with, now we are ignored, nobody counts us, we do not get facilities). DDA flats have the parks installed with open gym, and even have the Baba Gang Nath Sports Complex; the residents from Munirka village have not received equitable space and services

from the government shared another visitor- at Rock garden. But, it is interesting to note that for children from adjoining villages; with the efforts of the locals from the region Baba Gang Nath Academy for Judo has been functioning in Baba Gang Nath temple's premises. For the children it even holds tournaments and provides scholarships to sustain their passion and engagement with sports (Lidhoo, 2016). Another is Khajan Singh swimming academy in the region, which also is popular in the region as it charges relatively lesser fee, than other private sports academies running in collaboration with high-end schools[14], as shared by my respondents. To deal with these issues, residents of Munirka Village have also formed an association.

Figure 10: *Indicative board by the residents' welfare association of Munirka Village. Picture taken in Winter 2019.*

Over the period of time, Munirka Village has become the popular destination for students and people looking for inexpensive housing. The range of monthly rent varies between 8000 to 12,000/- rupees for 2 BHK (bedroom hall kitchen set), which is way less than the DDA flats that ranges between 35000 to 45000/-rupees. With the unchecked construction, the region is densely populated with multi-storey buildings mostly occupied by rentiers and therefore *outsiders*. These outsiders are seen as a threat to the local culture by the villagers, and further with them even the villagers are perceived as nuisance by the DDA flat

[14] Schools like Heritage, G.D. Goenka, Vasant Valley, Ryan International charges relatively more fee than Khajan Singh Swimming Academy.

residents. These contestations arising from class locale, culture (the language spoken), aspirations; further intensifying the contestations over space are even evident in children's play and their access (and restrictions) to the neighbourhood spaces. On one hand the resident children (of DDA flats) are not encouraged to play in the parks (even Rock Garden), perhaps to eliminate every possibility of (inter-class) interaction, children from Munirka village and Motilal Nehru Camp are also shouted at when they play in the parks of DDA flats (elaborated in chapter 3).

Site 3: Vasant Kunj Sector B and C

Like DDA flats Munirka, in the early 1960s, Vasant Kunj was also carved out from the farm lands acquired by the DDA from adjacent villages like Masoodpur, Mahipalpur, Munirka and Kishangarh. Situated in the vicinity of the lush green landscape of Sanjay Van and Aravali range, Vasant Kunj is one of the prime residential locations in Delhi. It is divided into five sectors namely A, B, C, D and E with each further having several pockets. Each sector houses its own shopping centre that provides essential daily supplies along with additional facilities like recreational services including one of the best DDA's sports complex at sec. B. Shopping complex comprising Ambience, Emporio and Promenade malls adds to its glittery high-end residential image. It houses bureaucrats, businesspersons, politicians, and service professionals including the corporate sector. This locality has attracted few of the best established school brands, hospitals and so on. The residential property in Vasant Kunj consists of DDA flats, private apartments, independent houses, bungalows and villas. The real estate prices in the locality are high even ranging from few crores to 50 crore and above.

Having close proximity with the airport within 9 kilometers and with Gurugram- the IT hub of North India, just 25 kilometers away, this locality has become the most sought after residential space. One of my respondents informed me that in the last 10 to 15 years a lot of people working in Gurugram have settled here. The gated communities of Vasant Kunj, by

and large can be considered as a mixed locality of salaried class, business professionals and even bureaucrats. In comparison to DDA flats Munirka, DDA flats of Vasant Kunj are preferred and therefore the real estate pricing of the region is relatively higher than Munirka. Because of the rise of Gurugram's IT culture and multinational corporations, Vasant Kunj and Munirka's real estate pricing have also shot up. For the facilities and security provided in the gated communities, the residents are ready to shell out any amount of money. Referring to the high affordability, a resident of Vasant Kunj boasted that, "one may find BMWs, Audis or Mercedes[15] nearly in every block of the locality…so much so that at times the number of cars exceeds the number of family members." The rent bracket in the region also ranges between 40-50,000/- rupees per month for an apartment, whereas for the villas the monthly rent may go upto few lakhs.

Sector B and C of Vasant Kunj are located opposite to each other, along the Nelson Mandela Road. I have interacted with the children and their families from the DDA Vasant Kunj and Police Colony residents, as the residents of villas and bungalows were not accessible to me or not interested to take part in the study. One resident from Vasant Kunj Sec. C, categorically described the *class* depending on the manner in which one talks. Characterising herself as educated, she remarked, " *aisa nhi bus paisa aa gaya lekin bolne ka tareeka nahi"*(it is not that you just have the access to money but don't have a polished language [or mannerisms]…). Within the residents of DDA flats Vasant Kunj, the hierarchy of owner and tenants was clear cut, where a respondent (tenant at one of the DDA flats Vasant Kunj, Sec. C) informed me that, "owners do not like to mingle much with the tenants…it is more of a distant formal relationship…but with other owners the possibility of meeting in gatherings and of welfare association's meeting are more of which tenants are not part". Similar subtle hierarchies also characterised between the residents of Police colony as

[15] Brands of high-end cars.

well as Vasant Kunj, where despite being part of the region geographically the residents of Police colony by virtue of not being owner of their residential flat (as are being allotted by the virtue of their service), are not seen in the similar class bracket as the resident owners of Vasant Kunj. This repulsion is evident in the case of children also as when children from adjoining villages and slums access the in-lanes of Vasant Kunj (to go to school etc.) and the parks- are not welcomed in the space (elaborated further in chapter 3).

For this study, the selected localities are understood by taking into account children's experiences from three different (yet geographically proximal) localities. With reference to residential spaces, given the subordinate position of children in the society, we know that children do not have any say in selecting or rejecting a particular space as potentially fit or unfit for residence. But their parents or the larger family takes this decision. Children rather experience their residential locale with respect to their play and day to day experiences (say going to market, to school and so on). Play is one such avenue through which children experience their neighbourhoods (relatively) independently. How do children experience a particular space- to be qualified as or suitable for play or not? Do they perceive a space inviting enough and safe enough to play at any time the day? Are they free to explore their neighbourhood spaces- including parks, streets and deserted (abandoned) patches of their locality)? Or are their movements restricted in the wake of safety and security? For this, insights from experiential psychology (Acar, 2013; Barker & Wright, 1951; Buss, 1995; Dixon, 2014; Gaster, 1995; Korpela, 1992; Spencer and Woolley, 2000) can help us understand. Dixon (2014), in his work presents a remarkable degree of independence that children and youth experience in Tokyo (Japan). He cites examples of how children as young as even 6 and 7 years old, alone take rides in city's buses and train to go to school. By taking the shared responsibility of public spaces and of children by all the stakeholders; Dixon (2014) reiterates that has made possible a culture of trust, helping children to explore the city

and urban spaces all by themselves. Spencer and Woolley (2000) chart out the importance of place-attachment, confidence in accessing and usage of particular space by children with respect to towns and cities. Barker and Wright (1951) in their study shows how children who experience freedom tend to explore their neighbourhood spaces by walking through the school journey, classes and for different activities. On the basis of then such safe and secured experiences of spaces, children develop their favourite spaces and significant spaces (Korpela, 1992). This further inculcates the sense of confidence as establishing them as self-sufficient. On the basis of their experience and access to city's spaces, children represented city's public spaces through drawings and verbal descriptions as dangerous, violent and unpredictable (Buss, 1995), whereas terming institutionalised and organised spaces as safe. Such experiences of children from the selected localities in this study are discussed in chapter 3.

1.6 Methodology

Research, as we know, is not an individual process. During research people who help us at different phases are no less than our co-researchers; whose help we seek in order to accomplish our set goals. There are various terminologies adopted in various research styles with which we can designate people who help us in accomplishing our research by answering our questions or helping us to understand what we are seeking. Various nomenclatures towards research participants may range from calling them subjects, participants, informants or respondents, collaborators where in each term carries with it an underlying understanding. Term *subject* is used in disciplines like psychology, especially to mark that for data collection people are acted upon. It is particularly a term designating the participant as *passive*. Informants in a similar fashion can be understood as the people who inform us about our research. Respondents can be understood as people who answer or respond to the questions asked by the researcher. Collaborators can be understood as a term keeping in mind an ethical

position where the researcher and researched aims to operate at the same plane. In this study I have located and attempted to work with children as collaborators in research. By acknowledging their active participation, I have tried giving them the due respect as research collaborators. The following section discusses the continuous negotiations that I as a researcher carried out in the field while generating the data with my research collaborators.

In the section below, I summarise major debates and discussion around children and childhood by putting forward the larger theoretical and methodological framework followed in this study namely- New Sociology of Childhood (James & Prout, 1997). Towards the last sections I have shared about the process of data generation with respect to the initial rapport building process that I have followed in my work.

1.6.1 Social Constructionist Perspective: Understanding the Marginalised Status of Children

With the dependency model of viewing children, they are not considered qualified enough to give their consent and research with children, ends up turning into research on children; whereby regardless of their consent they are being researched upon. Traditionally such researches have silenced the voices of children treating them objects rather subjects of enquiry (Richards et al., 2015). In the dominant research approach, childhood has been looked at with the lens of *adultist* perspective. Kehily (2012) in her work shows that with the philosophical presentations of children and their childhoods as a phase of innocence and dependence actually ends up doing more harm than good; as it further strengthens the structurally vulnerable status of children rather than questioning it. Thereby any research derived from this standpoint is bound to treat children as vulnerable. Categorising people as vulnerable, in it-self places them in the subordinate position therefore unable to decide for themselves and robbing them of their genuine voices and possibility of exercising power.

Interest in children as social actors had been side-lined in the academic discourse; rather children were understood as a developmental category.

Until 1970's childhood was not treated as a distinct field of study. The shift in perspective towards children could also be credited to the policy focus on children in 1989 by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). Within the Article 12 of UNCRC, the concept and practice of *child voice* is being stated in a strong manner. It states that children not only have the right to articulate their opinions with regard to issues that affect them but also have the right to have these opinions heard. During the year of 1970s and 1980s, this shift in the perception about children and childhood, James (2009) pronounced as "break with tradition" (p. 37). During this period, many movements started focussing on the position of child in society; for example- the launch of International year of child in 1979, multiple notions about children say world's children, happy, safe, protected, innocent childhood and child abuse came to forefront (Norozi & Moen, 2016a). Universal theories of children's development during this time-period came under scrutiny. Piaget's work on child development was also challenged whereas Vygotsky's work which took children's social location into account was recognised. Vygotsky's work accorded a greater role to the child's social and cultural context with respect to her/his development.

Within the Social Construction framework, there are multiple approaches to look at and understand children and childhood. Gittens (2009) classifies these approaches into three broad categories as:

- Studying the changing material conditions of families and households through time focussing primarily on their socio-economic situations
- By the way 'psycho-historians' drawing on Freudian theory to reconstruct emotional and psychological changes in child-rearing and the experiences of childhood in the past

- The study and description of legal and political changes in governmental attitudes to childhood, child-rearing and children via social policy lens. (p. 36)

Taking class as the defining variable, this study largely falls in the first category as shared by Gittens (2009). Social constructionist perspective helps us in understanding the positioning of children in society. It helps in uncovering to us the assumptions and perspectives of looking at children. For example: what purpose does it serve to locate children as dependent or independent; in need of protection or not and whose purpose does such an image of children serve? Children in need of care, dependent children or independent children, all such discourses are shaped by society, treatment of children and thereby shaping the childhood experiences. As depicted *social* in social construction of childhood, is very much grounded in different cultures, societies with respect to the time (periods in history), and thereby treats child and childhood as a socio-cultural and temporal category. This perspective emphasises the diversity of situations that children experience which in a way shapes their childhood. It is with the New Sociology of Childhood which contributed towards childhood studies and established children and young people as agents or social actors and thereby alleviating their role as active participants of research. The traditional methods of looking down at children have been challenged and in more contextualised manner children's lives are rather looked up and studied holistically (Richards et al., 2015). This methodology provided the required anchorage to my study and helped in data generation.

1.6.1.1 New Sociology of Childhood: Shift from Research On Children to Research With Children

New Sociology of Childhood (Corsaro 2018; James & James, 2004; James & Prout, 1997; Mayall, 1994b) treats childhood as social construction and children as active agents. This methodology promotes participatory research with children. It maintains the position that children's stories which seek to study, not to evade form research. This

theoretical framework emphasises that children are not passive objects but rather competent and active agents. Viewing children as having agency means viewing them as capable of reflecting upon and making decisions about things that concern them. James and Prout (1997) lists six key features of this new paradigm New Sociology of Childhood, which are:

1. The socially constructed childhood is different from biological immaturity. It is contextualized interpretation of human's early life based on societal beliefs and cultures.
2. Childhood is intertwined with other social variables in societies such as gender, class, ethnicity etc.
3. Children's own individual perspectives must be considered while studying children and childhood.
4. Children must be viewed as active participants not only in construction of knowledge about them but also in construction of society as a whole.
5. Due to direct involvement of children in construction of knowledge about them, ethnography is useful methodology to study childhood.
6. The new paradigm of childhood sociology is to respond to the process of reconstructing childhood. (p. 8)

As it is reiterated above, children's class membership is considered as a significant variable in the study. To explore the same, an ethnographic lens has been incorporated whereby children from three distinct localities are selected. This understanding points out the treatment of children in society as it is as beings rather than as becoming (adult).

1.6.2 Timeline of the Study

The following table depicts the time-line of the study, carried over in different phases.

Nature of the Study	Duration	Localities Selected	Target Population And Field Setting
Pilot Study	October 2016- November 2016	Dwarka, Delhi	6-14 years old children, playing in Public Spaces (parks and streets)
Intensive Fieldwork	April 2017-April 2019	The Selected Localities- Coolie Camp, DDA flats Munirka and Vasant Kunj DDA (including adjacent localities and settlements*)	Floating Population: Children whom I met at least twice or more in the parks and public spaces (streets), but have not visited their home. Selected Respondents: 10 children each (and their respective families) from the selected localities whom I have engaged with throughout the research journey.
Follow-up visits (scattered)	May 2019- January 2020	Coolie Camp, DDA flats Munirka and Vasant Kunj DDA	Floating population and selected respondents
Telephonic Conversations during COVID-19 pandemic	March 2020- October 2020	Coolie Camp, DDA flats Munirka and Vasant Kunj DDA	With selected respondents
Adjacent localities and settlements include*: Kusumpur Phari, Budh Bazar, Sewa Camp, Shiva Camp, Munirka Village, Motilal Nehru Camp, Munirka Vihar, Masoodpur Village			

Table 1: *Summary of the timeline of the study.*

The telephonic conversations were not initially thought of as part of data, but registering the extreme impacts of mandatory lockdown during COVID-19 on children's (and their family's) lives, I decided to incorporate it in the current research work. It is important to mention that I had not visited children during this phase and the conversations only happened over phone calls with occasional video-calling.

1.6.3 Selection of the Sample

Children of the age group 6 years to 14 years old constituted my primary respondents and therefore, the target population. With children, their parents and other residents of the respective localities including senior citizens also participated in the study. As described above, the aim of the study is to explore class characteristics of children's play, pertaining to the selected localities, so the choice of sample too is embedded into the selection of localities. Following the selection of the localities, initially the study undertook non-participant (detailed) observations of the parks and open spaces (lanes and by-lanes) of the selected localities. These spaces which are generally considered as the *obvious* spaces where play could be observed helped in drawing upon the further plan for data generation with respect to the temporal and spatial nature of children's presence in outdoor spaces, play preferences and to explore about their general routine in their neighbourhood spaces.

Therefore, children present and playing in public places constituted the initial set selected via purposive sampling made up the sample for this study. But, as the public spaces constitute a natural setting which cannot be controlled, this set of the sample was much diverse and beyond my control. For example, in institutionalised settings like in classroom observation at school the population at a moment is controlled and there are general rules when one can enter or make exit from it. But in the case of public parks and streets such a controlled observation cannot be possible. Therefore, the initial set of sample during non-participant observations included this *floating-population*[16]. Keeping in mind the nature and requirement of the research, the initial observations (at times ranging up to five hours at a stretch) with this floating population were recorded.

[16] This included children from Coolie Camp, Munirka Village, Budh Vihar, Motilal Nehru Camp, Shiva and Sewa Camp and from Masoodpur village.

Further narrowing my sample, from this floating population, I selected willing children- residents of Coolie Camp. From DDA flats Munirka and Vasant Kunj also I selected 10 children from each locality, making it 30 children in total for focussed study.

Children from DDA flats Munirka and Vasant Kunj DDA were not accessible easily in the outdoor spaces as they had a very controlled presence in public spaces for a purpose- say going to school or coming back, waiting for school bus etc. To share an instance, in an attempt to talk to a parent and child when the child was waiting for the school-bus and reviewing through her syllabus for possible examination that day, I was frowned upon by the parent who questioned my study as useless and waste of time, since it deals with play (the not so important matter).

It is important to mention here that the sample selection, in case of children from Coolie Camp happened from outdoor public spaces with gradually accompanying them to their respective home whereby children further helped me put in contact with their peer group. This sampling was done by keeping in mind the age group and willingness of children of the specific locality. But, in case of DDA flats Munirka and Vasant Kunj DDA, through adult members (guardians) via snow-ball sampling technique, I was put in contact with respective families and thereby gained access to children, with mostly interacting with them at their respective home. For focussed conversations, cue questions were developed (attached in appendix) around children's everyday routine, their general play preferences, and educational routines. The narratives of children that developed during the conversation are elaborated and presented thematically in the study.

All my respondents are under the purview of family and are enrolled in school. All my respondents fall under and follow the Hindu religion. It was not a conscious decision to take all from the same religion, but possibly this speaks of the dynamics of children's peer-

groups that seldom crosses the set boundaries of caste, class, religion and seldom constitutes mixed groups.

1.6.4 Data Generation Strategies: Methods and Techniques

Under the New Sociology of Childhood framework, I have followed the "mosaic approach" (Fraser et al., 2004) in the study which aims at *discovering* the relatively uncharted world of young children on the assumption that young children are "experts in their own lives" (p. 16). This approach is based on child-friendly data collection methods which include taking non-participant and participant observations with children in the street, in their neighbourhood and home spaces. It also included conversations with children around their favourite games, preferred way of spending leisure time and even having playing sessions with them.

The specific data for this study was generated in phases namely pilot study, intensive fieldwork, follow-up visits and lastly via telephonic conversations during COVID-19 pandemic (as explained in Table. 1). The pilot study was carried during the October and November, 2016 which marked Dussehra and Deepawali festival holidays followed by mid-term exams of children, as per the scholastic calendar. The intensive fieldwork was carried over in two annual cycles of the year 2017-2019, and later on the follow up visits in the year 2019 and telephonic conversations until the Dussehra festival of the year 2020. Therefore, spread loosely over four annual cycles covering the festival time, summer vacations and general activities throughout the year as per scholastic calendar, the pattern in children's play was observed. For example- during holidays (specifically summer season) children can be located playing in streets, in parks and cycling till late evening say even by 8 o'clock. On the contrary, during winters when daylight hours are short, the presence of children in outdoor spaces during early evening even by 6 o'clock is negligible. Similarly, during the annual exams children's presence in outdoor spaces drops significantly, where they would mostly be

indulged in studies and occasionally, having leisure time by either watching Television or indulging in play as filler activity and not the dedicated one. Similarly, the patterns in terms of age, gender, residential locality, availability of play-mates, abundance of resources and preference for certain kinds of play also surfaced in the study (discussed in subsequent chapters).

Initially, I started talking one to one with my participants during and after (participant) observations. I used to carry my note-book and used to put in important points that children shared during conversation. But this way of data generation failed totally, as I happen to be out in the field generating data and talking to children during their play-time. Play time which is a very precious and limited time span to children- go out to play; they did not like my presence and me asking questions to them. But it was observed that while children are playing in parks or streets during their limited and (very precious) play time, many did not show interest in talking to me, or some rather misbehaved and expected me to go away and not intrude their play time and play space. With sincere and regular follow ups to my field (locations of the specific parks and by lanes) and at times on the invitation of children to be present at the designated spot on the time given by children, I could manage to establish familiarity and then the rapport with children. After initial rapport building, it was easy for me to be part of their respective groups and play along with them. While during the play, I often used to ask questions depicting that I did not understand a certain game or rule. Then at this, children used to take initiative and explain the rules of the game, or any other doubt that I used to enquire about. Though after repeated attempts, children accepted me as their play-mate, but this act made me an object of suspicion for *adults* in the vicinity as it is unusual for them to see an adult woman playing with young children.

At Coolie Camp, I was received in a more friendly way and girls of the camp, my research participants approached me without hesitation and in the very first meeting we

gelled with each other so well that we had a session of playing games for around four hours. Contrary to this, though despite my attire I still looked a bit different as I was not a native resident of the camp, my presence was not taken as totally alien to the camp. Without much suspicion, I was taken as a volunteer teacher- an NGO worker (already operating in) to the camp. But this perceived and assumed role of mine later received many questionable looks and gestures from people (both men and women) from the camp when they found me *actually playing* with the girls (below 15 years) and toddlers at the camp for hours. To this one mother eagerly asked her children in a loud enough voice (that I could also easily hear it easily), *"aaj padhai ki chhutti bilkul hi*" ([questioning] today there is no plan to study at all?). And at that juncture I shared about my identity as a researcher working on children's play rather than volunteer teacher form the NGO working in camp. It is important to note here that there is negligible hesitation and suspicion on the part of children as well as their parents while interacting with the stranger (me). This could possibly because of me being a woman, looked like a teacher (as per their expectation), also because children and senior citizens all occupying the lanes and bylanes of the camp and me along with children playing were constantly under their radar of view and were not in isolation. The lanes and bylanes provided me also an opportunity for transforming it into an *organic space* where I could establish a harmonious and friendly relation with children and adult members of the camp (but mostly with women and girls).

1.6.4.1 Rapport Building and Briefing about Research

Talking about play in general and favourite games of children in particular, gave children an upper hand to share things confidently and in detail. Not being in the structured setting of *school* helped children in exercising agency and questioning my *adult* status by challenging me via their play. Children in the study were able to express themselves at ease.

Though I was clear about my research and the data needed, but, the initial rapport building and summarising of my research to children, entailed a difficult task for me. In the following section I would describe my entry into the field and the dense process of negotiation that entailed my initial rapport building following the inculcation of *trust* and *friendship* between us.

As the entry point into the field, I started my work with non-participant observations. I used to go and sit in parks (for hours) after locating children's presence. As, park which is a dusty and noisy place- that does not amount to a *perfect study space*, my presence with a notebook (field-diary) was often questioned by children. Seeing me sitting at many unusual spots (with respect to study) with my notebook, thinking and writing- children curiously used to ask me questions regarding what I was doing there and so on. Some children though used to initially observe from afar for quite sometime and later used to ask me directly, whereas others would simply hover around me from all possible directions to peep into my notebook to see if I am actually studying or doing something else sitting in park. Children used to come and ask, "*aap kya likh rahe ho? Aap kyu aye ho*?...*chale jaoge na kaam karke ?*(What are you writing?, Why are you sitting/ studying here?...Will you go back after doing/ completing your work?) Being present though (mostly) on a corner bench, sitting silently with my notebook and engrossed in writing- my presence still caught children's attention. With children, such initial conversations, trust-mistrust relationship and their curiosity in my work (act of sitting and writing in park) and about my presence in general acted as the first entry point wherein I introduced myself and my aim- *to be there at that time*.

About my affiliation and my research, I used to introduce myself saying "*main JNU college mein padhti hu, hame homework mila hai games ke baare mein likhna hai, isliye main yaha games dekhne ai hu"* (I study at JNU college, we have got this homework, wherein we are supposed to write about games and that is why I am sitting here to observe

games). Listening to this, but still not getting satisfied since presence at park, with notebook and now enquiry regarding the *games* as *home-work*- does not amount to be a proper educational act, according to (many) children. This strategy helped me in building up rapport with some children who later felt comfortable enough to ask me numerous questions. But a group of four children (boys from Rock Garden, Munirka) actually followed me (secretly) to actually see if the introductory details that I have shared with them are true or not. This spontaneous act of children following me to the university can be understood as a trust building act. Meeting a stranger, no matter how friendly is she talking, still children only trusted me completely when they cross-checked my identity as a student of the university, as at the main gate when I showed my identity –card to the security guard, children acknowledged that act. It is important to note here that largely this strategy worked only with a subset of children especially boys- who belong to lower strata. Children- belonging to DDA locality were still sceptical about my intentions and were largely not accessible through this method. Due to the different socio-economic backgrounds and possibly the notions around security, stranger-danger; this singular strategy did not work with *all* children across socio-economic classes.

1.6.4.2 Redefining Adult- Child Relation: Inverting Down the Power- structure

I would characterise my study as work *with* children rather than work *on* children by drawing horizontal rather than vertical lines of interaction between the researcher and researched. This implies the degree of collegiality and equality in the way that researchers relate to researched community. The binary between children and adults thus breaks down as both inhabit life-worlds that generate social meaning. In research with children, the adult interviewer and child interviewee relationship generates some important methodological considerations. Various researchers have looked at the interview process in terms of power (Wyness, 2012). Power, here is attributed to the unequal relationship that a researcher may

claim due to her superior educational knowledge and thereby monopolising the situation. Such an imbalanced power equation may be balanced out by having conversation with children in groups. Hill (2006) and Wyness (2012) demonstrate the numerical advantage of having an interview with a group of children, where the power structure emerges in a balanced way. Hill (2006) mentions how children at times participate in research after assessing the method of participation in research. Children prefer participation in researches that "takes less of their time" (p. 84) and be executed in a child-friendly manner rather than having bulky interview schedules which make them uninterested and often opt out of the process.

In conducting this study also rather than as a researcher, I consciously downplayed my role as a *help-seeker*. Not belonging to children's age-group and their circle, I foregrounded my incompetency with respect to the contemporary games and unfamiliarity with video-games and other modifications with respect to play in the city. This then gave children an opportunity to play a *responsible* role where some children actively volunteered to help me out with my *home-work* (research). A class three child remarked, "*apko agar aur bhi doubt ho na to ajana, main apka homework kara dungi"* (if you face any other difficulty/doubt, do come again, I would help you with your home-work).

Terming this study as my *home-work*, children helping me in completing my homework at times even questioned my academic abilities. As my engagement with them stretched for two annual cycles (and beyond), yet registering me with questions, clarifications, demanding them to explain more about specific game or teach me how to play even made some children view me as *dumb* or a *slow learner*. One of the child after knowing that even after months I am still doing my homework, wherein she has got upgraded to the next grade in her school and I am still doing the same homework remarked, "*aap college mein hi ho na"* (…[enquiring] are you sure you are enrolled in college? [and not dropped out because of

inability to submit homework in an annual cycle]…). This way power relations I have tried to balance out by underplaying my own role as researcher and as an adult, while giving power to children to decide on their participation say by helping me out in my homework as per their routine, interests where they could talk about their school play work experiences, preferences and help me understand their lives better.

It is important to be aware of the fact that children tell us about their social worlds at a given time and place and, by virtue of our perceived powerful position of being an adult. But in researches pertaining to children, striking a collective component along with participants to generate data is very important. It is important on the part of researcher to move downwards in hierarchical ladder and play a least adult role- which I tried by seeking children's help Understanding children's life worlds by gaining access, also adds to an added ethical responsibility on the part of the researcher. With constant negotiation in terms of balancing confidentiality, putting forward children's concerns and at the same time being aware of the intrusiveness of the research process towards children, the research with children demands a high level of *reflexivity* on the part of the researcher. Reflecting on the process of data generation, I am constantly introspecting while writing as well. Still there are major portions of the data which I have not included in my current writing, as I am yet to figure out the ways to present the information keeping children's confidentiality intact. In a friendly manner, after building trust, children have shared with me their secrets (which they are keeping secret from their teachers, parents and other authority figures as adults in their lives).

Doing fieldwork, participant observations, experiences as a playmate, for me are actually the perks of working with children. I really enjoyed my fieldwork in that sense. But, writing down those experiences thematically, by maintaining confidentiality following research ethics, was the biggest challenge. Also, as I have mentioned that since my field was highly accessible and my research participants are still in contact (and accessible) so over the

years my data has accumulated and though I have a starting point of my fieldwork but I could really not put an end point to it simply. Though this particular study is reaching its closure, my engagement with children and my efforts of researching with children still continues.

1.6.4.3 Negotiating the Research-Space by Shared Vocabulary

Children do not accept anyone's presence easily. Starting from day one, with initial rapport building to gaining acceptance from them to be part of their world, I devised various combinations- as researcher, as their playmate, help seeker and so on.

Researching with children, Fraser (2004) addresses as a "child centred research methodology" (pp. 23-24) described in terms of its *making sense* for the children concerned. This making sense can be achieved when the researcher is able to explain and children are able to comprehend the research, with shared vocabularies between the researcher and young people. With the negotiated meanings between the two, then actually the child centric methodology takes birth. Through such negotiations, in this study I along with children developed particular types of child-friendly data collection methods which included casual conversations, talking on the go (and while playing) rather than having dedicated sit-in question-answer or interview sessions. Talking while playing or servicing children on the swings was a way of data generation technique devised during this study. As in their play-time, mostly while going to or coming from tuition (and at home in between different activities), children were hesitant to sit back and talk in an interview fashion. Also, it made me uneasy that researching children's play, I am exhausting their play time only. Along with this, for the study ethnographic lens helped me in generating the necessary data, which allowed me to be with children (without interrupting their play or general routine say of study and so on). Such techniques are considered friendly because these have been negotiated between the researcher and the researched. The reliability and validity of these methods

should be assessed as per the degree of shared understanding between the researcher and researched (Fraser, 2004).

The needed vocabulary, according to Fraser (2004) must emerge "*in situ with* the researched (here children)….[and]…'neither the child, nor the researcher's lack of vocabulary' implies a lack in reasoning powers" (Fraser, 2004, p. 24). In this study also, I have developed such vocabularies with children with the initial phases where I introduced my work as *homework*, shared terminologies of play say *ekkum duggo teej* (to be read as 1,2,3- name of the game) and even shared understanding of timings and space- where to meet and when. For example- children who used to give me time to meet for the following day. After the first meeting (during afternoon hours, in summers) at Rock garden, Munirka with a group of boys I was given a specific time-slot (of early morning) by the children for next day's meeting. Being excited, I reached the spot a little earlier but did not find them. However, I waited there for quite a long time and took observations meanwhile. After about an hour or so the group assembled at the park and briefed me that, "*jab hum bulaye us time ke baad aya karo pehle nahi*" (do come after the stipulated time that we have decided, do not come before the stipulated time). This could also be read as children's way of evaluating my authenticity possibly to see if I am genuinely interested or not; by testing that- would I visit them the following day at stipulated time. Thereby we established this shared understanding that if the meeting time is 7:00 a.m. then I should expect them by 7:30 a.m. or afterwards. Another instance of shared understanding was of my *playing together* where after winning or losing a match, everyone else had to contribute monetarily for the winning team which would serve as fund towards necessary refreshments (for the day). In this contribution, by virtue of being an adult member (and new entry to the group), my share was initially supposed to be greater than their individual share. Here children tactfully negotiated with my adult privilege for their

benefit. But, to continue being the member of their group I too had to agree to the shared rule, which we later negotiated and modified further.

1.6.4.4 Stranger Adult (Researching) with Children

The three neighbourhood settings (and not any school or institution with set timings) right next to my geographically familiar space that is Jawaharlal Nehru University helped me in swift entry and exit into and from the field. In a way I was always into the field observing. Having my field so close and accessible therefore, allowed me to have stretched fieldwork phase and even multiple visits afterwards[17]. Known to the physical setting made me confident to explore it at even odd hours[18]. But at the same time my physical proximity with the space did not help me in getting my respondents easily. As not knowing people personally, being stranger would make it hard for me to introduce and persuade people for participation in the research on a topic that is play, which is generally considered not of much use. Also, during initial phases of observations conducted in parks, streets, lanes of the localities where I used to visit and sit in the corner, look at children playing, at times interacting with them- people would treat me with suspicion. Being extra-cautious[19] towards children's safety, any stranger for that matter- be it a man or a woman of any age would be seen as a *potential child trafficker* with malafide intentions and therefore, is first trying to be friendly with children and must be having some or other intentions to harm children.

At Coolie Camp, I felt outsider because of my social class. Though I tried my best to dress modestly; but my way of talking (even in Hindi), interacting would reveal my differences to the people over there. My appearance with a bag and occasionally taking out my cell-phone, wrist watch made me stand-out. But children were so helpful and receptive of my presence that these hesitations faded away within initial days only. I played with children,

[17] Even early during the year 2020, as well as keeping in touch via telephone during COVID-19 lockdown.
[18] During early morning say 4 o'clock as well as late evenings at times 11 or 12 o'clock (during summer as well as winters).
[19] As preferred in an urban, anonymous way of living.

even ate food (offered to me at their home) with them, accompanied them to the *bazaar* (market) during weekly market visits, casual day to day visits to nearby shops for purchasing necessary stationery supplies and so on. After the initial rapport building, I felt an organic-connect with children from Coolie-Camp. Similarly, DDA flats Munirka also constituted a spatially familiar zone. But I did not know any of the residents there personally. At Munirka, though I appeared similar to the residents in terms of clothing, talking but my presence in the lanes and by-lanes were still looked at with suspicion. Once, an old lady stopped me, when she spotted me sitting for several hours at the park and then roaming *aimlessly*[20] in the adjacent lanes during a hot summer afternoon[21]. She enquired reasons of my being there, even checking my identity card as well to ascertain the purpose of my presence. In contrast to this, at Vasant Kunj, my experience of doing fieldwork was inverted. I thought that being from the prestigious university (JNU), my entry in Vasant Kunj would be relatively easy. But there at times even children would not talk to me and ask me to go away. In an incident when I tried to call and talk to children (boys of around 12-14 years in age) who were cycling, they would instead of stopping near me would rather ignore my presence and pass, by continuously ringing their respective bicycle bell. There were many such instances where I felt insulted. The later phases of my work (writing and reading further) helped me in critically reflecting on this incident. With my initial assumptions of having an easy entry into the field, by being virtue of an adult I was expecting that children *must* attend to my call; whereas children were possibly claiming their play-time, which is mostly limited to few hours (on weekends only and hardly an hour or so during weekdays), by not wasting their time in talking or answering to my queries. At Vasant Kunj, during initial phases, I could not find children (and parents) to talk to for my work but I simply took observations ranging up to 5 to

[20] It is perceived that for women, visits to outdoors should be for specific works, and not for wandering out.
[21] It is the time when mostly, the privileged class (having AC) likes to stay indoors keeping themselves away from the scorching heat of Delhi's summers.

6 hours in street and parks of the locality. Later, through my acquaintance, I could manage to establish contact with children and their families for further enriching conversations. Thereafter, the contacted families and children put me in contact with their known and peer-group respectively.

1.6.4.5 Insider and Outsider with respect to Childhood as well as Class Positioning

The researcher's own biographical experiences are often considered as the source of subjective bias when it comes to the reading of childhood. But as one grows older, the world of one's childhood further drifts apart. Even having belonged to similar geographical space, the time span of childhood makes it altogether a new subject of the study, as the cultural and temporal contexts of childhood/s is continuously changing (Sen, 2014a). "Time of childhood" therefore, according to James and Prout (1997), is "closely linked with time in childhood" (p. 228). The research on the subject of childhood, therefore Sen (2014a) reiterates "is never quite an insider" (p. 103). This insider-outsider tension I have tried to express by my own biographical sketch given below.

Having grown up in Delhi, I knew the city as an insider in some aspects. But being raised during a different time that is 1980's in a joint family, having a humble background shaped my worldview accordingly. My current research on three different socio-economic classes allowed me to understand my own location in a better manner in relation to the diverse set of lifestyles and ways of living which I encountered during my research. For e.g. during my growing up years we had only one tricycle at home and was supposed to share it during summer vacations and otherwise- when my cousins used to visit us or when my friends from neighbourhood would come to play at our home. Now, children within middle class backgrounds[22] have their separate sets of bicycles, tricycles and toys which they own individually. With the neo-liberal policies coming in, the whole idea of consumption is

[22] This is how their parents relate themselves with (as per lifestyle) and income versus expenditure graph, no. of property they own in the city and soon.

getting restructured. Having money at disposal, not sacrificing or adjusting as per needs but the way of experimenting and exploring the new ways of living- people do not hesitate to spend on things which might or might not be used after a few days or months. People, swayed by the ideals of consumerism are made to believe that it is their right to consume and if they consume the goods, services of higher price it would elevate their *status*. This understanding, I registered in my interaction with a family at Vasant Kunj, where the parents have shared that their child owns his individual piano which they purchased exclusively for his music classes-worth few lakhs of rupees. They shared that for their child they are selecting the best; no matter what price range does anything (be it a toy or any service) falls into. This incident made me realise my own experience of growing up and even the class location as even now, at the age of 30 years old, I cannot imagine having a piano all for myself, no matter how interested I may be in learning music.

1.7 Ethics in Research *With* Children

Any responsible research must follow certain ethical guidelines. For any social science research, a researcher is supposed to follow certain guidelines, required protocols say of approaching participants with a transparent understanding/ motives, maintaining confidentiality of participants, having gained informed consent and so on. Similar to other researches, research with young children also requires the researcher to go through a step by step process of approaching parents, children, guardians for their informed consent, respecting their views, maintaining confidentiality, ethical considerations say children's capacity to understand what the research is, in giving assent or informed consent; concerns of privacy between parents and children etc. All these arenas must be placed carefully keeping in mind children's positionality.

Research with children entails a combination of ethical considerations, say children's capacity to understand what the research is about, in giving assent or informed consent,

concerns of privacy between parents and children and so on. In such a situation the question arises, being sensitive to the implications of rights of privacy, how can a researcher find ways to give active voice to children's experiences? While doing research with young children, in what ways the ethical responsibility of the researcher increases? How s/he should perceive non-verbal cues from children? If any child declines to participate in the research process despite the consent provided by a significant adult (or vice versa) then how the child's (or significant adult's) decision must be respected?

Various intricacies in the research process especially when working with children are to be developed in the context specific to research, by the researcher in order to bridge the gap between the researcher (adult) and researched (child). Working with children as research participants entails an active introspection of many other modalities, and perspectives by the researcher. In research with children, power-dynamics operates at two levels. First level is the placing of an *adult* and a *child* in society, where an adult is placed at a privileged level than the child who is always considered as an adult in making. Second is the level of conducting research- to be able to research and being researched upon. Also, the setting of conducting the research with respect to time, space, presence of other children or adult members around have a bearing on children's participation in research. Scott (2008) in her work shows that children's personalities are "context-dependent" (p. 92). Research carried out with the same set of children in different settings say of home, in presence of an adult member or at school can then vary their levels of engagement in research. The familiarity with the surroundings provides a sense of confidence to children and thereby making them at ease with the research process. In the context of present study, which is conducted in neighbourhood setting at various parks, streets, children's home and other familiar spaces of theirs; children in a way

not only participated rather *directed* the research[23] in contrast to my previous research which was in the regulated setting of playschool (Sharma, 2015).

Apart from following the ethical protocols, a researcher working with children must also be aware about the ethical radar (Skånfors, 2009) and be vigilant enough to assess and take spontaneous decisions while in the field.

1.8 Dilemmas Encountered in the Study

There are numerous dilemmas that I have encountered at different stages in this research. With time, children and their respective families shared a cordial bond with me. Children even used to share their secrets. I had become part of their circle- whom they would call any time and may ask for any sort of help. In such an intimate relationship, maintaining the strict boundaries at times appeared difficult to me. As the things that children casually shared with me made me constantly ponder upon- should I use it as *potential data* to enrich this study by adding to the knowledge about children and childhood/s or should I refrain from doing so, and not breach the trust which children (and their families) have rested upon me? Due to this perpetual dilemma, I have still raw data from extensive conversations with children (kept intact) that I have not incorporated in this work. As, I am still figuring out ways to represent the concerns and issues of children keeping the ethical boundaries intact; at the same time respecting children's concerns and presenting them at a wider platform- to make sure their concerns and issues are highlighted and heard.

Another dilemma that I have faced throughout this journey is that of achieving a balanced portrayal of children from the selected localities. Conscious of multiple childhoods, my research should not end up glorifying specific childhood and problematising another, rather in the most genuine sense it should present children's everyday routines by studying their play. I have mentioned earlier that children from Coolie-Camp were relatively more

[23] Eventually helping me in exploring their play geographies- of specific parks and by-lanes; thereby helping me in narrowing down to the specific spots (Budh Bazar, Munirka Rock garden and Vasant Vatika park).

accessible to me than resident children from DDA flats Munirka and Vasant Kunj; to whom I had reached via their parents and guardians. Having the easy accessibility, I faced this dilemma that, to what extent should I intrude and record children's lives (from Coolie Camp) turning it into *data* for this study. Similar concerns I had with using photographs of children in the study. As in the case of children from Coolie-Camp, they would easily allow me to take pictures whereas, children from DDA flats Munirka and Vasant Kunj did not allow me to click pictures. Therefore, in this work I have tried not to use pictures of children's home spaces but of outdoor and public spaces more.

Though following the methodology which is anchored in children's rights, pioneering children's voices as social actors i.e. New Sociology of Childhood; I still faced dilemmas during representation of that data while writing up the thesis. In representing children's voices *as it is*; I faced the challenge as I too was a participant in their play, in exploring play geographies and have shared the joyous as well as not so joyous moments with them. Now, while writing about those incidents, I should see it with a distance in order to represent it in a neutral manner. The constant struggle while generating data as their playmate as well as researcher, and while representing it from a distance yet maintaining children's voices *as it is*; constituted my writing up phase.

Another set of dilemmas arose from my conflicting roles, where my position as a researcher clashed with me being children's playmate, as well as help-seeker. While playing with children, I was constantly juggling between my diverse roles. As being the help-seeker, children were helping me in my home-work (i.e. this study) and in return children (and their families) expected me to help them back in their studies. During our interactions especially in home-setting, parents expected me to emphasise more on children's studies and to question and discuss their education related things rather than video games and play preferences. Parents were not very pleased by watching their children devoting their time to play in the

presence of an adult (from University)-who can help them with their studies and therefore should utilise the time well.

1.9 Limitations of the Research

As the understanding of children, childhood/s, play, work, space, time, education are diverse and ever evolving, these need to be placed in time and context which the study does by keeping it restricted in selected localities of Delhi. Therefore, located in the specific time and space this study, therefore, is least generalisable.

While acknowledging multiple childhood/s on the basis of class, caste, gender, religion, ethnicity and even qualitatively different experiences of differently abled children; this study foregrounds only the class locations and has not explored the intersections of other variables.

Situated at the intersections of different disciplines namely- Sociology, Anthropology, Childhood Studies, Urban Studies, this study is ever expanding in all directions. Therefore, to limit it to a singular discipline or to only cater one aspect say play and not deal with other categories like work, education, urban space, time schedules and so on; would not do justice to the work. Whereas dealing with all the disciplinary perspectives at once and at the same time capturing the contemporary changes (including COVID-19) makes it an extremely difficult task to bind this work together.

1.10 Organisation of the Thesis

The thesis includes Introduction, three core chapters devised thematically and conclusion.

Chapter 1: "Introduction", contextualises the study by discussing research objectives, questions, conceptual and methodological frameworks. It also provides details of data generation methods and strategies. Towards the end the chapter deals with research ethics, dilemmas faced as well as limitations of the study.

Chapter 2: "Setting the Stage: Understanding Children and Childhoods", presents the discourses around children, childhood/s, play and work in the light of Global North and Global South. This chapter also presents how play and work, consciousness of class membership of children figures in their day to day lives. This chapter also reflects on the different imageries of children and childhoods by contextualising it in the field; further it also sheds light on the role of parenting in shaping childhood.

Chapter3: "Cityscapes and Children's Geographies of play: Spatial Description of Selected Localities with respect to Children's Play", chalks out children's play patterns, preferences of play within the selected neighbourhoods and city's space. Discourses around safety with respect to public spaces, stranger-danger are explored within the selected localities with respect to children's play. Further, the chapter also presents how the city's commons are colonised in the name of maintaining aesthetics thereby bringing to light the spatial politics of urban spaces. Towards the end, the chapter also charts out virtual geographies of children's play which registered an increased exposure to digital content and e-gaming during COVID-19 lockdown.

Chapter 4: "Timescapes of Children's Play: Dense Intersectionalities of Schooled Routine and Structured Lives", discusses about the role of time with respect to play (and other activities) establishing how routines and schedules decides, directs and influence children's play and their lives in general. The chapter deals with different themes: how children get themselves acquainted with time schedules in day to day lives, educational demands, explorations about their leisure routines, children's views on technology that shapes their play. With the understanding of time, perceiving digital watch as an important accessory, how children manage their time of play vis a vis other day to day activities especially scholastic is discussed. The chapter also examines the role of parents in setting up and ensuring strict routines. The chapter further reflects on the "time of childhood" by

contextualising it with the experiences of parents, thereby retracing childhood/s over different time and space.

Chapter 5: "Conclusion", summarises the current study by putting forward broader questions informing different disciplines say sociology of childhood, urban sociology, and childhood studies with further possibilities of extending this research. This section also provides suggestive measures to strengthen opportunities for children's play in the city by making the city an inclusive space.

Chapter 2

Setting the Stage: Understanding Children and Childhoods

Childhood, no doubt is a biological phase in human development that can be understood in a universal stage pattern. But it is also social since various sections of society and different societies have their diverse beliefs, roles, and ideals associated with children and childhoods. As emphasised by James and Prout (1997) childhood has to be located in the specific "structural and cultural context of society" (p. 8). Also, childhood can never be entirely divorced from other variables such as class, gender, or ethnicity.

Earlier, the child and childhood studies were subsumed under socialisation study, family studies and distinct attention was not given to the subject and to children per se. Corsaro (2018) under the heading "Sociology's Rediscovery of Childhood" (p. 5), establishes childhood studies as a new and nascent discipline. He mentions that "nearly 30 years ago, there was a near absence of studies on children in mainstream sociology" (p. 5). Qvortrup (1991) referring to the ignorance of childhood in sociology, on the other hand, notes that "children have not so much been ignored as they have been marginalised" (p. 11). Because of children's subordinate position in society, according to Qvortrup (1991) childhood studies have also been marginalised in the discipline of Sociology. Adults often view children in a forward-looking manner, as *becoming* rather than appreciating that they are with ongoing lives, needs, desires and so on. This understanding of children and childhood- as *unfinished products*, can be traced in education as well. Dewey (2004) with respect to children's education and their childhood mentions that adults often express impatience towards the immature child and they want to get the immaturity to be over as soon as possible by teaching and making the child educated. In such a conception again, children's subordinate location is visible where a child is looked down upon as *immature* and in the need of *education*.

In this chapter, the prime focus is on the *classed* identity of children. Other important markers or say variables of age, gender and so on that also play a role in shaping children's experiences are also taken into account (wherever the study demands). Located in the Indian context, with the awareness of the specific gender roles, the study along with *class* also focuses at some points on gender that emerged out as an important dimension in adding to or curbing children's play opportunities, thereby shaping children's experiences. Treatment of children in Indian society and families across classes has been traced historically and in contemporary society with respect to the localities selected. Understanding childhood from

Social constructionist perspective, the chapter delves deeper into the concept of childhood and traces its development historically. Ideological discourses that have constituted the understanding around childhood and adulthood with the implicit power-play between child and adult is addressed in the chapter with *global* and *local* contestations of different forms of childhood/s that are in circulation (through the market and other media). In Indian setting- what does it mean to be a child- is explored through parenting as well, which describes how it is adults who often decide the course of action for children and thereby shaping their childhood experiences. The chapter in a way tries to provide a glimpse of some of the multitude of childhoods co-existing in Indian society.

2.1 Childhood as Social Construction: Framework for the Study of Childhood/s

This perspective understands childhood as a socially and culturally constituted category. Every society, the community has a different, distinct understanding of children and childhood and with it, the roles and spheres of child and adult are defined. Based on differences, contexts and beliefs in cultures *childhood* differs. Even in the same society, childhood differs depending upon the social factors, say social class, gender, caste and so on. The concept of childhood differs in societies and within society and this shows that childhood is neither natural nor universal.

The social construction perspective seeks to understand *childhood* as to why the specific understanding under enquiry is constructed, by whom and specifically for what purpose. For example- locating children as dependent or independent, in need of protection and whose purpose does such an image of children serve? This perspective offers a range of alternative ways to understand and find about children and their childhoods. As depicted *social* in the social construction of childhood- is very much grounded in different cultures, societies with respect to the time (periods in history), and thereby treats child and childhood as a socio-cultural and temporal category. This perspective emphasises the diversity of situations that children experience which in a way shapes their *childhood*. *Social construction* as described by James & James (2008) constitutes, "a theoretical perspective that explores the ways in which 'reality' is negotiated in everyday life through people's interactions and through sets of discourses" (p. 122). There are numerous approaches to study children and childhood mentioned by Rogers (2003) for example, developmental approach, scientific approach, applied approach, social construction approach and so on. Following the social construction perspective, there are different *models* to look at childhood- rights, justice, individual, as dependent and so on. With these many perspectives, there are many answers to the question- *what is a child?* discussed in the following sections.

2.1.1 What is a child? Uncovering the Categories of Adult-Child

In general, we all know what a child is as we all have been a child once in a life, and have experienced childhood. Children are a common part of our social landscape. We often think of childhood as a natural way of progression, and we rarely ask- what childhood is and how children and childhood is related and constituted at a social level. We know that the *concept* of a child is not an abstract idea, as individual members of society *children* are actual manifestations of it. The familiarity with childhood, in a way stresses the subjective experience of it which further adds to the *social located-ness*. In a simplest manner, we can

say that *childhood* is considered as the early phase in human life across cultures and societies. But even a careful analysis of everyday speech can also present us with multiple meanings associated with the word *child*- this label is referred to someone who is young and cannot speak properly, someone who is naturally dependent on others due to physical age, mental development and so on. In Indian context *baccha (*child) is even used to show superiority in terms of age, with respect to child as, *bacche ho tum* (depicting lack of experience). If we invoke *nature*, then biological incapacities come into play which hints that children are physically smaller, weaker than adults. Wyness (2012) writes that the unexceptional observation that children are not fully developed adults in a way attaches "smallness with childhood" (p. 9). Wyness (2012) further reiterates that children and childhood therefore are treated as the aspects of the same thing, where children are grounded and physical manifestations of childhood. Wyness (2012) describes "childhood as an abstraction, a set of ideas or concepts, which define children's nature and the kinds of relations they have with other members of society" (p. 10). If childhood is considered as a set of ideas then we must also explore the meanings attached to such ideas which later in turn shape children's experiences. On the similar lines, Duhn (2006) elaborates how a child has been thought differently across discourses in contrast to adults. Children are seen as "not-yet-stable, not-yet-capable of self-governing 'subjects in the making'" (Duhn, 2006, p. 25). Building upon that Meyer (2007) also presents how understanding of childhood revolves around three discourses namely innocence, evil and rights, thereby adding primacy to the discourses on societal level which constitutes childhood and shapes children's experiences.

A child is understood as *becoming* who is in daily progression of becoming an adult, which is considered as the stage of perfection. James, Jenks and Prout (1998) mentions that, "child is identified with the idea of imperfection and adulthood is seen as the end point to dependency into independency and imperfection into perfection" (p. 38). Referring to

developmental perspective, Woodhead (2013) points out that due to developmental discourse, "children are constructed as 'not yet adult', as…'becoming' rather than a person in their own right" (p. 144). It is due to this dependency, children's experiences are then shaped by the significant adults whom they are dependent on. Referring to Freud's theory of personality[24], Nandy (1997) mentions,

> …childhood and adulthood were not two fixed phases of the human life but a continuum which, while diachronically laid out on the plane of life history, was always synchronically present in each personality. And that the repression of children in the name of socialization and education was the basic model of all 'legitimate' modern repression, exactly as the ideology of adulthood. (p. 71)

Here the reading of the above mentioned excerpt, in the light of politics of enlightenment, discourse of rationality embedded into European modernity and the colonial past of India[25], reveals an imbalance in depicting adult- child link and their associated characteristics. The duality established between adult and child privileges the adult masculine reason over other characteristics. Adulthood which is preferred and perfect form is equated with the disembodied reasoning which has overcome all other emotive and playful expressions.

But the maturity and completeness which is referred to in adults as compared to children is also a dynamic process, which is ever-going. This shows that even *adult* - are also in the *becoming* state. With this understanding we can say that children and adults therefore can be understood as placed on a continuum, where in which, children refers to having acquired a short span of experience as compared to adults, where both of them are moving towards the state of perfection. But we must halt and think, is it that the relation between

[24] According to Freud, growth of a child is noted by successive progression through different phases of psycho-sexual development. In it one becomes normal only when one enters the adult stage of sexuality and if one remains fixated at an earlier stage then it is termed as 'neurosis'.

[25] Colonialism has always degraded other cultures as 'childlike' - devoid of sufficient rationality, reason and adultness.

child, childhood and adulthood is so simpler? Can we actually place these on a linear progression? Is it that children and adults and their respective worlds are so distinct? In a society of which children are an integral part, how can then one separates child and adult with their intermeshed experiences? This question then leads us to also ask: is it even necessary to view *child* and *adult* as separate? Can we not understand as part and parcel of the same coin?

But here again if being a child or an adult is not different then why are children considered dependent on adults? Necessarily, the social membership and experience that *adults* acquire in relation to children can be understood with respect to larger *time-span*. Thereby, considering or say, valuing the social experience and understanding of adults it is considered necessary that children too are taught, exposed to such so that they too can become social actors with an enriched experience. Here the element of time is important[26]. In between children and adults the necessary *temporal* gap is what lets adults acquire the necessary social experience in order to proceed towards perfection in relation to children. The casual saying in Indian context, *"ye baal aise hi safaed nahi kye"* (these hairs have not grown white, but with experience), *"abhi tum bacche ho"* (you are still a child), *"baap hain hum tumhare"* (I am your father), all depicts the essential superiority of social experience gathered by adults in relation to children (due to their age). This temporal sequencing that separates children and adults as per their perceived maturity is *age*. Age depicts the number of years passed in one's life and is one of the rudimentary sources of identity used in many contemporary societies including India as well as Western societies. Taking age as one of the basic modes of defining and distinguishing between child and adult, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Child (UNCRC) defines child as, "anyone below the age of eighteen" (Article 1, p. 4). This is an internationally agreed upon definition of child (which is divorced from social-cultural context). Such a universalising definition informed by single

[26] As described in chapter 4.

criteria of *age* is problematic[27] as it does not consider the specific contexts and experiences of children which are resultant of their social-locations.

For operational purposes, age is still figured out as the important defining characteristic of a child, for example the schooling phase is being defined by child's age. Mouritsen (2002) mentions this primacy of age whereby children are assessed in all aspects in their school with relation to age. The interesting and rather ambiguous relationship between *age* and *child/ childhood,* I noted when children introduced themselves as *bada bacha* (grown up child) and *chhota bacha* (young child) while interacting. It was registered that some children who have not entered into their teen-age yet sometimes treat themselves as *chhota bacha*; as opposed to when they refer their own early childhood experience or about their younger siblings, they would mention, "*jab main chhota tha na, or bachpan mein"* (when I was child or during childhood)- thereby viewing themselves from relational lens. Such a reference shows that children also have an understanding of their age and their relational status of being a child- who is ever progressing (in terms of age and experience). Another child (who is 7 years old) mentioned of herself as "*bade bacche" (*grown up child) and shared that, "*chhote babies ki chhutti ho jati hai bade bacche der tak padhai karte hain"* (The young babies get released before, the elder children [referring to herself] have to study till late)- when sharing about her school experience. Here *bade baache* (grown up children) the label with which this child was identifying herself- meant a child who is in class 3, whereas babies is referred for pre-nursery children. Here Corsaro (2018) can help us understand where he writes that childhood is a social category and uncovers the understanding how children perceive themselves. Corsaro (2018) writes,

> [F]or children themselves, childhood is a temporary period; whereas for society childhood is permanent structural form or category that never disappears, even though

[27] Also discussed and reflected upon in chapter 5.

> its members change continuously and its nature and conception vary historically. It is somewhat difficult to recognize childhood as a structural form because we tend to think of childhood solely as a period when children are prepared for entry into society. But children are already a part of society from their births, as childhood is part and parcel of society. (p. 4)

Across the world, though roughly children proceed through a common course of physical development but a primacy attached to this stage-wise development and its progressive stages, as in the discipline of behavioural psychology, in a way increases risk for children. The stages of social, physical, mental and emotional development, though appear universal, are in fact socially located. But often children who do not go by this universal progression are labelled as *slow* or *abnormal*. More than benefit, such a simpler understanding of children and childhood based only on chronological age and its strict association with certain developmental stages is in a way destructive towards children. Apart from age there are some characteristics that are usually referred to in order to differentiate between children and adults. Norozi & Moen (2016a) writes,

> In relation to adults…children are deliberated as those who have less emotional maturity and less socially skilled. Children are contemplated as those with less competence in terms of life-skills and less expressive. Children are perceived as relatively in powerless position in relation to adults. (p. 76)

Here the carefully calculated understanding around child and adult shows an underlying *power-structure* that portrays children as dependents and adults as *fully grown-ups*. Qvortrup (2009) reasons out differential treatment of children as they are not active in the same way as adults are. It means that children do not lack competency but the understanding of competency that is defined with the vantage point of adults thereby subjugates children's competencies. On the similar lines James, Jenks and Prout (1998) have

also established that the understanding of childhood is very much an adult projection, which directs the way in which children are seen and understood.

On a larger philosophical level then the question arises that- do we ever cease to be child? When do children become adults? How does a society decide and treat one as an adult or a child? From different vantage points different people- law, medical practitioners, politicians, the education system, judiciary have described and understood children in their own way. This then leads us to ask- Has *childhood* – as a concept existed always? Being a universal biological phase of human development how does existence of childhood and children are being viewed across societies at different intervals of time-period? Under what circumstances children and childhood has emerged as a separate and distinct category? To uncover these questions we must trace the historical roots of *childhood*, which has led to its current overemphasised[28] status.

2.2 Historically Tracing the Concept of Childhood

History of childhood informs us that the notion of childhood as a distinct phase of life did not develop until the 16th century. Aries (1962) in his book *Centuries of Childhood* has proposed that childhood had undergone the process of social construction. He suggests that the idea of childhood is related to awareness with the specific nature of childhood. Studying medieval paintings, literature, philosophical and religious texts, Aries (1962) concluded that the awareness about childhood as a distinct phase was lacking in medieval society. During that period, a child was considered as an adult, as she/her could live without the continuous attention of the mother. Aries (1962) established that during different time periods in History, children were understood differently and distinctly as little devils- as inherently naughty and un-socialised uncivilised beings, and as little angels- who are born good and innocent.

[28] 'Childhood' and children's rights is understood as over-emphasised as it has gained massive visibility at national and international platforms and various NGOs that claim to be working on and preserving 'children's rights'.

Children were considered as the "source of enjoyment for adults 'particularly for women'" (Norozi & Moen, 2016a, p. 77). It is the modern notion of childhood whereby this phase is considered as the time to play, being happy and is not the period of work. Kumar (2006) also mentions that the history of childhood is a modern concept which is embedded in the narrative of the "modern, welfare state as a protected and prolonged period of life…" (p. 4031), revealing that in Indian context too this very construct of childhood is taken as it is.

The way nature of families has changed and modified over the period of time has also added to the understanding of children and childhood. The modern understanding of childhood[29] as a distinct phase finds its roots in the middle-class model of the family (Clarke, 2004, p. 8). With the idea of a self-contained family led by a strong father, this ideal family had its central focus on upbringing of children. For Aries (1962), two institutional developments were crucial between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries- "the introduction of a modern system of schooling and the privatising of family life, which lead to segregating spheres of child and adult" (p. 16). Now as per the modern understanding, the respective spheres in terms of roles and responsibilities of children and adults are made different and distinct. Linking the understanding on contemporary childhood, Mouristen (2002) finds concurrence with the emergence of modern school and bourgeoisie nuclear family, which assigned distinct roles for children. One possible reason around current conception of children and childhood comes from "Marxist concept of class", (Norozi & Moen, 2016a, p. 77) which understands it as a concept that benefits bourgeoisie. Also, in Europe's context, industrialisation also impacted childhood and its discourses. In pre-industrial societies where children worked with their families in agriculture and other cottage industries, with industrialisation, now that work sphere was made separate with family and children who work in mines and cotton factories had to travel to their workplaces. During

[29] This modern understanding of childhood considers childhood- as the time to play, being happy and is not a period of work (which is discussed further in the chapter with respect to its relevance in Indian context).

industrial times, Clarke (2004), notes that the exploitation of child labour stood as great "contrast to the idealisation of childhood" (p. 9) being spread by middle classes. This contradiction then led to many campaigns which demanded abolition of child labour. The idea of childhood as a special phase was later strongly reinforced by compulsory state schooling- which kept children away from the labour market and thereby settling the competition between adult and child labourers. Compulsory schooling was later established as a phase in which children are not physically dependent on adults yet they are not considered adults in their own right. This phase of dependency then later added to the discourses around childhood as children- in need of protection, nurturing, guidance and so on. Linking it further with the need of a well-educated workforce, the modern understanding of childhood, and its discourse around education and institutionalisation in a way ensures the growing up population to become *useful well-regulated adults*. On the similar lines various laws and a normative frame was established which directs children to be *schooled* for a certain period of time in order to learn required skills, and thereby constituted a qualitatively different sphere for children and related roles and responsibilities.

During the time period when children are supposed to be at school, and therefore are financially dependent on their parents, in a way shapes the notion of dependency with respect to children and childhood. In the new notion about childhood, the focus was on adult's perceptions about children; adults were in a way taking decisions and controlling every aspect of children's lives. In this understanding of social construction around childhood, still the agency with respect to children was missing. James and James (2004), credits to theoretical and empirical evidence that brought in light childhood studies by establishing the agency of children as social actors. But then this understanding of children as social actors is again questioned by Mayall (1994 a&b) whereby he mentions to what extent a child can exercise agency and the role of an actor in day to day setting.

With these diverse and dense discourses on children and childhoods, it is important to understand *childhood* in Indian context also. It would help us to locate these discourses and understanding of childhoods in Indian context.

2.3 Childhoods in Indian Context

This section would deal about the conception of childhood in Indian society by uncovering its traditional roots in the form of religious ideals, philosophical and spiritual discourse on childhood, historical traditions and social institutions, along with current visibility and debates around children's rights at national and international platforms. Attaching primacy to culture, Kakar (1978) writes that, "culture is so pervasive that even when an individual seems to break away from it, as in states of insanity, the 'madness' is still influenced by its norms and rituals" (p. 9). Same holds true for childhood and treatment of children as well. Kakar (1978) further writes,"…different cultures shape the development of their members in different ways, 'choosing' whether childhood, youth or adulthood is to be a period of maximum or minimum stress" (p. 9). In Indian context, traditionally childhood is treated as a special phase of life wherein the new-born enjoys attention from his familial and community members. Kakar (1978) writes, "in India, mothers and families that surround them share the traditional idea of the 'twice-born'- namely the belief that a child is not born as a member of society until between the ages of five and ten" (p. 12). Dharmasastra- the ancient codes of conduct mentioned in Kakar (1978) reads, "till a boy is eight years old he is like one newly born and only indicates the caste which he is born As long as his upanayana ceremony is not performed the boy incurs no blame as to what is allowed of forbidden" (p. 12). About India, Kakar (1979, p. 32) mentioned that the theme of childhood would have multiple interpretations in relation to different castes, religions which have their own practices. Kakar (1979) further mentioned that,

> [T]he child in Indian context is not seen as a tabula rasa unlike in Western philosophy, but as entering the world with 'innate' psychic dispositions from its previous life…there is little pressure or no urgency to try or to 'mold' a child in one or another parentally desired image. (pp. 34-35)

Such an understanding shows that this view of the nature of child and childhood phase as being *completely innocent*. In Indian culture, the child is being considered a value source, towards whom adults are expected to "afford their fullest protection, affection and indulgence" (Kakar, 1978, p. 210). Kakar's (1979) study on *Indian Childhood* can enrich our understanding of traditional views on childhood. Comparing the terminologies for child rearing, Kakar (1979) mentions that in Indian context the rearing is termed as "*palna posna* (emphasis original) which means protecting and nurturing children in contrast to Western terms like 'rearing' or 'bringing up'" (p. 31). In Bhakti songs and poems, Kakar (1978), notes that Indian childhood is valued precisely for the attributes that have not been "socialised" (p. 210). In this tradition, it is the child who is considered nearest to a perfect divine state and it is the adult who needs to learn the child's mode of experiencing the world. The form of interaction between the child and adult then is conceived in the form of an *interplay* rather than that of socialisation, which concerns itself with the mutual learning and mutual pleasure in each other. But citing about the neglect of girl child in Indian tradition, Kakar (1978) mentions that, "without the removal of ambivalence towards female child, without an ideological change that will ensure society's protection and nurturance to all its children, the Indian tradition of childhood, with all its dazzling 'achievement' remains gravely flawed" (p. 211). Traditionally, in the name of Indian childhood, we have seen how a (Hindu) male child is given preference while neglecting other realities say of caste, class, gender, religion which shapes children's experiences.

The relaxed nature of Indian childhood and primacy to play is portrayed by Tagore in his work (Tagore & Elmhirst ,1961). Crediting the importance to child's play, Tagore (in Tagore & Elmhirst, 1961) has mentioned that "the playtime of young life is not an unmeaning thing. It is intimately associated with the demands of a strenuous future" (p. 38). The poetic convergence of play and work in child's life is beautifully described by Tagore's vision of child's education (at Siksha-Satra) where he mentions,

> [T]hrough experience…in dealing with (the) overflowing abundance of child life, its charm and its simplicity, to provide the utmost liberty within surroundings that are filled with creative possibilities, with opportunities for the joy of play that is work-the work of exploration, and of work that is play-the reaping of a succession of novel experiences; to give the child that freedom of growth which the young tree demands for its tender shoot, that field for self-expression in which all young life finds both training and happiness. (p. 38)

Here the flexible and free nature of childhood is reiterated where a child is free to explore his or her surroundings at will and thereby learning and playing. Tagore mentions "We prefer to provide them with a children's toy-world, lacking the imagination to remember that, even if it was make-believe, it was always a grown-up world that we chiefly craved as the plaything of our early days" (Tagore & Elmhirst 1961, p. 38). Treating freedom as the founding principle of child's life Tagore instructs is to rather provide children the freedom of experience which eventually may quench their creative instincts rather than providing children with readymade toys depicting adult's world.

Culturally having rich understanding of children and childhood, at ground, the ideas of Tagore, Gandhi, Devi Prasad and children literature of 1930's which are creative and imaginative, building upon the Indian childhood are not given due acknowledgement. Such an auxiliary treatment of cultural understanding, according to Kumar (2016) was because the

people and state were busy in accomplishing the major goals of national development where "children and their education and imaginative childhood realms were neglected" (p. 13).

Kumar (2016) in context of Indian childhoods have mentioned that childhood is a research starved area. Kumar (2016) claims that we have a limited knowledge of children, their childhoods, parenting styles, teaching and about children's literature which is due to the diversity of circumstances in which childhood unfolds in India. Diversity in Indian context can be read in various ways namely- geographical and cultural diversity (in terms of rural-urban, gendered experiences) with inequality in terms of economic conditions and caste hierarchies. Kumar (2016) acknowledges the rural-urban categories of childhood and adding utmost relevance to the studies in the context of India's growing modernity which according to Kumar (2016) is passing through increasingly "impatient phases of economic development" (p. 12). Indian Childhood, Kumar (2016) shows is getting framed by "the dominant global discourse…(which) with its normative character…also enforces an essentialised vision and a compulsively comparative outlook on our attempts to study the childhood" (p. 12). Citing of our colonial past and colonial training in such study, Kumar (2016) mentions that "we tend to look either a replication of the European experience of we yearn for reactive contrast" (p. 12) Kumar (2016) further writes,

> The child, as a discourse of freedom, individuality and equality, was born in the mid-18th century in Western Europe. This constellation of terms lies at the heart of pedagogic modernism and the practice of setting childhood sharply apart from adulthood. It was coming already for 150 years when, among others, Montessori, and then Jean Piaget, etched the contours of childhood. Both did it by locating the growth of the young mind in biology. (p. 12)

On the other hand, behavioural studies also highlighted the role of environment along with parallel developments in Freudian psychoanalysis added to the already deterministic

explanation in the development of childhood experiences. Kumar (2016) argues that the idea of protection and innocence were a resultant of European history. This idea of protection with its two facets were mentioned as –"physical protection of children from induction into work and other is protection of children (during the years of latency) from the knowledge of sexual good and evil, from the social practice of sexuality" (p. 13). But for an agricultural and craft based society like ours, "child's participation in family's occupational life is a fact" (p. 13). On the other side the modern state was in a hurry to ban all kinds of child labour and turning the child into a schooled citizen. Locating gender as yet another dimension that defines and directs the path of one's childhood, Kumar (2016), citing his book *Choori Bazar Mein Larki* (Girl in the Bangle market) shows that "curtailing of girl child's physical movements long before the puberty sets in, the body-centric consciousness and later the active denial of intellect" (p. 13) results growing up in the strictly regulated patriarchal regime. Dube (1988) in her elaborate study of rituals and cultural practices with respect to the socialisation of Hindu girls has shown how the gender acts as defining force right from early childhood in Indian culture and tradition. Thereby, Kumar (2016) asserts that the common label of *childhood* is limiting when it comes to the capturing of girl child reality in India and we cannot equate it with *girlhood*. Apart from gender, *caste* is another important frame to study childhood in Indian context that has a bearing upon one's specific growing up experiences. The dense realities emerging from intersections of different variables like gender, caste, religion, ethnicity in context of Indian childhoods is out of the purview of this work.

2.4 Ideological Politics of Discourses around Childhood

About childhood- referring to social construction and adding primacy to culture, Nandy (1997) mentions,

> [T]here is nothing natural or inevitable about childhood…it is culturally defined and created…there are as many childhoods as there are families and cultures, and the

consciousness of childhood is as much a cultural datum as patterns of child-rearing and the social role of the child. (p. 56)

At a level Nandy (1997) acknowledges the omnipresence of children and childhood as *natural* and simultaneously also grounds it in particular socio-cultural context. The multiplicities of childhoods arising in varied social and cultural embeddedness must be explored further to see that if there is a general pattern of understanding and treating children, across societies; despite the social located-ness of the phenomenon.

In the previous section we have seen that age being a prime factor which casually defines and makes distinction between children and adults. The elder person therefore acquires superiority over the younger one on the basis of her social experience. A society that is dominated by adult members, exercises power over its young members by putting their own characteristics as *preferred* whereas treating characteristics attached with young as *subordinate*. Highlighting the politics of childhood and adulthood Nandy (1997) argued that, "the politics of childhood begins with the fact that maturity, adulthood, growth and development are important values in the dominant culture of the world" (p. 56). Since these values are tied up with adults, thereby devaluing children and childhood, and treating children as inferior versions of adults. Looking at the socially understood traits of child, Nandy (1997) writes,

> [W]e have already negatively estimated the child as an inferior version of adult- as a lovable, spontaneous, delicate being who is also simultaneously dependent, unreliable and wilful and, thus, as a being who needs to be guided, protected and educated as a ward…we have also split the child into two: his childlikeness as an aspect of childhood which is approved by the society and his childishness as an aspect which is disapproved by the society. (p. 56)

The ideological politics between adulthood and childhood is made evident here by pointing at the distinctive characteristics that are identified with respect to adults and children, marking their respective *statuses*.

Further Nandy (1997) says, "childlikeness is valued, sometimes in adults as well whereas childishness is frowned upon, sometimes even in children" (p. 57). Adulthood, in the modern world is valued as a symbol of completeness, as an end-product of development whereas childhood is seen as an imperfect transitional state which should be passed over as soon as possible. Hinting at colonial understanding, Nandy (1997) argues that it was colonial ideology that identifies children with savages and uncivilised. On the contrary in non-modern civilisations and their mythologies, the contesting dichotomy (as established by West) between adult and child is not there. For example: as per Puranic scriptures of India (Vishnupuran) Krishna has multiple dimensions- as an adult diplomat warrior, as counsellor, as playful child whom his devotees love like a mother loves her child. Krishna as a child is no less important than Krishna as warrior.

DeMause (1975, cited in Nandy, 1997) suggests that "the tradition of childhood is indeed the tradition of neglect, torture and infanticide" (p. 60). Lansdown (1994) writes, "traditionally, in our society, as in most if not all others, children are viewed as the property of their parents" (p. 33). Many societies still view children as the property of their parents, sometimes without any legal protection against parental oppression. In Indian context, the same is demonstrated by Kakar (1978) who mentions that, "children are not encouraged to be independent. They, like adults, are expected to seek aid in difficulty" (p. 86). Here the similarity with respect to *dependency* can be viewed where in Indian context, both adults as we as children are viewed as *dependent beings* traditionally.

The subordination of children, in the adult dominated society according to Nandy (1997) serves different functions for adults. Nandy (1997) traces out the continuity between

tradition and modern societies with respect to ill-treatment of children and he reiterates about four ways in which children are used. These include:

1. Child is seen as a projective device- a screen as well as a mirror to the society. He adds that the older generations project their inner needs into their children to fulfil their fantasies of self-correction. Such an act is being accomplished at national as well as cultural level. Children today are used in order to satisfy the grandest of personal and national aspirations.
2. Childhood has become a dystopia for the modern world. The metaphor of childhood (across cultures) is used to define mental illness, primitivism, abnormality, underdevelopment, non-creativity…Perfect adulthood like hyper-masculinity and ultra-normality has become the goal of most over-socialized human beings. Lloyd DeMause (1975, cited in Nandy, 1997, p. 65) points out that the idea of childhood as a lost utopia- which is absent in autobiographies but is mainly present in literature, myths and fantasies- which again is built upon the small episodes in remembered childhoods to serve wish-fulfilling fantasy, as a defence against traumatic memories of childhood.
3. Referring to greater and intense cross-cultural contacts, Nandy (1997) points out that "childhood has now become the battleground of cultures" (p. 65). In this wake traditional lifestyle is being encroached upon by the modern world of education and work, with respect to children and their families.
4. Societies dominated by the principles of instrumental reason and consumerism, mystifies the idea of childhood. The image of child is in fact split and incongruent aspects of child's life from adult's perspective are treated as natural savage childhood. Child is appreciated when she/he is least

like childlike but behaves as per the adult's notion of good child. Nandy (1997) writes,

> …when cultures help individuals to repress the contractual aspects of the adult-child relationship and help institutionalise a totally benevolent, self-sacrificing concept of parenthood, social consciousness gets used to perceiving only a one way flow of material benefits from parents to the child. The child, too, is socialised to such perceptions of benevolence and sacrifice and is constantly expected by the outside world as well as by his inner self to make reparative gestures towards his parents. (p. 68)

Highlighting the homogenising nature of modern childhood, Nandy (1997) mentions about Gandhi that, "even Gandhi-ism failed when it came to his children…Gandhi forced his sons to live in a way that would concretise his own concept of the ideal child" (p. 69). Foregrounding different competing spheres - where children are seen as projective devices by adults, to label underdeveloped beings and tensions arose from cross-cultural contacts- childhood has become a battlefield. The backdrop of macro-changes taking place in the society with respect to changing familial settings, ever increasing educational demands, influence of technology and market, children and child-rearing practices makes it difficult to cling to traditional practices. But we must look closely and enquire that- to what extent the competing set of practices re-define the traditional *subordinate* position of children and help in constituting the experiences of children- as *individuals*.

Social structures, according to Nandy (1997) are the main force behind the ill treatment of children. Such structures and the processes further according to Nandy (1997) have forced large sections of men and women to lose their self-esteem and then force them to seek that lost self-esteem through their children and thereby resulting in the regulation of children by their respective adults. Nandy (1997) further reiterates that, "…If violated men

and women produce violated children, violated children in turn produce violated adults…the ideology of adulthood has hidden the fact that children see through our hypocrisy perfectly and respond to our tolerance and respect fully" (p. 75). Foregrounding the devastating effects of ideology of adulthood, and its arrogance which limits adults to treat children equally, Nandy (1997) warns us against the hierarchical social-structure. Arguing about cultural criticism of politics of childhood as legitimate and needed, Nandy (1997) also makes us aware about the weakness of such a model. He mentions that,

> [T]he model fears the arrogance of parents or societies which presume to 'bring up' their children; it sees family as a psycho-social space within which the culture of the adult world intersects and sometimes confronts the world of the child. Ideally, this sharing of space should take place on the basis of mutual respect that it does not is a measure of our fear of losing our own self-hood, through our close contacts with cultures which dare to represent our other selves, as well as a measure of our fear of the liminality between the adult and the child which many of us carry within ourselves. (p. 73)

Nandy (1997) in the above mentioned excerpt tries to establish a shared liminal space which is mutually respectful towards both- a child and an adult. Thereby, he asks for bridging the social gap of structured hierarchy by creating a psycho-social space of mutual respectability, between the social actors- children and adults. Taking further from an ideological standpoint, now we shall move to uncover and understand about *childhood* as a structural category.

We have seen how the conception of children and childhoods varied across societies and at distinct junctures of time. Now, it is important to explore the taken for granted characteristic of children i.e. *play*. It is significant to investigate how children's activities are termed as play and seen in contrast with adult's activities which are generally classified as

work. Is it that children's subordinate position in society results in demeaning of- their activities as play which are generally given no importance or is it the other way round? How play and work are read, understood in their perceived wastefulness or usefulness respectively, from an adult's perspective? The following section contextualises play and work by highlighting the everyday activities of children and how children make sense of these two distinct yet similar sides of the same coin.

2.5 Contextualising Play and Work

What exactly is play? What is the dividing line between play and work? Could it be possible that an activity be both play and work? Is it possible that an activity that begins as play can turn into work by its end? Actually it is very difficult to define play and to segregate it from other activities say exploration, learning, and so on.

In the previous sections we have seen how children earlier used to work in the agricultural fields and later during industrialisation in factories and mills, for long hours. Play and leisure for children was rare and work was regarded as the norm. Play, since, is not a goal-directed activity, was considered a wasteful of time. But later with the advent of modernity, when the spheres of children and adults were marked separately, play and work acquired new meanings. Various sets of activities are classified and clubbed with in relation to distinct spheres of the human phase of life- say work is usually understood and seen as the arena of adults and whatever activities that are conducted by or are associated with children usually termed as play or playful. This binary of *work* and *play* impacts the classification and perception about each. Work being understood and perceived as the important and useful tasks that are often done or accomplished by adults and play being less-useful, tasks without any use value since is associated with children. Work is also understood as any activity which is carried to serve any purpose. Any goal directed activity can be termed as work; it may or may not be voluntary and with enjoyment.

Work and play as two important spheres through which children produced and reproduced themselves *socially*. Play and work served as a fluid set of activities in the lives of many children (at a particular and general interval of time). Usually these two were intertwined. An element of work was often infused with play, when children did any activity; while they worked they still managed to make their work *playful*. Whereas when children were asked to go at a particular time for their sports coaching, no matter if they liked it, at times when any favourite movie is coming, or any reason they would not want to go and at that time the presumably playful sort of activity turned out as work for them. Similar was in the case of playful education or education through play-way, where play in itself did not serve as much importance but was carried over to accomplish another task here in order to give additional educational exposure to children in a playful way.

Every child plays, no matter what and how the circumstances are. It would be wrong to say that children (who are labouring) do not play. Children by actively taking out, strategising their time and making way for their leisure (this leisure could be different for different children). But before understanding how play can be used as a lens to study childhood, we must explore: what is play? What are the possible variants of play say- free play, organised play, risk play, structured play and so on? Is play an organised form of professional activity including sports or games? Or Is it a non-formal endeavour? Is Play an adult-directed or a self-directed activity? How does play affect the body and mind of a child? What is the relevance of play? What is work? Is there any relation between play and work? Is play regarded as a temporal relief for coming back to work? Can there be an overlap possible between work and play? To engage with some of the above mentioned questions we have to refer to the relevant literature that deals with play.

Play as a concept is used in many different ways and holds multiple meanings. In simple Hindi words play can be termed and understood as *khel* or *khel-kood* which means

playing or jumping around. Such jumping around at one's will depicts the voluntary act of a person who is indulged in playing. Therefore, any activity in which a person engages at will, for enjoyment, without any perceived end-result can be termed as play. In play the factor of enjoyment is necessary. But seen in comparison with work which is always an activity carried out keeping an end-result in mind, which may or may not be enjoyment. Play either can be active or passive, where in active play an individual takes part actively and in passive play, amusement is derived from activities conducted by others. Say watching TV could be classified as passive play whereas playing cricket can be termed as active play. Children of all ages or for that matter all individuals indulge in one or other sort of play/ leisure or rejuvenation activities.

Play is described as having a few essential characteristics- *intrinsically motivated*- which is an end in itself and is done only for the satisfaction of doing it. Play is *freely chosen*. Vandenberg (1998, cited in Hughes, 2010, p. 4) mentions that the excitement of play is from the exercise of freedom on the part of children. If forced into play, that activity might not be regarded as play. Play and work can be distinguished in terms of their motivation- where play is intrinsically motivated, work might or might not be enjoyable, still has a goal attached to it. Goodman (1994, cited in Hughes, 2010) mentions that, "play may be different from work, but is not direct opposite…somewhere between the two, is a type of activity (that Goodman called as) - play/work" (p. 7). Play encompasses games, hobbies, sports and various other leisure activities (Ranganathan, 2000, p. 178). But play is the spontaneous expression of innate patterns of behaviours as opposed to games or sports that are predominated by rules and relatively organised.

Various researches in different fields of enquiry have established the importance of play in terms of enhancement of social and cognitive skills, in psychosocial development of children and from academic and research point of view. Along with providing for a window

for the study of specific culture, studying children's play can help us understand children's life in a much better way. Play can be understood as an important vehicle for developing self-regulation as well as for promoting language, cognition and social competence. Play we all know is a universal phenomenon. Play is considered as a significant activity during childhood years. Any instinctive, voluntary and spontaneous activity can be counted as play. From an academic view point (children's) play is as important as any other subject-matter of research. It can provide important insights to parents, educators for setting down a proper foundation with respect to teaching strategies. Schwartzman (1979) referring to the importance of social context and culture of the child asserts that, "a 'child' is no more 'natural' and no less 'cultural' than his/her parents" (p. 2). While making a distinction between play and work, Schwartzman (1979) mentions that according to one's culture, perceptions of play are being shaped. As per Western notion, play has been understood in terms of what play is not; play is not work, play is not real; play is not serious; play is not productive and so on. The binaries of work and play created in the West makes it hard to believe that work can be playful and the play can also be understood as work (especially in the case of organised sports). It is this binary that has intruded into various disciplines like anthropology, sociology and resulted in marginalisation of the systematic study of play. Such a marginalisation of play is also discussed by Wyness (2012) whereas due to its association with children and childhood, play is not given the due attention. It is only during the late 19th and early 20th century that study of play and games received some attention. In 1959, Roberts, Arth, and Bush (1959, cited in Schwartzman, 1979, p. 5) published an article entitled *Games in Culture*, in which they attempted to develop a theoretical framework for the study of games that would explain both their geographical distribution and their sociocultural significance. Schwartzman (1979) acknowledges that studies on children's play in Asian societies are scarce. A few significant accounts of children's play in Indian context include- Brewster's study (1951, cited in

Schwartzman, 1979, p. 30) that described various forms of tag played by Indian children. Brewster's study compared Indian tag forms with similar forms of play across cultures say America, Greece, Korea and England. His study in a way established the universality of particular types of children's games. Indulging in the description of a particular type of game (tag game) the study though provided rich material but missed on the part of social context of the play, say- who plays it? When? And how frequently etc. Mistry (1958,1959,1960, cited in Schwartzman 1979, p.31) also presented an analysis of Indian children's play behaviour in terms of various childhood stages (including infancy, boyhood, early childhood, later childhood and adolescence). But in this work also, the tendency to generalise Indian child and Indian child's behaviours could be sensed.

Famous saying *"all work and no play makes Jack a dull boy"* establishes the importance of play for fully functional and balanced human-being. Greek philosophers like Aristotle and Plato have also mentioned the importance of play in education. But until later centuries specific play theories were not developed. A few modern psychological theories and theorists have described play in relation to educational settings. Sigmund Freud (1923/1973, cited in Biddle et al., 2014, p. 276) brought in the light that play performs a special function in children's emotional development. Play acts as a child's mechanism for repeatedly working out a previously experienced traumatic event in an effort to correct or master the event to his satisfaction. This way play has therapeutic effect that enables children to relieve their negative emotions. Jerome Bruner (1972) has described the play as a "rehearsal" (p. 688). About children's play, Bruner (1972) stated that it provides children an opportunity to rehearse actions to various real-life scenarios in a risk-free environment. These rehearsals then prepare children to confront difficult situations (without being stressful) in real life. According to Dewey (1913, in Dennis, 1970), play can be understood as "a name given to those activities which are not consciously performed for the sake of any result

beyond themselves; activities which are enjoyable in their own execution without reference to ulterior purpose" (p. 230). Play is separate from work, and this childhood activity of play prepares children to become healthy working adults. Maria Montessori, an Italian educationist (n.d., cited in Biddle et al., 2014) has postulated that "play is the child's work" (p. 41) where, with a focus on sensory experiences and using hands-on approach, play allows a child to set his or her own pace..

From the perspective of cognitive development, Jean Piaget's (1952) all four stages directly relate to play. He stated that intellectual growth occurs as children go through the stages of assimilation, or manipulating the outside world to meet one's own needs, playacting and accommodation, or readjusting one's own views to meet the needs of the outside environment, or work. Play as social development has been explained by Lev Vygotsky (1978) who suggested that children use play as a means to grow socially. In play children encounter others, learn the rules of interaction, language and role-taking. For Vygotsky (1978) imaginative play is the main focus for general development of a child. He says:

> Play creates a zone of proximal development in the child. In play, the child always behaves beyond his average age, above his daily behaviour…play contains all developmental tendencies in a condensed form and is itself a major source of development. (p. 102)

Erikson (1963) has mentioned the light-heartedness of play. For him-

> Play…is a function of the ego, an attempt to synchronize the bodily and the social processes with the self…when man plays he must intermingle with things and people in a similarly uninvolved and light fashion. He must do something which he has chosen to do without being compelled by urgent interests or impelled by strong passion; he must be entertained and free of any fear or hope of serious consequences.

He is on vacation from social and economic reality-or, as is most commonly emphasized: he does not work. (p. 190)

In recent times educators and researchers have also established the importance of play-related activities that also promote learning. But the focus on academic achievements is such that parents push children to cut down their play time. Numerous studies cited in Singer et.al. (2009) establishes many benefits of playing like play helps children in learning problem-solving and subsistence activities like "food preparation, child-care; practise social skills such as sharing, taking turns, helping others and cooperating with peers and adults and cognitive skills like developing their own rules for game" (p. 286). Similar was also shown by Katz (2004), wherein children were learning all sorts of things including farming, taking care of animals in a playful manner by working with adults and later exhibiting the similar work rituals in their play.

Singer and Singer (1981, cited in Singer et al., 2009) found that pre-schoolers participating in make-believe play used the "future tense, conditional verbs, and descriptive adjectives more often than children who were not playing pretend games" (p. 286). Make-believe play encourages children to communicate with their peers to create pretend scenarios, and also provide the opportunity for children to adopt multiple themes and roles. Play in organised settings such as school has also a positive impact on children. Research on recess in schools suggests that free-time provided to children actually facilitates children's attention to classroom tasks. In school's setting free-time during recess with access and opportunity to play in the playground have an important role in social development in terms of helping children to develop rules for play, to make choices, to resolve conflicts. (Singer et al., 2009, p. 287). We have seen the importance of play from the developmental perspective and in general, now we would discuss the Indian viewpoint on play.

2.5.1 Popular Views on Play and Work in Indian Context

Padhoge likhoge banoge nawab; Kheloge kudoge hoge kharab…

(Your life will be a waste if you play but if you study or do well in academics you will be a king).

This age old saying sums up the dispositions that Indian culture and society at large holds towards play. Similar is also noted by Anandalakshmy (1998) that play is usually understood as any activity other than work; and it generally holds "lower importance in comparison to study" (p. 272). Childhood is equated with play, whereas adulthood with work, and to make the transition smoother; schooling, according to Sarangapani (2003), is seen as essentially a "period of disciplining in order to give up play" (p. 404). It is believed that no matter how entertaining and satisfying part play serves in children's lives; it must be given up and replaced with work as early as possible.

Continuous and years long schooling, education and disciplining has been successively trying to kill and destroy a child's creativity. With the heightened discourse on rationality embedded in our education system, it is increasingly trying to turn children into adults. As a society we too are absorbing this discourse where with all sorts of competitive reality shows regarding singing, dancing etc. around- we as a society are in a hurry to teach mannerisms and hurriedly transforming children into adults (Elkind, 2007, 2009, 2010). The desperate and conscious ways of not to behave like children, children with the support of adults are made to shed down their *childishness* as soon as possible (Nandy, 1997). It is because of this outlook all sorts of mechanisms of making children independent say day care centres, personality grooming schools, competition preparative institutions are mushrooming and getting popular (Sharma, 2015). Such an intense and complex politics is at work where children's subordinate position in the society is retained but their childishness or childlike features are hastily to be turned into adult-like features.

But it is interesting to note that in the year 2018 *Khelo India School Games*[30], a national level programme for development and revival of sports culture was launched. With it, the age old saying is being rather modified into- *Padhoge likhoge to banoge nawab; Kheloge kudoge to banoge laajawaab* (If you study you will be a king but if you play you would be stupendous). Many motivating slogans were given during, Khelo India School Games which includes:

Chalo padhai mein khel gholte hain (let us mix education with games)

Chalo khelte hain (let us play)

Chalo haathon ke sath sath paero se bhi future likhna seekhte hain (Along with hands let us now write our future with our feet too)

Khelega Bharat to Khilega Bharat (India will play and India will blossom)

(cited from the official website of Khelo India School Games, 2018)

With such programmes on launch and every school in the posh neighbourhood providing coaching for different kinds of sports, it is all the more important to explore about various play preferences of children across classes. Is it that children and their parents are influenced and now playing games or sports is preferred in terms of treating sports and games as career or is it that still education is the primary focus?

The similar echo where play is preferred, and child claims his right to play could be noticed in the latest advertisement (launched in 2019) of Tide ultra[31] in which a mother sarcastically complains about dirty clothes of her son when he shows her the medal which the child probably has won in some sports competition. Their conversation in the form of rap is as follows:

[30] It is to be noted that Khelo India School Games primarily was launched with a concern to revive games and sports but the focus of my research is on free-play- which is relatively unorganised and uninstructed, and therefore the programme was only explored in relation of the awareness and (perceived) interest (if any) that the games aroused and its impact on children's play.

[31] Advertisement of Tide https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oxsHp196_Nk

Mother: Music (Starts rap while pointing towards all the stains),

Cuff collar underarm gande karta subah sham (shirt cufflinks, collars are made dirty every time from morning till evening)

Kaise saaf hoga mael, bol zara beta raam? (How would these stains be cleaned? Tell me son)

Child: *To kya main khelu ni, kudu ni, cricket ni judo ni*, (Then should I not play-cricket or judo?)

banjau kya bhondu raam? (become like a fool and dull?)

It is interesting to note how an outspoken child is depicted in the advertisement who is establishing his right to play by mentioning that if he does not play would become *bhondu raam* (dull like a fool). Thereby negating the traditional understanding around play which was associated earlier with becoming a waste is now seen as becoming waste if one does not play.

For this study since the focus is on children of age group 6-14 years old, play of children in this age-group is explored. Children of all ages play. But their preference for different kinds of play, time devoted to play and other leisure activities differ depending on their location (geographical- rural or urban), social location (girl/ boy, able bodied or specially abled, belonging to different socio-economic class) and availability of resources and playmates. Within play the prime-focus is to explore for the opportunities of playing freely.

In this work play or playing freely is understood as a play which is unstructured, uninstructed and unsupervised activity wherein children are the absolute decision makers of how to play, what to play, for how long and where to play. The concept of choice and freedom to carry out a play is an important factor.

With enquiries pertaining to- how does children and adults belonging to selected localities (Vasant Kunj DDA, DDA flats Munirka and Coolie Camp) perceive and classify

various activities as work and play and what amount of importance or need is attached to both is explored. Also, with respect to play – the nature of play is explored whether the activity that amounts as play from an adult's lens- is it that the structured way of conducting it makes it nothing more or less than work for a child? Also, what kind of play (educational play, social play) is allowed or reinforced and preferred by parents- referring to the utility of play (for education, for social or language development) or is it that just play in itself holds any importance for parents and children? Through various researches the importance of play has been established academically. But here one might question that does play hold similar importance in general? What are the views of adults like parents, teachers on this subject? What do children think, how important or unimportant is play for them? Given the kind of educational environment that we are facing, where children are busy in attending school and then after school academic activities say numerous kinds of tuition and coaching classes (including learning foreign languages), having enrolled with formal sports training, music and dance training; do children find any free-time to play at all? If children manage to take out time for play then what kind of play do they prefer? Is play considered important or not? What do children have to say about it? How much time should be devoted to play? What kind of play should be played? As responsible adults, what do adults think about children's play? All these questions are explored in the following section.

2.5.2 Merging Worlds of Work and Play in Children's Lives: A Continuum

Traditionally, all leisure activities have been associated with play. Play is usually considered as loafing and wasteful exercise. Time spent in play is considered as *wasted* whereas time spent in work (home-work or any other assigned work) is considered as *utilised*[32]. One of the infamous quotes is "an idle mind is the devil's workshop", where it means that a mind which is not indulged in work depicts the devil. Understanding of *leisure*

[32] As discussed in chapter 4.

or play also differs according to parents and children from different socio-economic classes where for middle and upper middle class parents and children there existed strict time division having play time, study time separately. For children from lower classes this division was still there conceptually (at idea level) but was not executed in a strong manner say if 5:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. is homework or play time then strictly one has to follow the routine. Also, dedicated time hardly figures out in a few cases (but superficially) but free-play was not ensured religiously as in case of education or study time. If any child is enrolled in any hobby classes or tuition then that time frame is followed religiously, but as far as their routine is concerned otherwise, separate time is hardly provided or left for playing freely or leisure activities.

Here work is not understood as formal wage labour but rather in informal terms as any task which is to be assigned to children by adults. Amongst my respondents nobody was into employment or paid labour. But were in charge of routine household chores and were assigned informal activities and related responsibilities at home. Helping parents in various household works, accompanying to vegetable market, fetching water, sibling care, dropping to and collecting from tuitions their younger siblings- children served as source of assistance in their homes (Lancy, 2017) and their contribution in the domestic labour is indeed appreciable, as with their efforts to some extent they relieved adults of their responsibility. One must ask- can various activities of day to day of both children and adults be classified in such a tight compartmentalised fashion of say work and play? Or is it that could we place work and play on a continuum? Can work be playful? and could an act of play be work for a child or adult? Also, with the dichotomies of child and adult seem blurring (as discussed above) can we say that even an adult can play and a child can also indulge in serious work? This section engages with the very basic ideas around these concepts of work and play and various kinds of playful activities which generally termed as leisure, with respect to children.

In agricultural families, children serve an important function when it comes to taking part in household responsibilities. Children are allotted important but *lighter* works say of fetching water, bringing in the woods, taking animals for grazing, whereas girl children usually are supposed to help in-house chores, and such a participation of children in serving responsibilities are seen as a preparation for their adult life. These roles and responsibilities of children are discussed at length by Katz (2004), where she describes how in traditional societies even scholastic calendar is in line with the day to day lives of people wherein considering children's participation important during harvest season, school observes holidays. Showing the liminality between children's work and play Katz (2004) provides an illustration where young children who are neighbourhood friends also, used to take their animals together for grazing. When the animals graze meanwhile the children used to play in the open fields.

Viruru (2008) has shown that children are often allotted light work which (is believed) should not hinder their educational opportunities. Basu (1998, cited in Viruru, 2008) mentions that "for a child to work is not the worst thing that can happen" (p. 230). Work, Balagopalan (2002) writes is "inherent to the definition of 'Indian childhoods'" (p. 26). This can provide an essential core as against the western childhood resting on the notion of separate adult and child spheres. The convergence in the respective spheres of work and play was registered on several occasions. At Coolie Camp, children were given the important responsibility of fetching the daily quota of water from the common tap and occasionally from water-tankers. It is important to note that the assigned work used to turn into a playful sight, where (especially during summer season) one could register children playfully pouring water over each other and having a playful *watery-war*. The fluidity between different activities that usually classified as work and play was to such an extent that each of these overlapped, took place simultaneously freely flowing into one another. To distinguish

between work and play to some extent, the aspect of temporality can help us decide which activity could be classified as work and play. For example- if the water is coming regularly during the week, children could take a time out and play during the assigned work but in the absence of water-supply when the water tanker was called in, *seriousness* was demanded from children where they are supposed to collect as much as quantity possible, without *wasting* any amount of water.

Figure 11: *Children, while filling up the buckets with water; splashing and playing with each-other. Picture clicked on a summer evening of 2017 at Coolie-Camp.*

Though gender division existed in terms of assigning different work to children but these assigned works often used to be turned into a playful activity by children. Another such incident where play and work was merged in registered from Coolie-camp. A girl child was playing in the street, a few feet away from her home with the group of other children- was called in between many times by her mother (who was washing clothes near the entrance of their home- in the lane only). This girl after taking her turn in the game (*stappoo)*, used to hang up a few washed up clothes on rope and again used to come back to take her turn in the game. This girl child was meticulously balancing out the responsibility given to her during her play-time and was thereby negotiating and taking out time for play as well.

For children at Coolie Camp and Motilal Nehru Camp, it was registered that more than gender, their age- that is being older sibling mattered most in getting chores assigned. Also, as per their class-location, since their families cannot afford to appoint a help, in that scenario the (relatively) elder children of the family used to take care of household chores- cleaning, cooking, taking care of siblings when their parents are away at work. This way we can say that with respect to gender when it comes to take-care household responsibility and of siblings, the categories of gender appeared hazy. Though, in some aspects with teenage girls, gendered responsibilities in terms of work were visible directly. But it would be wrong to essentialise this distinction with the gendered lens. As young boys (8 years old) from Coolie Camp shared that when their mother goes to work (as domestic help) they take charge of household responsibilities. Their responsibilities range from cooking food, cleaning the room (home), chopping vegetables, sweeping and mopping the floor etc. Children shared, "*hum ghar mein-jhaadu pocha lagate hain, bartan dho dete hain, gas saaf kar dete hain, aur bistar theek kar dete hain, paratha bana lete hain, atta meedhte hai, roti bana lete hain, paani bhar lete hain"* (we do clean the house, wash utensils, the gas stove, make the bed properly, prepare the dough for *chapatis*, at times cook paratha as well, and fill up the drinking water). These children though appear young but are trained well in household chores and the way they take care of so many diverse works at home, it indeed acts as an added help to parents.

Apart from the regular household chores, *sibling care* was also registered as an important responsibility which children play an important role into. It was registered that children both boys and girls were assigned sibling care duties.

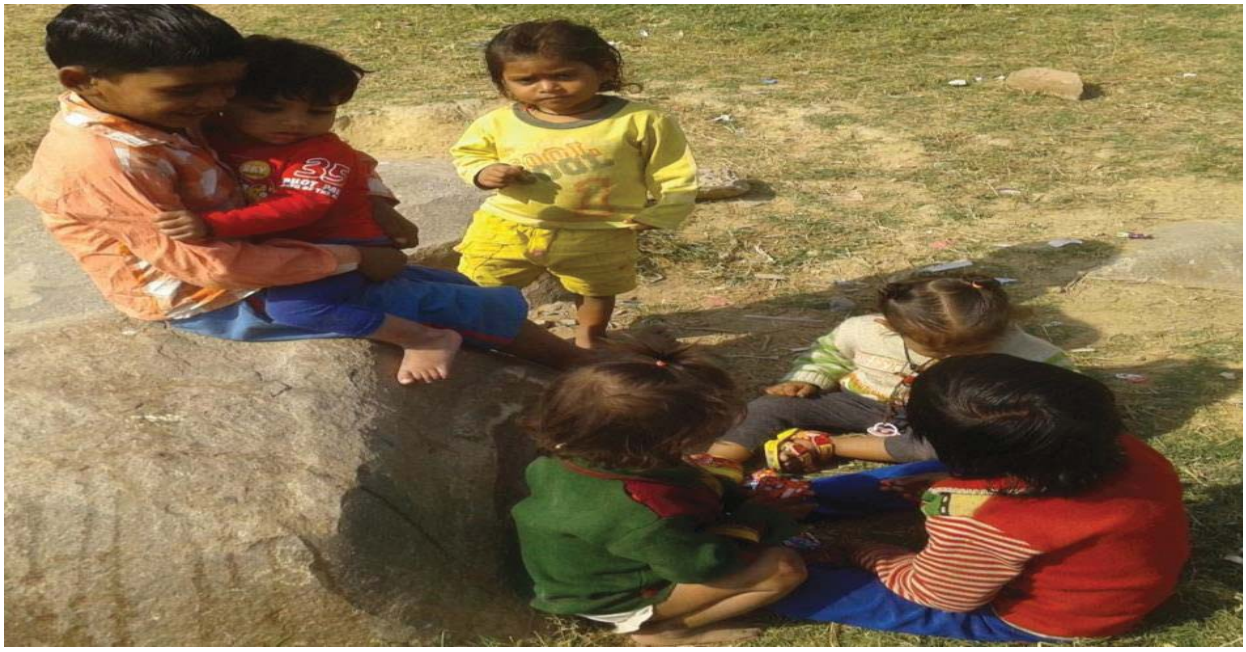

Figure 12: *Chandan, taking care of his youngest sibling while his other siblings and neighbourhood friends are playing along, on a sunny winter morning at Rock Garden, Munirka. Picture clicked during early winter of 2018.*

During a casual conversation with Chandan, on asking if he likes to play any running game or is he fine sitting there with other children he replied positively saying, "*thodi der mein"* (after some time). It was registered later that in the company of a known Chandan left his sibling while he played *gulli-danda*[33] with other children of his age- group who arrived later in the park. It was surprising that such a young child was patiently taking care of his sibling and prioritising the sibling care, he went for play only when he left his sibling in the care of a known. Children assigned sibling care responsibilities exhibit an extraordinary level of sensitiveness toward younger children, as they themselves shared snacks, biscuits and candies with the young children without even being asked for, even at times keeping nothing for themselves.

In the picture below we can see a girl child holding her sibling, while other children are playing (or waiting for their turn for the swing).

[33] Indian game, which is mostly played in rural areas where using a long stick (*danda*), short piece of stick (*gulli*) is hit. Having many variations this game is played by children across India (as well as South Asian subcontinent).

Figure 13: *Disha, holding her young sibling while counting on the swings' ride and waiting for her turn to hop-on. Picture clicked at DDA flats Munirka park in spring of 2018.*

Disha herself is 7 years old. She along with her younger sibling came to park (at DDA flats Munirka) in order to play sometime. She was also accompanied by her younger sibling. Carrying her sibling in arms and standing near the swings she kept waiting for her turn, but the other group of children (who came back from tuition) did not vacate the swings. Disha- who herself is a child, while on her play time was supposed to care for her younger sibling. In between quite a few times she tried to grab the swing while leaving her sibling (the infant) on the dusty ground crying. Her struggle was evident, as one side she was trying to claim and make use of her play-time whereas on the other side she was not able to, or maybe due to her felt responsibility for her younger sibling she could not turn a blind eye towards crying baby. Afterwards, she took the infant in her lap and sat aside on a bench watching other children play. It was recorded later that a woman came and took the infant from her. Later during conversation, it was found that she was Disha's mother and she went to purchase milk (at one of the Mother Dairy outlets in DDA flats Munirka) while she left both the children at the park to play. This example shows that it would be wrong to generalise that always girls children take care of their siblings or household responsibilities, as in this case both the children were

left in the park to play (as shared by the mother). They stayed back for about 30 minutes in the park, during which Disha also played with other children, meanwhile the infant was in the company of the mother. Also, it is significant to note that more than gender; the age factor dominates, where elder siblings are supposed to take-care of their younger siblings. Also, their belonging to not so rich families wherein an extra added help or care-taker to be appointed is not possible- elder siblings served as care-givers to their young siblings.

Learning work was also at times seen as playful by children. A child from Coolie Camp shared that his father is a gardener and he often accompanies his father in the evenings to nursery (where the father works) and to their clients' home. Learning to care and plant seeds, this child then with his friend has put some plants in one of the (abandoned) parks at DDA flats Munirka- which they termed as their *secret kona* (secret corner). They showed me their *secret wala kona* and explained the necessity of weeding out of unwanted plants. Also, these children were carrying two bottles full of water along with them. I assumed that it might be for the drinking purpose (on a hot summer evening), but later I found that they especially took the water to pour over the saplings they planted.

Figure 14: *Children from Coolie Camp showing their delicate plants at DDA flats Munirka park. Picture clicked during the summer of 2018.*

Apart from this, taking care of home when parents are not around served as free play time where they children could call in friends to their home or play in front of home serving both- playing as well as keeping an eye on their home. Some other forms of work, where children's contribution was observed at Coolie camp included- getting cooking oil, match sticks from nearby shops, getting the daily supply of milk (every alternate day) for home, taking care of (family) stall/ shop in the absence of adult members. This perceived work of a few minutes where children used to take-care shop and act as shopkeeper, later finds its way in their play *dukaan-dukaan* (shop-shop) with other playmates. Accomplishing an allotted work was at times rewarded by parents in monetary terms and sometimes by praising and appreciating children. Such occasions served as no less than *proud-moments* for children where they could help adults in their chores. Some forms of play included- putting up race to the mutually decided spot, the one who reaches first is considered the winner. Other activities that turned playful, included the walk to school and then back to home where children used to share tattoos, play cards with other groups of children on the way back from school. Often such things were also exchanged between children at school.

Children at Coolie Camp had relatively much free-time, rather unstructured time and were least dependent on technology for leisure. Though it is important to mention here that teenage boys still had personal smartphones and access to internet via Jio phone's free services[34] but girls and younger children were not as dependent on technology. In terms of the diverse work accomplished by the children at home enabled their parents to go to work. Especially at Coolie camp as parents could not hire help for household chores and children acted as an added source of help- for parents; children from DDA flats Munirka and Vasant Kunj DDA were largely dependent on maid or any other guardian when parents are not around.

[34] Jio- Reliance Jio is a telecommunication company that launched its unlimited internet services which got popular after its launch in the year 2017 onwards.

Children from DDA flats Munirka and Vasant Kunj DDA had minimal, almost negligible household responsibilities allotted to them. For these children education held the most important work to be done with utmost care. Apart from it these children often were enrolled for hobby classes and sports training. On the pretext of non-availability of playmates and unavailable space for play, these children had their play activities restricted to a specific set of activities that includes cycling, playing badminton, cricket only in a few pockets and patches- where some open space is available. Otherwise mostly they would like to get indulged in virtual games, one could see children hanging around, taking walks in evening like adults and talking amongst each other, sharing whatsapp chats or maybe the latest piece of music or video online. Though meeting outside with other children of their age, many children-mostly girls preferred to take walks rather than playing running games. Also, when out for a walk- children could be seen neatly dressed in relatively *bahar ke kapde* (clothes meant for wearing when stepping out from home rather than casual wears). Looks and appearances were the most important aspects of children when stepping out of their home for leisurely walk. Though the Rock garden was nearby- children from DDA flats Munirka and also their parents guardians preferred them to play in nearby lanes or parks and not allow them to go to rock garden- which might have provided them larger space and possible potential playmates. But since in public park- the possibility of mingling children across classes is higher and maintenance of boundaries is minimal, children and parents might have opted to stay aloof[35]. In DDA flats Munirka- some parks and spaces were abandoned by children who were residents of the locality, stating reasons like- *"yaha grass nahi hai"* (there is no grass), this (park) is not clean enough, *"humlog dusri jagah khelte hain"* (we play on the other side), this is near road, other children- *"gande bacche"* (dirty children) play here.

[35] As described at length in chapter 3.

For children from DDA flats Munirka and Vasant Kunj DDA, structured activities say going to school, then to coaching, and later for hobby classes was a general routine. Education was the prime focus and playing –just for the sake of playing was only present as *filler* in the time-gap that children get during weekends or holidays. General every-day routine of children is tightly packed in such a manner that a child from Vasant Kunj DDA shared, "*acche se sone ko bas Saturday-Sunday milta hai…*" (gets to sleep for more hours on Saturday-Sunday only). This child shared that early morning before school she goes for swimming classes, then to school and in the evening has back to back two tuitions- for which though the teacher comes at their residence, but still the added *tuition and school homework* drains her. Often she has to wake till late night and finish her assigned *home-work* and therefore she points out that she only gets to sleep for a longer duration only during weekends and thereby the scope for playing on her own or having a *free-time* is not there.

Qvortrup (1991) notes that schooling is a continuation of children's work, which is necessarily different in its quality from previous work in which children were indulged into during pre-industrial work, agricultural labour and so on. The schooling as work is not recognised by adults including social scientists. Qvortrup (1991) terms this as "collective amnesia" (p. 15), where the schoolwork is seen as useful to bureaucratic work, which skills the unskilled child and turns into productive adults.

Also, it is important to note that children who are enrolled in school have "limited time left for work outside school" (Corsaro, 2018, p. 37). Educational expansion has curtailed children's possibility of working long hours. With mothers (from lower income families) working outside, *lighter* works of the domestic realm fall on children's shoulders. Younger children spend 1 to 2 hours in domestic chores, say, putting wet clothes in the sun, fetching water, cleaning the home and so on. These chores are also gendered in nature where boys and girls of different age groups are allotted to serve different responsibilities, say getting

vegetables from market, grocery supply for home and so on. Children's work and participation was an important aspect of lives of people in Coolie Camp but in other two localities though children's presence was felt but theirs and adult's world hardly gets to merge with each other, they had different set of responsibilities and children were always treated as in need of care and assistance, who are still not mastered to do any work or serve any responsibility given to them. In Coolie Camp children and adult's world seems to be touching upon each other where children could be seen taking active part with adults in serving various chores. But in DDA flats Munirka and Vasant Kunj DDA, children's and adult's spheres were wide apart. Children's most of the time and day's routine was structured and adults were always assisting them directing them for one or another activity. The question of accessibility here is important. As a researcher, I could provide much details about the lives of children from Coolie-Camp because these children were more accessible to me whereas children from DDA flats Munika and Vasant Kunj DDA were relatively less accessible. Decided by their parents- would children talk to me or not? having interaction in parents' presence and under strict-time slots, parents answering on behalf of children- were some of the limitations due to which the present discussion might appear imbalanced.

2.6 Classed Childhoods: A Socio- Structural Category

The social constructionist perspective has established that childhood is not a homogenous entity rather it is very much diverse and varied. Across societies and even within the same society, children's experiences also constitute a multitude of characteristics. Mayall (1994b) makes us aware that, "childhood is not experienced as one consistent set of relationships; rather its character in time and place is modified by adult understandings in those times and places of what children are, and what adult relationships with children are proper" (p. 116). Children's experience and their childhood, is very much dependent on the way others (adults) treat children. Bourdieu (1977) offers an interesting and complex nature

of habitus, through which social actors, through their continual routine and involvement in their social worlds acquire a set of predispositions to act and see things in a certain way. Similarly, children too being social actors, too develop these understandings around their social role.

But we must also acknowledge that it is not always children who are influenced by society, the society also is getting inturn shaped by children. Giddens (1979) shows that children have the ability to influence and modify social environments can be understood by,

> The unfolding of childhood is not time elapsing just for the child; it is time elapsing for its parental figures, and for all other members of society; the socialisation involved is not simply that of the child, but of the parents and others with whom the child is in contact, and whose conduct is influenced by the child just as the latter's is by theirs in the continuity of interaction. (p. 139)

Being part of the same society, children and adults influence each-other alike. Mayall (1994a) argues childhood is an essential component of a social order, where the general understanding is that it is the first and separate condition of the lifespan whose characteristics are different from later phases of life. Presence and location of children at macro-societal level can be seen. Children make up a considerable population at societal level and therefore certain global and international levels of analysis must also be applied in order to understand children's lives across the world. Lee (2001, cited in Wyness, 2012) argues that children are occupying a subordinate position within the social structure as "'dependent beings' rather than 'dependent becomings'" (p. 53). Childhood thus becomes a fixed rather than a transient category, cutting across other social variables like gender, caste, class and so on.

Demonstrating the orthodoxy of developmental psychology in constructing the discourse around childhood, Mayall (1994a) critiques the developmentalists' ideals and writes,

> The supremacy of developmentalists' ideals of children and childhood has allowed us to bask in the comfortable view that children are the same children wherever they are. Their emotional, relational and cognitive competencies and in-competences relate to their age and their stage. In this vision, children can be observed and described as having attained a certain level of development and competence whatever the social context, rather than perceived as people whose competencies, confidence, knowledge and interactions vary according to the social context. The goal of much developmental psychology, to find universal truths about 'the child', blinds us to the personhood of children, viewed both as individuals and as groups, and their exposure to the same social forces as anyone else. (p. 118)

Here Mayall (1994a) tries to establish and bring to focus the socially located personhood of children and places them at par with other individuals in society. Children's social identity in a way directs their childhood experiences.

Wyness (2012) argues that children grow up into social classes through a range of formal and informal structures through which "children become bearers or members of economic classes" (p. 53). Such knowledge of class-membership and awareness about one's socio-economic class position was also recorded amongst children with whom the current research is conducted. A child from Coolie Camp while playing, casually remarked, *"hum kagaz ki patang se khel rahe hain gareeb hai na kyuki"* (we are playing with the paper kite since we are poor). This child was 8 years old. To my efforts of striking a healthy conversation, despite my conscious efforts to look similar (as I consciously was dressed in a humble manner and was speaking in Hindi) the child still replied to my queries foregrounding his class-positioning. Also, children from Vasant Kunj and DDA flats Munirka localities too behaved in a distinct manner- talking in English, showing off their play resources- the games they own, electronic gadgets that they use and often demand from their parents. As shared by

a parent (in boasting way) from Vasant Kunj DDA that their child demanded the specific set of branded shoes (sports) despite he has already a couple of pair of shoes in good condition, but since the child has joined his school's cricket team- he needs new sports shoes[36]. Certainly, this child too might be aware about the financial status of his family and their class-position whereby he knows making such demands would be met. Accumulation of play resources, games, extra pair of shoes, branded clothes, their common topics of discussion- around games, around holiday etc., the food preferences (and lifestyle in general) which makes way into children's talks were some of the ways through which children understands and make sense of their class-positioning. Also, as shared in chapter 3 about the family's trip to Budh Bazar where the whole family did their necessary shopping for the upcoming marriage within the budget of 700/- rupees, these children too demanded various things to be purchased. But their mother somehow made a priority checklist along with purchasing something or the other for each-child.

Class- consciousness of children was also registered in the way they made play-groups and in general understanding as "*gande bacche"* (bad children) and "*acche bacche"* (good children). Children from DDA flats Munirka playing at one of park while sharing about slum children (from adjacent Motilal Nehru Camp and Coolie Camp area) mentioned that, "*hum gande baccho ke sath nahi khelte"* (we do not play with bad children). This understanding of good and bad must be understood with respect to the appearance of children, where children from DDA localities might appear in well-dressed manner, children from the adjacent slum might not appear as *clean* and in tidy manner, also not in branded clothes and often wearing (clean washed off but) worn out clothes, which establishes their class-membership.

[36] The parent shared this detail with pride where the father was demonstrating his child's extraordinary talents- for which the child had been selected in the school's cricket team and in order to reward him, his demands for a new pair of shoes (despite already having shoes) can be acknowledged.

Corsaro (2018) also establishes "childhood as a structural form- a socially constructed period in which children live their lives" (p. 3). By establishing childhood as a structural form, Corsaro (2018) means, "(it) as a category or a part of society like social class and age groups" (p. 3). He further states that,

> [F]or children themselves, childhood is a temporary period; whereas for society childhood is permanent structural form or category that never disappears, even though its members change continuously and its nature and conception vary historically. It is somewhat difficult to recognize childhood as a structural form because we tend to think of childhood solely as a period when children are prepared for entry into society. But children are already a part of society from their births, as childhood is part and parcel of society. (p. 4)

Since children are also part of society, the differences in terms of caste, class, gender, ethnicity also figures out in children's interaction amongst themselves which in an adult regulated way[37] gets crystallised over time. As a structural form, Corsaro (2018) establishes that childhood is interrelated with other categories such as social class, gender, and age groups. The nature of childhood would in turn get affected by the structural arrangements of these categories in society.

2.6.1 Monetary Consciousness amongst Children

Class-conscious nature of children is also explored in relation to their handling of *money*. Money, earned as rewards by doing household routine chores, helping a neighbour in fetching the necessary articles from nearby shop, self-generated amount during play by *betting* or receiving pocket-money from parents, were some of the ways through which children generated their *necessary* sum of money. This sum total amount was perceived

[37] Adults regulate children and direct them where to play, whom to play with also arranging play-dates (discussed in chapter 2) where parents direct and regulate children's interaction thereby implicitly teaching them rules of interaction in routines do's and don'ts.

necessary by children to meet their needs- of eating snacks outside, purchasing candies, buying gifts for friends and so on. Another economic activity in which children from Coolie Camp were indulged was *betting*- earning pocket money while playing. Morrow (1994) "children may indeed be contributing to family incomes indirectly by purchasing consumer items with their earnings which parents would otherwise have to pay for directly or through the allocation of pocket money" (p. 139). Children's independent handling of money is another window through which their class- awareness can be understood.

The concept of pocket-money was not as such explored in detail, but children's handling and usage of money- earned and given to them by adults can inform us about their economic understanding and their awareness of financial status. At Coolie Camp when children (mostly girls) served for one or a few household allotted chores were given 5/- rupees or 10/- rupees- as reward. Apart from this, children did not have a separate concept of pocket money. As shared, *"jab mama aate hain na to kapde, paise, deke jaate hain wo hum bacha ke rakhte hain"* (whenever our uncle visits us, he would bring clothes, fruits and also gives us money which we keep safe). Also, whenever children visit their hometown or if any of their relatives comes to see them here (in Delhi) or on festivals (by their own parents) if they receive any money then they put it in *gullak* (piggy bank made of potter's clay). A girl child shared about her new dress which she purchased from Budh Bazar of her own money (accumulated by savings). At times these savings by children were also used as a contribution towards household income. Hutson (1990, cited in Morrow, 1994) mentions that, "children tended to work (earn) in order to pay for luxuries, while their parents pay for necessities" (p. 141). Savings was an important act for children especially girls and younger boys from Coolie Camp whereas older boys were found spending money in the group of friends and on eating, roaming around in groups and so on.

It was also shared by younger boys (below 10 years old) that the elder boys while playing also indulges into *betting*, the children shared (pointing from afar), "*didi ye saare na paise ki shart lagate hain match khelne ke liye*" (Sister…all these elder boys are indulged into betting while playing match- cricket). In order to earn extra-money to serve their needs (which generally do not have adult approval) say getting cell phone recharged, getting the playlists of songs updated and so on, elder boys from Coolie Camp are also involved in betting. Not employed, but still making earnings to meet their perceived needs, children are very well aware of the ways to earn and spend money and have devised ways to do it as per their will. Greenberger and Steinberg (1986, cited in Morrow, 1994) mentions that, "consumerism and the advent of teenage markets created a need for money amongst the children" (p. 141). Children spend their earnings on toys, sweets, candies, fashions, gifting each-other during friendship day, and so on.

At Vasant Kunj DDA, a child shared about his earnings that he regularly receives as a distinct amount in the form of pocket money. Though the child could save around a few thousands during his birthday month and have it all saved in his piggy bank, his savings were in the knowledge of parents. He had no control or absolute say in spending the amount at will. Unlike older children from Coolie Camp, children from Vasant Kunj DDA had restricted rather controlled ways of spending their savings- the earned amount. But it is here important to note that the sum-total amount or earnings/ savings varied which in the case of Coolie-Camp fall in between 200/- to 500/- rupees (which can be spent at will) and at Vasant Kunj DDA this amount fell in the range of 10,000 to 15,000/- rupees with occasional rise in the amount during festive season or birthday months.

The way children have constituted their economic worlds in a way shows their agentic and class-conscious nature where, as adults, children are also taking part in economic activities (as per their financial status) and are making decisions for their purchase. Further,

we must enquire in Indian context how children and childhood gets conceptualised both by adults as well as how children perceive themselves given the global and local influences. In the following sections the cultural politics of global and local markers of childhoods is dealt with which in a way shapes rather normalises one form of childhood and problematise other forms.

2.7 Contested and Customised Childhoods: Cultural Politics around Global and Local Childhoods

With changing times, it is also important to trace how childhoods have been changed in the contemporary time. It is also important to assess social change and childhood in contemporary Indian society which is marked by macro-changes say globalisation, urbanisation, increasing impact of market and technology, familial settings and childhood is also getting changed. The year of 1970s and 1980s, James (2009) mentions the change in perception about children and childhood as "break with tradition" (p. 35). This time-period marked the emergence of change in perceptions about children as *social actors*. During this period, many movements started focussing on the position of *child* in society; for example- the launch of International Year of Child in 1979; multiple notions about children say world's children, happy, safe, protected, innocent childhood and child abuse came at forefront. Universal theories of children's development then came under scrutiny during this time-period. Piaget's (1952) work on child development was also challenged whereas Vygotsky's (1978) work which took children's social location into account was recognised. Vygotsky's (1978) work accorded a greater role to a child's social and cultural context with respect to her/his development.

Within the Social Construction framework, there are multiple approaches to look at and understand children and childhood. Gitten (2009) describes three varying approaches to study children and childhood, these include, "socioeconomic situation of families, second-

understanding emotional and psychological changes in a child's upbringing and last being the legal and political perspective" (p. 35). Along with treating childhood as a pre-defined and pre-stated phenomenon, childhood has also been constructed very much in the context of socio-cultural location which determines the trajectory of one's childhood phase. James and Prout (1997) lists six key features of this new paradigm New Sociology of Childhood, which are:

1. The socially constructed childhood is different from biological immaturity. It is contextualized interpretation of human's early life based on societal beliefs and cultures.
2. Childhood is intertwined with other social variables in societies such as gender, class, ethnicity etc.
3. Children's own individual perspectives must be considered while studying children and childhood.
4. Children must be viewed as active participants not only in construction of knowledge about them but also in construction of society as a whole.
5. Due to direct involvement of children in construction of knowledge about them, ethnography is useful methodology to study childhood.
6. The new paradigm of childhood sociology is to respond to the process of reconstructing childhood. (p. 8)

This understanding also points out to the treatment of children in society as it is society which decides when a child is a child and when a child becomes an adult. Children in need of care, dependent children or independent children, all such discourses are shaped by society, treatment of children and thereby shaping the childhood experiences. Childhood is not only dependent on context, culture, time-period but also on circumstances. *Child-labour* and treatment of children as independent beings is also circumstantial where in some societies

children are seen as economically responsible and in some societies child-labour is considered as a taboo. Socially and contextually rooted understanding of childhood shows that it cannot be isolated from other variables such as- class, gender, caste, religion and so on. With respect to children's needs and welfare, there are certain standards that are laid down by many international and national agencies across the globe. Such standards are laid keeping in mind children's developmental and biological, chronological age and features in mind, irrespective of their particular social contexts. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) has now become a global frame of reference with respect to legal, political and professional terms for treatment of children. Passed in 1989, UNCRC works on a welfarist model of childhood. Nieuwenhuys (1998) argues that, "UNCRC is not culturally neutral but is grounded in the assumption both of 'superiority of childhood model that has evolved in the North and its need to impose the model on global South" (p. 270). It is thereby practising an exclusionary model by not recognising diverse forms of childhoods and keeping childhoods that do not fit as per its structure as *outside childhood*- depicting the lack of childhood. Foregrounding the neo-liberal policies, that are creating global markets of taste, needs and expectations have weakened the role of state. Marking the cultural politics, Nieuwenhuys (1998) writes, "modern society knows only one acceptable childhood ideal that has slowly been spreading from the upper classes towards the entire population" (p. 270).

Boyden (2015) while discussing the image of childhood around the world, shares how image of children from Global North is being imported to other parts of the world through policy making and rights framework and how such an image then affects adversely children form Global South and third world countries. In the backdrop of increasing international activism for children's right and creation of agencies like The International Union for Child Welfare and Defence for Children International, Sommerville (1982, cited in Boyden, 2015) writes, "the major tenet of contemporary rights and welfare thinking is that regulation of

child life should give priority to making childhood a carefree, safe, secure and happy phase of human existence" (p. 188). This modern world view of childhood, according to Boyden (2015) comes along with its legislative frameworks, policies and codes of welfare practices with the historical interplay of Judeo-Christian belief system and capitalist development. Children from impoverished backgrounds, because of their unkempt appearance, generally poor state of health are "frequently judged by officialdom to be lacking in moral or social values" (Boyden, 2015, p. 193). International rights legislation and traditional child welfare thinking, both are rooted deeply into the ideologies of the social work and legal professions which has resulted in the development of "global standards for childhood" (Boyden, 2015, p. 194) by downplaying the wider social, economic, political and cultural conditions shaping the childhoods. Within such a framework, priority is given to individual causation highlighting individual pathology and rehabilitation in terms of curing the problem. Also, it is important to note that the international law has traditionally embodied the image of the *dependent child*, the potential victim and then have adopted welfare programmes laying out protective measures. One such impact is in the construct of a *happy child* image which is now being actively sought by governments worldwide to achieve it and thereby framing policies in relation to it.

With the image of Global Child, we must be wakeful of the structural global inequality that also comes with it. The cultural imperialism which hierarchies cultures is also embedded in the *global image* of children that normalises some images of childhoods while problematising others[38]. Kumar (2006) writes, "the acceptance of childhood as a protected and privileged period of life was simultaneous to the rise of the modern welfare state, and predates by several decades the discourse of globalisation" (p. 4030). The enquiry about childhood amidst the macro changes like globalisation, must be understood in its socio-

[38] The favourable images of childhood could be happy, playing, studying child and problematic could be working children, street children and so on, discussed at length in the following section of this chapter.

cultural locale where the irreversibility of change brought by hegemonic cultural exchange results in damaging impact on the actors at the receiving end. With cultures travelling, there is compression of time and space (Harvey, 1989), which is made possible through new media technologies. With market and technology available to families, the private realm has now been made open at global level. The similar concern is made by Kumar (2006) where he mentions,

> [T]he ubiquitous tools of globalisation, such as internet and tourism have currently induced a weakening of the welfare state and a dissolution of earlier existing 'protective' barriers wherein teacher and the learning system mediated between the child and the outer world. The more far-reaching effects of globalisation such as the implicit changes seen in work-patterns, child-rearing practices and the very notion of family itself, and in turn, the very impact of such changes on childhood, have yet to be systematically studied. (p. 4030)

A market constituted at a global level also plays a very important role in contributing to the *global-image* of children whereby some children who belong to relatively well-off classes are portrayed as the ideal and sacred children with *perfect* childhood mediated by market which decided their food, clothing, games they play and ultimately the consumerist life which is laid by the market for children.

Whereas other side is the sell-purchase of children in the global market where children of poor families are sold and purchased as products. Kumar (2006) mentions, "…globalisation has influenced children in a negative manner. Trafficking of children has also grown on a scale that the discourse of child rights has failed to cope with" (p. 4032). The NGO-isation of *childhood* there is lacking, whereby despite numerous NGOs working for child rights still rising crime and trafficking rates against children are registered at an alarming rate. Children and their constructed needy image which is read with the traditional

lens of raid, rescue and rehabilitation (Sircar & Dutta, 2011) rather than counter 3Rs-resilience, reworking and resistance by acknowledging children's role. Sircar and Dutta (2011) in the context of constructed image of needy children writes,

> Imageries of suffering carry with them notions of idealized victim subjects who attract the most amount of compassion. Children – especially from non-western geographies – are such a group, for whom vicarious appeals by activists, philanthropists and the state alike contribute towards a discourse of compassion that is globally throbbing with funds, protectionist laws and images. (p. 333)

Sircar and Dutta (2011) critiquing the Oscar winning documentary Born Into Brothels tries to uncover the representational politics of children and their childhoods at international platforms. They write, "images of suffering children aesthetically adorn almost every appeal for funds by charities and child rights/ welfare organizations" (p. 336). Linking it to global exchange and fund economy, Kleinman and Kleinman (1997, cited in Sircar & Dutta, 2011) mentions that, "images of victims are commercialized; they are taken up into processes of global marketing and business competition" (p. 336). Highlighting the similar phenomenon Boyden (2015) mentions that social policies at international level are extremely blunt and its universal application around the world divorced with the understanding of specific socio-cultural context has led to the criminalisation of certain forms of childhoods. Children helping their families in various works, children employed and children who are not continuing the school are some of the forms that are condemned and criminalised at times. Such imposition of values of one culture over another is damaging. Childhoods must be constructed, deconstructed and understood well embedded in their social and historical contexts. Otherwise such a homogenous lens would prove to be damaging towards children and societies at the receiving end as well.

It is therefore worth acknowledging the varied landscape of India, Nieuwenhuys (2009) in her article critically explores that - *Is there an Indian childhood?* With a singular label of *Indian childhood* could varied childhood/s be homogenised? How to represent differences that shape children's experience? Citing about the homogenising tendency around construction of Indian childhood, into a series of *problematic yet fundable issues,* Nieuwenhuys (2009) mentions that such an act must be read from a lens of two inter related phenomenon- the colonial heritage and general Euro-American dominance in global research (and specifically the childhood studies). Here contextually embedded childhood is looked down upon from the lens of the West aiming to homogenise. Indian childhoods are constructed as problematic- by highlighting child labour, street children has casted children's lives into a series of binaries that divide their childhood into what if desirable and undesirable- which must be addressed and rectified (Nieuwenhuys, 2009, p. 148). She writes,

> Even when children are approached as meaningful actors who have the right to participate in the solutions offered, as is now increasingly the case in NGO interventions, the agenda is firmly set within the parameters of a limited set of choices. These choices are designed to help guide Indian society towards realizing what development agencies have decided is the highest possible goal, the emulation of a kind of childhood that the West has set as a global standard. (p. 148)

There are many explicit and implicit impacts of such an uneven exchange of childhood at local and global level of which children are always at the receiving end. In conflict zones[39], children are ripped apart from their peaceful familial lives, are turned into refugees and at times are also actively turned into child-soldiers. Kumar (2006) has also mentioned that, "childhood as a category represents a cultural frontier where the project of modernisation has come under threat from globalisation" (p. 4034). With respect to diversity

[39] At both national and international level.

of childhoods, Nieuwenhuys (2009) strongly answers to the question 'Is there an Indian childhood?' in a positive way by mentioning that, "…though there are many childhoods, under either deconstruction or reconstruction, and no way (these could be restricted)… how many and which they are" (p. 151). Nieuwenhuys (2009), points out the diversity and appeals to locate childhood and children's lives qualitatively rather than just counting on how many childhoods and thereby quantifying it.

Apart from international and national policies, the market (and children's media) is also another element that increasingly is triggering the homogenising impacts on childhoods across the world. Local forms of childhood with respect to children's play, songs, the clothes children wear, the language children speak, their education, the cartoons and larger media in the form of movies and selective channels made for children are all homogenised at a very rapid rate. Contestations in these local and global childhoods can keenly be observed by taking the *class* factor into consideration. In the following section, I would discuss multiple childhoods that I could gather in the journey of this research.

2.8 Childhoods and its Multitudes: Competing Imageries of Children and their Childhoods

As the twentieth century has progressed, there has been crystallisation of highly selective, stereotyped perceptions around children and childhoods. Major stereotypical images of children are directly exported from Global North to Global South which has, regardless of the distinct socio-cultural context of either, added to the homogenisation process of existing childhoods. Also, with this direct import of stereotypical understanding some forms of childhoods are preferred whereas the other are condemned and also criminalised.

2.8.1 Happy and Playing Child Construction: Linked with Play and Delinked from Work

James, Jenks and Prout (1998) suggest childhood is characterised by a set of cultural values. They write,

> "[I]n the twentieth century…Western childhood has become a period of the life course characterised by social dependency, asexuality, and the obligation to be happy, with children having the right to protection and training but not to social or personal autonomy." (p. 11)

The underlying assumption, here- obligation to be happy, with respect to children is often tied up with the image of playing child. This easy marriage of *play* and *children* also must be explored and located contextually, by examining through multiple layers of the meanings attached to play and children's play.

Play is understood as the part of childhood during which children are free from responsibilities, children could play because they do not have responsibilities to serve. This perceived lack of responsibility, by adults then gets translated into the understanding that children do not work. This conception of work is again understood as is perceived by adults as something which is done to earn an income and pay taxes. Also, the construct of responsibility gets equated with the sets of normative expectations and obligations which an adult is supposed to serve as a social and moral citizen. With such an understanding, "being a child and going through the period of childhood means having no economic and moral responsibilities- which means not having to work" (Wyness, 2012, p. 11). This construct of happy and playful child thus is characterised with the understanding that phase of childhood *lacks work*. In a simplified way one can understand as- childhood is equated with play and adulthood is equated with work.

Also, when it comes to children, there is no expectation that they should work and therefore it is the reason why children- in their own right, cannot claim income or financial support from the state as well. Such an understanding can further be related to legal understanding of children, where children until a specific age are kept away from the labour market and there are different kinds of laws that are instituted at international platforms as well.

Exploring the normalised linkages with childhood and play, we must critically understand that the conception of play is often understood in opposition to work. Play is understood as a period which is free of responsibilities, where individuals can relax and have fun. Understood in connection with modern childhood, play thus can also be seen in relation to educational and structured activities. But also an excess of structure within play undermines the very idea of childhood (Wyness, 2012, p. 12). This binary understanding of adult and child and play and work, must be questioned. Corsaro (2018) shows that children have always played and have "recently stopped working" (p. 12). Children in some societies and communities had and still continue to be having economic responsibilities, which at times get superseded by compulsory schooling. Raman (2000) has evidenced experiential reality of childhood in India where, "childhood… (was agreed)…as a time for play, fun and laughter, but when the family's survival needs had to be met, even children had to work" (p. 4062). Such are the roles and responsibilities that are part of children's lives. The understanding of the phenomenon of childhood therefore, cannot be separated from the larger social-matrix of community, caste-tribe, kin group and family. The playing child image of children is a recent construct as modern childhood. Zelizer (1994) traces this shift in conception of children's image from treating them as an economically productive unit in the 19th century, children's status was transformed as emotionally valuable beings where their happiness and developmental process was a keen subject for parents.

With the social constructionist framework and keeping in mind the playing child image, we must uncover the present day responsibilities of children- Is it that playing child image is universal? Do all parents, across societies believe in such conception and construction of children and childhood? Centrality of play is recognised at international platforms in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1989) also. Article 31 of UNCRC writes, "states parties recognise the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate in cultural life and the arts". Keeping in mind that many children in different parts of the world have considerable responsibilities which are prioritised over play, can we say that Article 31 of UNCRC was drafted precisely because otherwise children were so engrossed in responsibilities and work that play took a back seat? Greishaber and Mc Ardle (2010) challenges UNCRC's approach condemning it as one size fits all approach. They write, "accepting that play is a universal right is therefore a culturally specific belief that favours Western ways of viewing children and childhood" (Grieshaber & McArdle, 2010, p. 11). Raman (2000) has also pointed out the cultural and political contexts of children's rights with respect to UNCRC, where right from the inception, drafting and implementing the pivotal point is *westernised modern childhood* which finds its roots in "globalisation through colonialism and then through imperialism of international aid" (p. 4055). This shows one size fits all model of such international platforms also which are supposed to cater children's rights across the globe.

Right to play does not go with the experiences of children who have no choice between working (labour) or starving. This shows that playing-child construction is recent and even culturally specific which then by international policies at global platforms are now being trickled down to third world countries as well, and leading to homogenisation of childhood. Wyness (2012) while adding weight to play and its discourses says that, "its

categorisation as 'childish' reveals that its association with children in a way compromises children's contribution to society" (p. 13). With respect to the adult's sphere, play is seen as residual, which is not real, something which is done after accomplishing an important business work. Play is something which is done in order to get rejuvenated and could be seen as the preparation to get back to work. This under-treatment of play can be understood in relation with children. This leaves us with a question that- do we undervalue play because it is linked to children or is it that because we trivialise play and therefore, childhood gets compromised?

2.8.2 Street Child versus Sacred (Schooled) Child

The label of street children, with it has a very negative connotation attached. The image of a street child is that of the "abandoned child who is left to fend for herself/ himself in an alien, dangerous world" (Wyness, 2012, p. 112). Also, children *in the street* are often regarded as street children and treated as potential delinquents. Glauser (1997, cited in Wyness, 2012) mentions that "street children are seen as physical menace" (p. 112) by the local authorities. Glauser (1997, cited in Wyness, 2012) while exploring the category/ label of street children "calls for a critical enquiry" (p. 21), about whose interest does this category serve? Underlying here is the assumption of a benevolent West helping out the children of underdeveloped countries by civilising them. The condemnation of and negative image attached with street children calls for a critical enquiry. Zucchi (1992, cited in Ward, 1994) referring to the hypocrisy of moral crusaders mention,

> Italian (children) street musicians came down to Paris (the host city), from their poverty ridden societies, were sent back whereas reserving their indifference towards other set of children working in glass factories and sulphur mines- who were subjected to far worse conditions. (p. 149)

Questioning such an act where these street children were seen as an embarrassment to trade and to the tourist industry, Zucchi (1992, cited in Ward, 1994) warns us about the add-on labels and categories that are weaved around children and childhoods.

Children's work outside school with respect to responsibility is explored by Morrow (1994). Questioning the construct of dependency and childhood as a phase marked by lack of responsibility, Morrow (1994) shows that children across ages are indulged in various kinds of work and they tend to serve their work duties quite responsibly. Corsaro (2018) also mentions about children who undertake paid work and terms them as "*newsies*- children who take up the work of distribution of newspapers" (p. 85). "Responsibility", Morrow (1994) writes, "involves being accountable, answerable, capable, competent, dependent, reliable, trustworthy and so on" (p. 132). But despite children taking up responsible works, childhood is still defined at policy level as a period of incompetence, such is the politics of childhood where dependency of children over adults is created and forced. Children are not allowed to make decisions affecting them and they are granted little economic power also (Oldman, 1994). Boyden (2015) uncovers the dichotomy between street and school child, with respect to policy making and construction of children who are outside the purview of family considered as "un-socialised or anti-social child as deviant or trouble maker" (p. 191). The untamed and un-socialised child then is seen as a threat which gets reinforced by crime statistics that usually portrays young people out of control, roaming in the streets as threat to the civilised society. Boyden (2015) writes,

> In cities as disparate as Abidjan, Bogota, Cairo, Manila and Seoul, children playing in the streets and other public spaces and young teenagers congregating on street corners, outside cinemas or bars, have become synonymous in the mind of general public with delinquent gangs. (p. 191)

Streets are depicted as physically and morally dangerous zones for children and children who are found in (or are at ease with) such spaces[40] are then labelled as threat for a civilised society. Whitehouse (1912, cited in Boyden, 2015) writing about children on streets mention,

> The evidence is…clear and widespread as to the evils resulting to children and young people through trading in the streets…The chief of these are the physical injury sustained by children through standing out on streets in all weathers, often insufficiently clothed; the moral injury following upon a life on the streets, which in case of girls generally means their ruin, and in the case of boys rapidly leads to gambling and crime. At the best it unfits those who engage in it for any regular work in life. Fresh from school, and in many cases before they have left school, they enter upon a wild, undisciplined life, and suffer both mental and moral degradation. (p. 191)

This idea that streets are an unsafe zone stems from northern European conception, Boyden (2015) writes, "in northern Europe street life especially in the poor districts was equated with a criminal sub-culture whereas in the Mediterranean countries the street was crucial to a variety of social and commercial activities" (p. 192). This distinction between public and private realm was made by the lifestyle of the urban rich, as Low (2001) mentioned that the fear of crime in public spaces has resulted in more preference for gated-communities. With respect to children such a lifestyle and restricted living results in creating a new normal where un-freedom or rather growing up in restriction is normalised.

In the regulated environment, a sacred (schooled) child then takes birth. This sacred-child is safeguarded from the evil of the outside world and is socialised in a carefully protected environment as opposed to street children who have freedom to explore the public

[40] Children who work as vendors or street traders or generally found loitering in streets.

realm on their own. A sacred child might not play on the streets in the same unregulated and free way as the street children use the space. Instead the sacred child is confined into designated play areas- in schools, in sports academies, restricted with designated play-timings[41]. Class distinction lies at the very heart of this street and sacred binary. The sacred child is supposed to be at school and away from the street. As Mayall (1994) puts it "the child is dealt with as a project to be acted upon" (p. 125). Through education, this sacred child then is acted upon with an aim to turn into an ideal citizen. Such an understanding is also part of Indian structural adjustment programs (SAP) where the westernised notion of children and childhood is replicated in Indian context without giving the due importance to the social cultural contexts of Indian children and their varied childhoods. The strategy of compulsory education as the core policy initiative to end child labour, Raman (2000) writes "alters the complex social matrix within which child labour is embedded, reproduced and sustained" (p. 4058). The stagnation of agriculture and handicrafts, disappearing traditional livelihoods of people and increasing commercialisation of the economy, are actually pushing the families dependent on informal economy into forced labour and children are equally impacted.

The idea that children need to be protected, guarded also gets deepened due to the increasing crime rate. Kitzinger (1997, cited in Wyness, 2012) mentions that "sexually abused children are depicted as innocent and as victims. With the abuse their innocence is being taken away and such images then heightens up the protectionist impulse amongst adult population" (p. 21) thereby, resulting in the sacred child. Such instances then instil fear in parents as well with respect to deep distrust of strangers, in vicinity with children[42].

With respect to the discourses around schooling and the modernist conception of childhood, Hendrick (1997, cited in Wyness, 2012) mentioned that, "the control, the morality which came from school, produced a dominant image of 'schooled child'" (p. 22). He further

[41] As discussed in chapter 3 and 4.
[42] As discussed in chapter 3- Stranger Danger Syndrome.

writes that, "the schooled child image has developed from 'delinquent child'- the product of earlier period" (p.22), leading to disciplining and regulation of children in the later phases. The relationship between schooling and childhood can be traced at a global level, Wyness (2012) writes that the international community has focussed attention on the plight of children around the world ensuring "right to free and universal schooling" (p. 156). Carlen et al. (1992, cited in Mayall, 1994a) writes, "absenting oneself from school has through the operation of welfare and police agencies been criminalized; truancy equals delinquency" (p. 5). Such a depiction demonstrates that the sight of a child on his/her own, out and about, is increasingly likely to invoke adult suspicion arising a series of questioning- why aren't you in school/with your Mum/at home? and thereby adding value to the sacred (Schooled) child and condemning street child. The *schooled child* image imposed upon Global South, is so strongly registered that even during the COVID-19 pandemic, during the mandatory lockdown schools reconfigured and continued in online mode; without even having to work out the e-infrastructure first especially for the children from underprivileged sections.

2.8.3 Innocent and Shy as Outdated; Clever, Smart and Independent as New Call for Children

Children's lives and their relative roles of being productive (economically or otherwise) are explored by Zelizer (1994) locating it in various time periods. Lives of children are characterised by a range of appropriate contexts, experiences, relationships and behaviours namely properly loved children regardless of social class, children belonging to the domesticated sphere which is often a non-productive world of lessons, games and pocket money. Scheper-Hughes (1989, cited in Boyden, 2015) writes,

> [I]nstrumental value of children – as an extra earning individual has been largely replaced by the 'expressive value' of being innocent, important for family and so on.

> Children have become 'worthless (economically) to their parents but priceless in terms of their psychological worth. (p. 189)

Children and their taken for granted association with innocence, must also be explored and understood within the social-constructionist framework. "Innocence connotes irresponsibility" (Wyness, 2012, p. 13) by associating innocence with children and childhood, children then are considered as immature and incomplete members of society who need to be under constant adult regulation and attention. Christensen (2000, cited in Viruru, 2008) argues that the discourse of innocence pivots around the "idea of vulnerability" (p. 226), children being considered as biologically (smaller in size and age), socially (lacking social skills with respect to adults) vulnerable which later gets translated into their structural vulnerability at the level of society.

Kumar (2016) elaborates that the idea of protection and innocence were a resultant of European history. This idea of protection with its two facets were mentioned as –"physical protection of children from induction into work and other is protection of children from the knowledge of sexual good and evil, from the social practice of sexuality." (p. 13)
Capturing the change in children's characteristic image, Ranganathan (2000) mentions that, "the adjectives that used to describe children two decades ago were innocent, joyful, pure, happy, bubbling, enthusiastic, now to large extent have been replaced by fretful, troubled, pressured, anxious, destructive, hyperactive, cheeky" (p. 216). In the neo-liberal times, innocence is now equated with dumbness whereas being clever, smart, to be able to handle oneself is the new idea which is to be strived for children. With various institutionalised programmes and with technology emerging- claiming to make children independent, children are supposed to become adult-like as soon as possible.

2.8.4 Consumer Child

Figure 15: *Representative image of consumer child. (Source: Buckingham, 2011).*

Specifying the intruding role of the market in children's lives, Buckingham (2011) writes, "from the moment they are born, children today are already consumers" (p. 5). Market addresses children directly as consumers by different kinds of media advertising- numerous cartoon and child-targeted programs on TV, gaming and so on (Wyness, 2012). Children's consumption is embedded in wider social networks where consumption is not just about purchasing of goods but is also about the ways in which they are used, appropriated and adapted, both individually and collectively. Also, consumption subsumes both goods and services. "Studying children's consumption'' writes Buckingham (2011),

> ...means looking not only at advertising and marketing, but also at the many other ways in which commercial forces and market relations affect children's environment and their social and cultural experiences…it is not just about toys or clothes or food, but also about media, about leisure and about education. Ultimately, it is not just about objects or commodities, but also about social meanings and pleasures. (p. 2)

Holding a macro view, mentioning about the consumer culture, Buckingham (2011) mentions the "culture is a complex and loaded term which implies how meanings are created within a given social context and in consumption as means of communicating or signifying meaning" (p. 2). As wearing Adidas or Nike shoes to play holds meaning for the child (example explained in the sections above) where the child is demanding a new pair of branded shoes on his selection in the cricket team reveals the consumer culture- which the child as well as his parents are part of. Children are increasingly conscious about the designer labels, fashion trends in order to follow a particular lifestyle. Their identities are "increasingly influenced by their consumer status" (Wyness, 2012, p. 69). Flourishing toy industry is resulting in children proudly owning hammley's toys, hot wheels cars, barbie doll and thereby attaching to and exhibiting their consumer status. Children and youth are fertile ground for market activity. There is an ongoing debate about the relationship between childhood and consumerism, along with numerous public concerns about the way market and consumerism exploits children.

Williams (2006, cited in Wyness, 2012) reiterates that consumerism allows corporations to "exploit children's emotional vulnerabilities to sell their products" (p. 195). *The Commodification of Childhood* by Cook (2004) charts out the historical patterns in trade journals which shows how the image of the consuming child was materialised by creating separate children's clothing segmented by age and gender gradation. Gary Cross (1997, cited in Corsaro 2018, p. 151) in his book *Kids' Stuff* presented a historical account of the marketing of toys. He notes that, "until the end of the 19th century, parents gave children few toys…this pattern changed over with the idea of toys as a part of children's own material culture" (p. 151). Later on big giants toy companies like Mattel and Hasbro marketed directly for children which included various strategies like advertising toys on television, cartoon programmes and related merchandise. These advertisements directly impacted children by

providing a script on how to play, which all toys to play with and so on. Cross (1997, cited in Corsaro, 2018) argued that these toy companies, "by early 1980s turned toys characters into cartoon TV programs of half to an hour commercials" (p. 151), featuring toys as cartoon characters. Such a marketing strategy is now expanding its reach where toys are linked to films, fast-food chains (Mc Donald's, pizza etc.) which provide toys like hot wheels, barbie dolls, action heroes, pokemon cards as part of their happy meal services.

Toys are perceived as an asset and identity/ confidence booster. Pugh (2009, cited in Corsaro, 2018) in her work *Longing and Belonging: Parents, Children, and Consumer Culture*, shows how children participate into "economics of dignity" (p. 153). This economy that children develop has various norms and rules to it, which include having visits to specific amusement parks, owning the specific set of dolls and brat toys, pokemon cards and so on. Having or not having such experience or assets then decide a child's membership into a specific peer-group. Getting a specific amount of pocket-money, to be able to make their own purchase of toys, clothes, video games is also part of such economies of children. Also, "spending on the opportunities that shape children's trajectories' is being termed as 'pathway consumption" by Pugh (2009, cited in Corsaro, 2018, p. 154). Having private lessons of dance, singing, organising for summer camps or for that matter changing residence to be in a neighbourhood with a better school are some of the strategies put in place by parents. Such aspirations and consumption strategies though are present in lower class parents as well but often get blocked by limited resources.

Don Slater (1997, in Buckingham, 2011) puts it, "consumer culture denotes a social arrangement in which the relation between lived culture and social resources, between meaningful ways of life and the symbolic and material resources on which they depend, is mediated through markets"(p. 2). Buckingham (2011) places children, childhood and consumer culture in a macro-sociological frame saying, social relationships fabricate and

mediate consumer culture and in turn the consumer culture too "gets shaped by the nature and meanings of social relationships"(p. 3). Another example reveals (school) education as part of such consumer culture, where children with a class specific understanding have classified themselves on the basis of their association with a particular kind of school in a distinct yet disrespectful manner. In a particular such instance, children at DDA flats Munirka made fun of a child of their group, when asked about which school he goes to. Mockingly children said *"ye na KV mein jata hai"* (he goes to KV[43]). And everybody laughed at the child. Being enrolled at KV (reputed central government school) and not at any other private yet branded international schools like Heritage, G.D. Goenka, K R Mangalam etc. bespeaks of class specific understanding of children which they associate with specific school's status. Such instances reveal how social relationships between children of different socio-economic classes and residential locations varies, where by their enrolment in a particular school, by wearing a different set of clothing or pair of shoes on play-ground would determine their relations to each other.

Consumption, in the end, is part of the lived experience of capitalism and children play an equal part in consumption- as members of a particular society.

2.8.5 Cyber Child: Loss of Innocence

Children are accessing technologies across classes with ease. The image of a child- to be able to use rather being well-versed in handling technology is emerging. Children right from early preschool years are taught and given exposure to handle tabs (Sharma, 2015). Also, living in the family setting with access to smartphones and resources makes it accessible easily to children across classes[44]. Referring to modern telecommunication, Kumar (2006) mentions,

[43] Kendriya Vidyalaya also known as KV are reputed central government schools which are known for their fair performance and reputation amongst other kinds of government schools in India.

[44] It has been already shared that with JIO smartphones children from Coolie Camp and Motilal Nehru Camp are also at ease in handling the internet and have easy access to YouTube and other sites. Children across classes thereby have access to the unregulated internet which they use to download games and play. Also, some children have their dedicated accounts of face-book and are a regular user of YouTube as well.

"(it) mark a radical increase in speed, quantum and nature of long-distance communications. Its social and cultural implications are complex and generative" (p. 4030). Young children's friendship networks are based around computer games (Wyness, 2012, p. 191). It was registered during fieldwork that certain games and programs are labelled as *baccho ki game* (children's game to show its simplicity) by children whereas claiming the channels and programs that adults watch was seen in a way asserting adult status by children.

Figure 16: *Children engrossed in technology: Representative picture of cyber-child from the field. Pictures clicked in the winters of 2018.*

While technologies allow children to build their social networks, it also generates a "potent conception of children as agents" (Lee, 2001, as cited in Wyness, 2012, p. 192) consuming technologies in the form of entertainment, video games and so on.

Lindstrom (2004) defines the children of 8-14 age group as tweens- a digital generation born with mouse in their hands and speaking a new language called Tweenspeak. Tween-ager, according to Lindstrom (2004) have, "grown up faster, are more connected, more direct and informed" (p. 1). He further elaborates saying,

> [T]he steady diet of information, available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Through a whole variety of channels, is playing a major role in shaping this new generation…this is the first generation born with a mouse in their hands and a computer screen as their window on the world. Tweens understood icons before they could read. (p. 1)

The communication between children has taken up new forms. Now they communicate saying- "visit me at my homepage, let's talk- come to Whatsapp" (Lindstrom, 2004, p. 7). Their day to day communication has arrived at a new level with the options of chat rooms, video games and smartphones. "Chatting", according to Lindstrom (2004) is the "preferred way" (p. 9) to meet and greet people now.

Postman (1982, cited in Wyness, 2012) describes how in the second half of the 20th century with the increasing influence of media and technology, the moral and cultural boundaries between child and adult started blurring. This phase he describes as "fall of childhood" (p. 19). The immediacy and easy availability of television (and Internet technologies) has in a way undercut the sequential and adult-regulated process of parenting towards children. Now children are also exposed to the same images, ideas and risks as their parents are. Earlier discourses of innocence, vulnerability, dependency with respect to children thereby are now not applicable. With the loss of innocence which is diluting the

adult child binary, Jenks (1996, cited in Wyness, 2012) mentions the gap between the conception of ideal childhood and children's experience in post-modern societies through the idea of nostalgia, "the child becomes a longing for times past." (p. 59)

Corsaro (2005, cited in Wyness, 2012) in this regard mentions, "kids seems to have less time to be kids" (p. 11), referring to the weakening of time, space and opportunities to play on their own. With respect to social geography, age, gender and availability of other resources say the internet has in a way changed children's lifestyle. Wyness (2012) writes, "television, video-games and the computer become electronic baby-sitters: parents offer them as one way of keeping their children close and occupied, as a means of regulating their leisure time" (p. 115). But such technological dependency in a way narrows the gap between child and adult as the world of the internet introduces children to the world of adults without any filter, also potentially putting them in contact with "strangers" (Facer et al., 2001, cited in Wyness, 2012, p. 115). With video games depicting war-zones and with obscene images flooding on the internet, children come in contact with the adult world which affects them and thereby challenging the innocence model of childhood and disrupting boundaries between childhood and adulthood. Ranganathan (2000), mentions about disconcerting trend whereby children have got access to internet and they are "exposed to pornography" (p. 215), has been an alarmingly negative impact on children. Rather than counterpoising culture and nature and establishing supremacy of one image over another, we must strive to come out from the new orthodoxy established by modern childhood. Prout (2000, cited in Wyness, 2012), locates children's bodies next to their dominant discourses and writes that,

> [T]he discursive and material world that are part of a more complex assemblage of things which constituted social world, children's vulnerability with respect to their age and social status are significant along with the multitude of practices and objects constituting children's worlds and adult's understanding of childhoods. (p. 24)

Kumar (2016) also highlighting the overpowering nature of technology, has mentioned that,

> [B]efore childhood could develop as a social category, with political recognition a new unknown world has overtaken (it)…the world of information and communication technology has knocked down the boundaries within which Europe had tried to protect childhood…the new technological environment blurs boundaries- between nation states, regions, cultures, and between ages. Children can now directly accessed and inducted into a global community of consumer-citizens. All aspects of childhood, including play, are covered by this new community which is managed by global conglomerates who design video games, toys and social media sites for children. (p. 14)

Within such a scenario the traditional role of parents and guardians as protector is limited and it is impossible to set contours of knowledge when children have access to and are flooded with endless things through Information and Communication Technologies (ICT). Now children are no more citizens in making rather have acquired an active place of consumer-citizen in the global market much before acquiring the legal citizenship of the nation. The new market oriented consumer geographies of child's sphere now makes older notions of protection and guidance meaningless.

Exposure to technology is a double edged weapon which must be balanced with parental guidance. Over indulgence at times does harm to children and youngsters. With severe addiction and occasional violence, at times unsupervised indulgence into technology takes bad shape. Bhardwaj (2012) also reports such a violent attack where a student attacked his classmate over posting pictures on a social networking site. Concerning the same, Broota (in Bhardwaj, 2012) mentions, "laptops and phones have become the new family members for children…the child feels more close to gadgets as they get all answers they need through them" (para. 3). Kulkarni (2018) mentions about Service for Healthy Use of Technology

(SHUT) at National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences, Bengaluru (NIMHANS) which is a de-addiction centre, working with patients (mostly teen agers and youngsters) having chronic addiction of mobile and gaming. Mekaad (2019) also reported severe addiction which at the end resulted in the death of a 16 year old boy. The boy who was a swimmer and otherwise physically healthy, suddenly collapsed after getting agitated at losing the game (PUBG[45]) and died eventually of cardiac arrest. Such an unregulated and unsupervised indulgence into technology is an important concern which is to be taken care off. But, on the contrary, such digital indulgences are on the rise and have gone high during the COVID-19 lockdown period (discussed in chapter 3).

The role of parents here becomes important. We know that it is parents or other caregivers of the family who take decisions on behalf of and for children which later shapes children's childhood. The following section deals with such parenting strategies which are at the very basis of shaping children and their childhoods in a particular manner- usually considered as *normal* according to parents.

2.9 Tailoring Childhoods: Role of Parenting in Construction of Childhood

This section deals with the role of parenting in shaping childhood. It addresses the fact that how parents in a way regulate, direct children and thereby shape their childhood experiences. The choice of residential locality, school, food that children eat, would children be going for sports coaching? What kind of clothes would children wear? How and where would they spend their vacations? With whom to play, when and where to play?-appear very basic rather mundane things that often are decided by parents for their children. Like *global childhood*, normative parenting practices have also been percolated down to third world and thereby leading to changing parenting strategies.

[45] Player Unknown's Battlegrounds (PUBG) is an online multiplayer battle royale game developed and published by PUBG Corporation, a subsidiary of South Korean video game company Bluehole. Released in 2017, the game received notable attention in the year 2018 onwards and became popular amongst children and youth in India as well (further details in chapter 3).

When we establish children as social actors, we must be aware that absolute freedom and agency is not granted to children as similar to other social actors as adults. Children stand as "actors, negotiators and acted-upon" (Mayall, 1994, p. 116b). With agency there is an interplay of structures as well – the social structures that serve the adult and marginalises the child. Interaction between children and adults must be viewed as "transactions of power-relationships" (Mayall, 1994, p. 116b). Also, their agency and structure interplay in terms of powers to act in any given social situation with respect to adults varies according to how the adults in specific social settings conceptualise children and childhood. In this very structure, children and their parents' relation get established. Across many societies and in Indian society as well, the majority of the decisions on behalf of children are taken by adults-parents, guardians and well-wishers. Children seldom find the freedom to take control of their lives and to make decisions for themselves. The very act of parenting also decides and shapes childhood. Also, like childhood models, under the influence of global policies and marketing strategies, the very act of parenting is also directed universally.

Shorter (1976), argues that *good mothering* is an invention of modernisation, where "traditionally children were treated with indifference, it is the modern time period of the twentieth century which gave the dominant status to child in public discourse and focussed on welfare of children" (p. 170). Anderson (1980) terms this *sentiments approach* where the shift in sentiment towards children was traced historically from indifference or neutrality to high valuation. In urban areas, Qvortrup (1985, cited in Boyden, 2015) reasons that the extended family fell into decline and the smaller nuclear families emerged as the predominant household form within which child-rearing was central. Conformity to child rearing has reached a point in the modern industrialised world that parents are condemned for allowing their child to miss school and parents whose children work are "accused of exploiting them as a commodity" (p. 190). The family in the 20th century can this way be identified as child

centred which focuses on the child's emotional state and welfare which was not recognised previously. With childhood, then good mothering is also a modern construct, which got developed with the discourses around proper *child-care*. Child-rearing practices changed over a period of time. Wyness (2012) writes,

> [W]omen started to attach themselves to their babies through breast-feeding…these sentiments then gradually percolated down to working class women…women, then over time had to learn how to be good mothers and in the process became aware of children as separate entities in need of love, protection and separate treatment. (p. 18)

The construction of childhood and motherhood/ parenting is very much enmeshed and linked. Intensive mothering expectations (IME) as shared by Vincent (2010) through discursive ideology leads to formulating a particular set of practices and outlook which is treated as standard. Parenting practices can also be seen as *class-specific* behaviour where in different actions and strategies of rearing children and taking day to day decisions are based on the very class-locations of the family (parents). Hays (1996, cited in Vincent, 2010) mentions that, "intensive-mothering is an expert- guided and child-centered, emotionally absorbing, labour intensive, financially expensive ideology in which mothers are primarily responsible for the nurture and development of the 'sacred' child" (p. 110). Mothers in paid employment are expected to meet differing demands – both of their respective workplace as well as of home (their children) by striving their best and doing best for their children.

It was also registered during the fieldwork that mothers with young children have taken up *work from home*. A mother from Coolie Camp mentioned that she earlier used to go as domestic help whereas now that she has four children and the youngest one still very young (few months old) the mother to support her family economically has taken up sewing and tailoring work with additional sewing work in the camp independently. She prioritising her child's growing up years has mentioned that she prefers to work from home wherein she

can now devote more time to her children. Mentioning about parenting strategies of the working-class, Lareau (2002, cited in Vincent, 2010) mentions that, "…parents believe that as long as they provide love, food and safety…they do not focus on developing special talents'" (p. 114). She further mentions that such a parenting style provides children "opportunities for unsupervised, unstructured play" (p. 114), which is difficult in the case of intensive mothering where in the name of protected and dedicated parenting, opportunities of freedom are curtailed[46]. Similar stories could be found from relatively well-off localities. Another mother from DDA flats Munirka shared that she used to work as teacher with a reputed school in Vasant Kunj, but since her ailing in-laws are there and her son- who has just joined the school, after his birth she had to left her job and prioritise her motherhood. Regardless of *class-locations* here we can see that in both the cases motherhood is considered as superior and even job and career oriented women have prioritised their motherhood. However, their mothering or parenting practices may appear similar but are very much informed with their class locations. Another mother form DDA flats Munirka shared that,

> *no doubt apko money crunch rehta hai, but aap baccho ko time de paate ho - dusre ka bacha koi apna samajh ke nahi paalta ab inko school drop karna pick karna is my responsibility…now (ahead of vacations) we are planning to send him (her son) for cricket academy also* (no doubt you may face resource/ money crunch but you can give time to your children- nobody takes care other's child as one's own child, to drop them to school pick them up from school is all my responsibility, now ahead of vacations we are planning to send my son to cricket academy).

The mother shared that though at times she faces shortage of money; but at least she is able to give more time to her child and thereby she feels that is able to balance out the monetary demand replaced by the time and attention she is able to provide to her child. Also,

[46] As discussed in chapter 4 also.

she further adds that she is planning to send her child for cricket coaching as an additional training to him during summer vacations. The mother further shared, "*khaali idhar udhr ghumenge TV mein lage rahenge, training leke khelenge to aage team mein to ja sakte hain, aur fir routine bhi bani rahegi* "(they will roam here and there, otherwise would stick to TV, if they take training and then play they might get selected further in team and this would help them in maintaining routine as well). Preferring the sports training for her son, the mother asserted that it would help the child in learning nuances of the specific game under proper training and might further get selected into (school's) team. Otherwise the child would just pass his time in doing random things, in roaming around, going to relatives or watching TV. Also, the membership with cricket coaching would help the child in maintaining the *routine*, which generally gets compromised during vacations. It is evident that this mother, through her parenting strategy by choosing what is best for her child, is deciding rather actively preparing for the child's upcoming summer-vacations. Children left without any perceived work or routine might go *idhr-udhr* (here and there) to maybe relatives or neighbours in their free-time which possibly would not fetch any additional learning to children and thereby wasting the crucial vacation time. Therefore this mother with her strong preference towards organised sports wanted her child to utilise his vacation productively in structured and routinised manner.

An employed mother of a teenage boy from Vasant Kunj DDA shared about her dilemma as a working mother. She shared,

> *Maine to abhi do saal pehle join kia hai kaam, mujhe aisa lagta tha main apne bacche ko chhod kar kaam kr rhi hu jaise ki gunaah kar rahi hu. I literally cried initially for15 days that I left my kid only for job. Lekin maine jabse bacche ko chhoda hai na uski padhai disturb hui hai. pehle wo mere under rehta tha kaam karta tha uski padhai sahi chal rhi thi. Jabse maine isko chhoda hai wo down gaya hai…bohot zada*

down gaya hai. To usme mere upar ye burden aa raha hai ki aap job chhod do..ab next year ye 10th mein ho jayega..isko dekho"(I have joined this job 2 years ago, I used to feel guilty and even cried about leaving my son and going to work. It is true that since I have left him to study independently (not provided much attention), his academic performance has got affected. Now I am again being asked to leave the job as he would be in his 10th class next year and his studies must be given priority)

Here we can sense that along with the responsibility of the child, his academic performance, this mother is also trapped in a dilemma whether to continue or not her work. Being a mother she considers herself guilty of leaving her child, not providing him with *proper* attention.

Another mother from Vasant Kunj who is not employed, has two children – one is school going, 8 years old and another baby girl who is around 2 years old. With pride, she shared that their family has two maids- one exclusively for children- who takes care of their pick and drop from school, their day to day routine and needs and the other maid takes care of the household (cleaning and dusting responsibility). This mother explained, "with young children, you need extra help and I being alone most of the times [since her husband has to travel a lot for his work] a full-time maid is the basic requirement". Here we can see how the resource of an *additional help* and a full-time maid cum caretaker for children is used by this mother in order to provide carefully tailored and safely guarded childhood.

Mayall (1994b) mentions that, " (though) children undoubtedly view themselves and may be viewed as actors…, their ability to negotiate an acceptable daily experience is heavily dependent on the adults' understandings of childhood and of appropriate activities by and for children (across various settings)" (p. 114). This conditioning and control over children's lives by adults stems from the long and continuing tradition that children are viewed as becoming rather than being. Durkheim (1956) ties up the understanding of children and

childhood with respect to psychological insights while mentioning about the functions and goals of education. Durkheim (1956) notes,

> Education is the influence exercised by adult generations on those that are not yet ready for social life. Its object is to arouse and develop in the child a certain number of physical, intellectual and moral stages, which are demanded of him by both political society as a whole and the social milieu for which he is specially destined. (p. 71)

This understanding of the child- who needs to be socialised thereby grants the authority to teachers and adults over children. Various social settings where children spend their time are controlled and conditioned by adults. Children's play is controlled by parents in the kinds of toys they buy, over what kind of play environment they would play, with whom they would play and so on. Children are not left unsupervised to play[47]. With respect to class specific parenting choices, Savage (2005, cited in Vincent, 2010) mentions that class is ubiquitous referring to its "everywhere and nowhere quality" (p. 113). Parenting though regarded as a personal, intuitive experience, according to Vincent (2010), is also deeply infused with class and consumer behaviours. In the study of food preferences towards children, Goodman and Du Puis (2002, Vincent, 2010) describes "organic food as a 'middle class privilege- a class diet'" (p. 113). Such class specific, cultural logics of child-rearing can be understood by concerted cultivation as identified by Lareau (2011). Concerted cultivation can be understood as a set of (class) specific nature of practices that informs the rhythms of family life like enrolment of children into age-specific, organised activities say sport, music, cooking, pottery, crafts, buying in goods and services- that are perceived as necessary(Elkind, 2009, 2010; Lareau, 2011; Manne 2005, Sen. 2014a; Vincent et al., 2008; Vincent, 2010). "Taste classifies and it classifies the classifier. Social subjects classified by the classification

[47] As discussed in chapter 3 and 4.

distinguish themselves by the distinctions they make, between the beautiful and the ugly, the distinguished and the vulgar" argues Bourdieu (1984, p. 6). Here in the context of parenting, children also learn such tastes and ways of living by growing up in a *class-specific* manner.

But despite such a protective and indulged parenting still it is difficult to protect children. Increasing information and communication tools along with newer technologies and gadgets, exposure to children has increased multi-fold, which is difficult to regulate for any parent. Kumar (2006) mentions that,

> By pitting the adult as parent against a vast and varied army of anchors, jockeys and stars, the new global media hit at the adult-child bond in the nuclear family, already weakened by isolation from a community it might have been a part of, at least notionally. (p. 4033)

Also, in the presence of *n* number of parenting experts and the whole parenting industry flourishing, and the nuclear settings of families are in a way making parents also vulnerable. Balagopalan (2002) writes,

> Third world childhoods are usually divided into those of urban middle-class children, in whose lives the influence of western forms of childhoods is evident and the childhoods of poor which are relatively less affected by these western material and cultural forms. (p. 21)

Indian child- is at the intersection of anthropology, history and current politics. Social matrix in which a child is embedded- as a member of a family, community, extended kin group, of a particular caste, class, religion, gender, all have a bearing upon the lives of children. Life chances and opportunities or say restrictions are all determined by the very social contexts of children. "Nutritional status of children", Raman (2000) demonstrates "cannot be seen in isolation from the nutritional status of the family" (p. 4063). Direct lifting of (international) policies which are based on western notions of childhood, totally divorced

from Indian contextual explications, got adopted through adoption of Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) have only made Indian children "more vulnerable" (Raman 2000, p. 4064). The dilemmas and agony of non-western societies are more complex with the accelerated pace of social change in the face of unbalanced globalisation and ever widening social divides of class and cultural differences. It is important to acknowledge that with the influential and powerful section of the Indian middle class which also subscribes to the increasingly modern and globalised views of all pervasive universal childhood, it is all the more important responsibility to foreground and read children's lives in context of their social and cultural locations and foreground the ongoing tensions.

Amidst these multiplicities we must be aware that in Indian context, if we are attempting to read childhoods, we must then approach it in all its located-ness with respect to class, caste, gender, religion and so on, along with tracing it in the backdrop of macro-changes like globalisation, urbanisation, migration and flattening impact of *consumer culture*.

Chapter 3

Cityscapes and Children's Geographies of Play:

Spatial Description of Selected Localities with respect to Children's Play

"A whole history remains to be written of spaces- which would at the same time be the history of powers."

Foucault (Power/Knowledge 1980, p. 148)

Space is fundamental to any form of community life. Social location and social category as per hierarchy become visible in the very space that an individual inhabits. Space is not a static container in which events occur in a linear fashion. Rather it is a multidimensional entity in which events occur in a web of relationships. A *space* is socially constructed and constituted (Lefebvre, 1991). The structuration of a specific space influences the experience of people inhabiting that particular space. "Radical approaches to geography", as Valentine (2004) mentions have begun to "recognise space as the product of social forces, observing that different societies use and organise space in different ways…through which social differences become spatial patterns of inequalities" (p. 8). Therefore, space is very much an alive entity which transforms and in turn gets transformed through social interaction. Looking at the city from this perspective, the city too can be understood as a space that is produced together with the interplay of geography and human experience. Cities are very much a socio-cultural and emotional landscape along with its geography. A careful observation of spatial organisation of the selected localities including parks, market and residential enclaves reveals an interlinked web of social, economic and political strategies in place. The control and division of any space, according to Foucault (1980) becomes an apparatus of disciplining and surveillance. With respect to children's play and organisation of

people into the specific localities informs us about the underlying principles of disciplining and surveillance, explored further in this chapter.

The spatial location of the selected localities, parks and other significant places (of children) are shown in the map below:

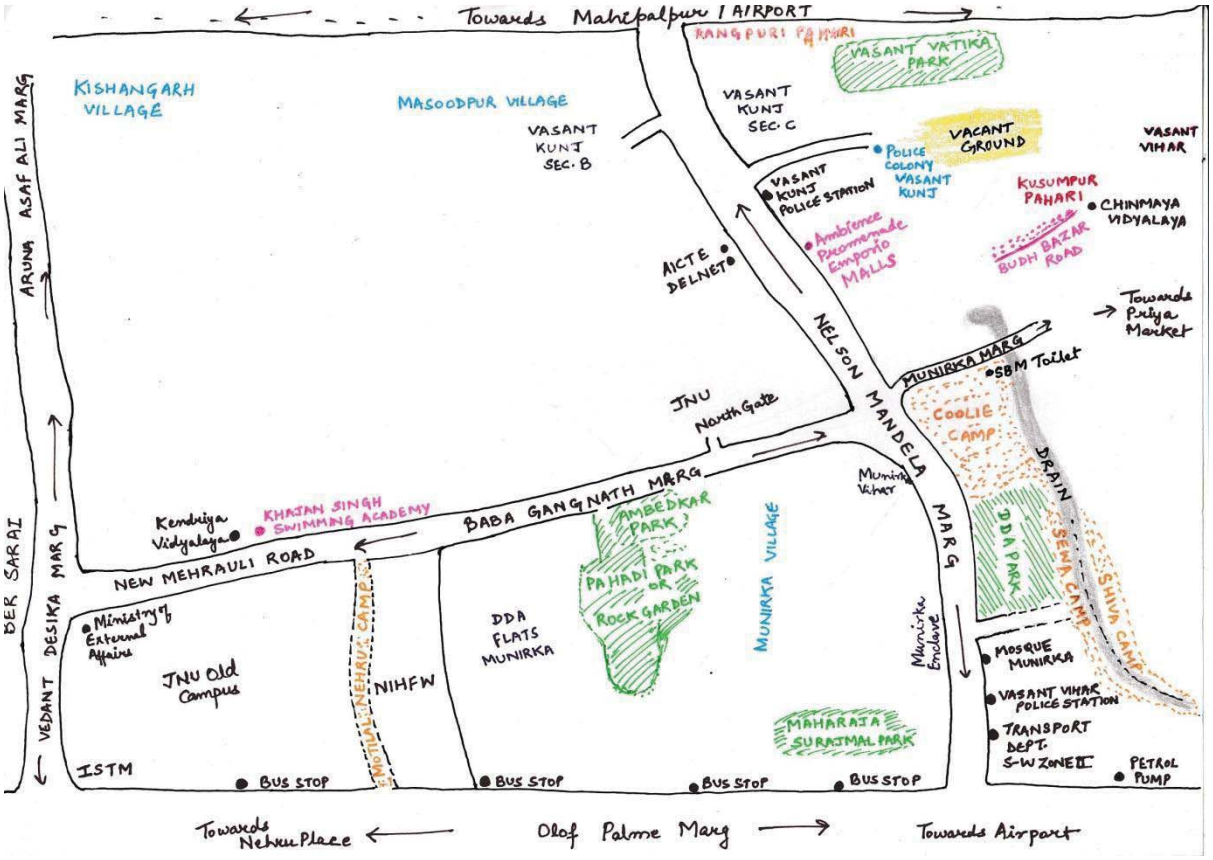

Figure 17: *Simplified map of the field showing spatial location of the selected localities and the neighbourhood.*

To demarcate the status of different spaces, the map follows a colour coding scheme. As the map shows, the slum settlements like Coolie Camp, Sewa Camp, Shiva Camp and Motilal Nehru Camp are shown in orange colour as these are not recognised by the government. But Kusumpur Pahari, which is also a slum, is shown in red colour as it is a recognised slum by the government. Amongst these slum settlements also, there exists a distinct kind of hierarchy on the basis of location, recognition status and with respect to facilities available. For example: despite the recognised status of Kusumpur Pahari, the residents of Coolie Camp treat themselves and their residential location as better, since they

have occupied the prime location on the main road *"hamara to yaha road pe hai, wo to andar jake hai, waha paani bhi nahi pohochta unchi jagah pe hain na"* (our [residence] is at the main road [Nelson Mandela Road], that [Kusumpur] is located much inside and as it is located at height, so they face water issues as well). Also, now as the Vasant Vihar metro station is located at walking distance from Coolie Camp, the residents are better placed in terms of connectivity than the residents of Kusumpur. Similarly, in the Munirka region- three distinct sets of gated residential spaces marked distinctly, namely- Munirka Enclave, Munirka Vihar and DDA flats Munirka apart from Munirka Village. Amongst these, Munirka Enclave is considered to be high security and preferred residential zone over Munirka Vihar followed by DDA flats Munirka, as the latter two are easily accessible to residents of Munirka village and general public. But on the other side, the residents of Munirka village in a way treat these gated colonies as new entrants in their traditionally held land which was acquired by DDA and developed later on. Such contestations are registered in Vasant Kunj as well from the residents of adjoining villages Kishangarh, Masoodpur as shown in blue colour, Vasant Kunj Police Colony as well as Rangpuri Pahari (slum) shown in orange colour. Vasant Kunj Police Colony represents an interesting case in the region where the residents of police colony are not the owners and have got the accommodation by being in police service, but "are considered and treated below by the owner residents of Vasant Kunj", as shared by one of the respondent (resident of Police Colony).

Parks- Ambedkar Park, Rock Garden (or Pahadi Park), Maharaja Surajmal Park, DDA Park, Vasant Vatika Park- as shown in green colour in the map are the preferred areas which children frequently visit for their play and leisure activities. Apart from these, the green patches (smaller parks) within the DDA flats Munirka and at Vasant Kunj also served as play space for children with often playing in the lanes and by-lanes right in front of their home. The vacant ground depicted in the yellow patch in the map, adjacent to Vasant Kunj police

colony is one of the playground size vacant spaces available in vicinity of Vasant Kunj sector B and C. But as it is a sandy ground, is not preferred by children as their potential play space.

The places like Budh Bazar, Khajan Singh Swimming Academy and Shopping Malls as shown in pink colour in the map can be considered as the overlapping yet buffer zones where the residents of the selected localities get to visit (and meet). *Budh bazar* (Wednesday weekly market) being the weekly affair caters to the residents of Coolie Camp, Vasant Vihar and Munirka Vihar. Khajan Singh Swimming Academy acts as the favourite and in budget sports destination for many children from DDA flats Munirka (and Munirka Vihar, Munirka Village) and Vasant Kunj DDA, whereas the shopping malls are the frequently visited shopping and family get-together (and for parties) destination by the Vasant Kunj (and Vasant Vihar) residents and by DDA flats Munirka residents.

In this neighbourhood of DDA flats Munirka, Coolie Camp and Vasant Kunj, within a walking distance of a few meters (and kilometres), one could register stark differences with respect to the purchasing power, the lifestyle and nature of housing of the residents. The selected neighbourhood presents an entangled urban reality which is separated by *class ceilings* but is united by the aspirations of the residents of all the three localities- the aspirations to achieve better. The same is experienced by children and is evident in the choices that children make on a day to day basis with respect to their play and leisure activities.

Amongst the three selected localities Vasant Kunj DDA, DDA flats Munirka and Coolie-Camp, the existence of *Coolie- Camp* and its expansion over a period of time in a way presents an interesting case. Flourishing amidst the posh localities namely Vasant Vihar, Vasant Kunj, R.K. Puram and Munirka, the residents of Coolie-Camp are in a riddled up relationship with their (geographical) neighbours. Serving as domestic-help, driver, labourers in the adjoining localities these people are in a way needed, but since they are residing in the

slum which is allegedly occupying the *prime-location* of the city, are hated for illegally capturing the geographical space. Residents of Vasant Kunj and Vasant Vihar- where after paying crores of rupees could claim an apartment in the prime-location, the residents of Coolie-Camp *collectively* are occupying the on-road site (at the main Nelson Mandela Marg), belonging to DDA "worth of 200 crores"(Ghosh, 2009, para. 1), makes their relationship more envious towards each-other. Existence of slums (Coolie-Camp, Kusumpur, Sewa Camp, Shiva Camp, Motilal Nehru Camp) and villages adjoining to the DDA localities- Vasant Kunj and Munirka, have made the residents of DDA all the more concerned about their *security*. For *security*, DDA residents are ready to shell out any amount of money- be it for stationing security guards, installing barbed wire boundaries and gates in the locality, installing CCTV to keep *anti-social elements* away from their residential zone. *Security* was registered as one of the main reasons why children also do not like to go out and play, the same is also not encouraged by parents as well. The envious relationship between the privileged and under-privileged class is clearly evident when children from adjoining slums and villages visit parks of Vasant Kunj, are being called out and yelled at (explained further in this chapter). Works on gated communities and respective safety security debates (Low, 2001, 2003, 2017; Low & Smith 2006; Low et al., 2009) reminds us in strong words that a (boundary) wall or gate erected in order to protect oneself, tells us every moment that there are *dangerous* people outside this boundary who want to destroy us, and thereby instilling multi-fold fear with respect to unknown or stranger. Similar contestations were also pointed by Srivastava (2015), where he elaborates upon how the "fear of rural migrants or a slum dweller" (p. 149) is ingrained in the minds of people which further legitimise the perceived necessity of gated community. The politics and hierarchisation of space done in this manner then gives birth to the *walls of separation* at both physical as well as mental level. These walls, sometimes physically demonstrating the boundaries of demarcation as in the case of Coolie- Camp,

Vasant Kunj and DDA flats Munirka, other times speaks about the walls mentally constructed. These mentally constructed walls then discourage children (of specific locality) to use specific parks and public spaces (streets and lanes) that are considered as belongings of privileged (relatively rich people). Such walls of separation are seldom broken. Encountering such hierarchisation, children too grow up absorbing symbols of class specific values and traits leading to a distinct taste (Bourdieu, 1984), with respect to the peer selection, selecting leisure activities- the kind of games they would like to play, the leisure spaces and so on.

Not only residential spaces, but such class-based segregation can be seen with respect to recreational zones as well that are differentially conceptualised and maintained in and across the city. Pointing towards such a differentiation, Gabriel (2004) writes,

> Where do children have opportunities to get together to 'do their own thing', to mess around or hang about? On the margins of the adult world, play is an important activity where children develop their own unique peer friendships. But in an urban environment is it sufficient to increase the number of parks and playgrounds? Do these reinforce the idea that adults and children should live in separate worlds? (p. 180)

Here Gabriel (2004) raises a very pertinent issue by making us think that- are such differential and segregated spaces useful for adults and children or are such highly differentiated zones are creating another sort of compartmentalisation- of spaces and of minds as well. Talking about city's planning, we know that there are certain general principles that govern town planning with a foresight of expansion and providing air spaces and room for expansion over a period of time. Taking this argument further Legg (2008) notes that, the new city which is set up must take into account the beauty which should be blended in well with comfort for its inhabitants. For recreational space, Legg (2008) claims that a "necessary amount of space is needed for recreation for all classes" (p. 28). But often this ideal and

equitable allocation of recreational space does not get distributed evenly across classes. Such allocation of spaces often is accompanied with its politics, whereby for providing a specific service or facilities, a specific area is preferred as compared to other areas of the city. Such differential allocation thereby shows the class character of the city with respect to its various localities[48]. Class segregation of spaces and highly segregated spaces for differential and functional use as per time zones must be looked at critically. In this chapter, such nature of the city is explored in relation to children's play.

The questions which this chapter delves into include- What opportunities are available to children? Where do they like to play? How do they interact with the city's spaces? What constitutes their growing up experiences in the 21st century with respect to play and other leisure activities? Can we say that children make their own choices when it comes to play? If yes, then with respect to play, what are the kinds of *choices* that children make? Are open spaces available for children to play? Do children prefer going out and play, or do they prefer staying back at home and playing video games? How do children use spaces say- streets, parks and by-lanes of their locality? Which all spaces constitute their *home-zone* (Matthews & Field, 2001) or *home-range* (Gaster, 1995) i.e. spaces of familiarity and *safe-distance*[49] for children across classes (including the gender and age variable)? Is it that children feel safe or unsafe and therefore, they can or cannot play in their neighbourhood spaces? Or is it that they do not have free-time left with them to go out and play? How do they choose their play spaces? Are children aware of their locality's geographical and spatial location? Are they free to explore their vicinity and neighbourhood areas? What all kinds of opportunities in terms of mobility are available to children? What role do adults play when it comes to using available

[48] As discussed in chapter 1.
[49] The distance which children can explore on their own, without any fear and without depending upon their supervising adults.

spaces for play? How availability of technology is influencing their play or games at the playground and otherwise?

With all the above questions this chapter, charts out children's experiential accounts with respect to their opportunities for mobility into their familiar zones, describing how children build upon their possible *Geographies of Play* (both real as well as virtual). In the following sections, the chapter explores how children (and their respective families) make sense of their *home-zone*, utilising spaces available with respect to play and constituting their everyday experience with respect to the space which they inhabit.

3.1 Zones of Possibilities: Selected Public Spaces of Interaction from the Localities

The criteria for selecting the spaces came from my respondents. Many of my respondents when asked about their familiar play spaces have mentioned these namely– *Vasant Vatika, Rock Garden* and *Budh Bazar*. Reflecting on it, with respect to opportunities these spaces provide to its inhabitants for interactions across class as *zones of possibility*, this section is developed. Though geographically, these spaces are accessible to people across strata and there are no strict and explicit entry-exit rules. But, it is interesting to note how these geographies are being shaped by children's presence and their interactions. How children attach meanings to these spaces- is it safe to go, clean or not clean space to play in? Does these spaces enable interaction across classes or is it that here too children have their demarcated and segregated zones as per their *class* membership? - constitutes the locale of this section.

3.1.1 Vasant Vatika Park

This park is located in Sector C of Vasant Kunj, near to Delhi Public School and Vasant Valley School. This park has been the favourite place for residents (adults and senior citizens) of Vasant Kunj DDA, who use it for daily jogging purposes. Resident children however, can only be spotted in the park when accompanied by parents and guardians. One

could hardly see children visiting this park alone or in all children groups. Though there are no specifically divided zones in the park, but, as per age, gender and at times class-specific membership, it is seen that children along with adults occupy certain spaces. There are some corners of the park which are relatively clean, have grass cover, are used by people to sit and to do yoga whereas areas which are dusty, having dried leaves and branches collected off, are left unused.

Figure 18: *On a summer afternoon of 2017, non-resident children trying to climb on a fallen tree at Vasant Vatika Park.*

The picture above shows a huge tree fallen on the ground. Children are trying to climb over the fallen tree. In this group of children, not a single resident child of DDA Vasant Kunj participated. Though seeing these children climbing and jumping off the tree, the temptation of resident children was evident as were looking from afar, smiling and laughing at when children were jumping off the branches. But in the presence of their guardian, being worried of getting dirty, perceiving this act as risky and possibly maintaining their class specific location- which informs them that they should not be playing with *dirty children*, resident children did not join them. Though resident children too wanted to join the game, but as *other*

children- who are not like them, not looked tidy were playing on the fallen tree, restricted resident children to join them. The class specific socialisation of both the groups here resulted in maintaining the boundaries of the class divide with which both the groups of children are very well familiar.

Figure 19: *Cricket match (of all boys group) on a Sunday morning during winters of 2018.*

In yet another picture, on a winter Sunday morning, a cricket match is in progress. In this match where resident children (rather teenagers and adults) were occupying the central zone of the park, leaving the corner space; non-resident children (probably from Masoodpur village, Sec. B, Vasant Kunj) occupied and claimed this space, by setting up their cricket match parallel to them. Arranging a cricket bat, three big stones as wickets and five playmates, their match started. It was interesting to note that instead of playing together well in teams, two small groups (five and seven members each) were having cricket matches separately and that too, on the same patch of land. This act was creating a lot of confusion and trouble with respect to fielding and counting on runs, but neither of the two groups

stopped their match. It was interesting to see how different groups through their play, in a way were constantly competing and claiming the said space.

Regarding the evident separation leaving no possibility of mingling up and playing together, one mother (resident of Masoodpur) who accompanied her young children to the park shared that, "*bacche to yaha bohot jagah se aate hai, ye naye jhoole lage hain na, par apne apne mein hi khelte hain"* (In this park also, children come here from many localities for the new swings that are recently installed, but they hardly mingle up and rather play on their own and with their known). On probing about the class angles and interactions amongst children from different socio-economic strata, she shared that, "*ab ye sab chhote bacche kaha sochte hain, ye to maa-baap ka kaam hai unko sikhana ak mil jul ke khelna chahye, apar yaha to ve hi mana karte deekhe"* (young children do not think like this, it is parents who should teach their children to play together, but here parents are only seen restricting their children). She mentioned that in a way parents only teach their children whom to play with and who is not a potential playmate. Another mother (not a resident of Vasant Kunj DDA) shared, "children from Vasant Kunj have lost innocence, they don't even treat adults with respect, and they have so much of attitude." There existed a stark invisible boundary between the resident and non-resident children which is visible from the way they played, selected play-mates and so on, which even the parents of non-resident children also acknowledged. But while asking about inter-group interactions a mother (resident of Vasant Kunj DDA flats Sec. C) on the different lines mentioned, "see, we cannot force children to play in a certain way, it is their wish to play and develop friendship with who-so-ever they want. As a parent, I do not interfere in that." Refusing to interfere with children and their play matters this mother in a way maintained a very neutral stand when asked about children's interaction and friendships across class with respect to their play.

3.1.2 Rock Garden, DDA flats Munirka

Figure 20: *Munirka Rock Garden in Summer (above- picture was clicked during morning hours where people on jog and a few carrying necessary supply of milk and vegetables could be seen; below is the picture of children playing on swings during early afternoon) of 2018.*

This garden has been installed with various colourful swings, equipment for open gym, new grass cover and is maintained by South Delhi Municipal Corporation. The entrance gate (towards main road- Baba Gang Nath Marg) for the garden, during the day time is not

kept wide open but is opened a little just for walkers. But in the morning and evening it is opened wide so that people from adjacent localities could park their cars in the premises of public-park. Also, since it is on Aravali range- a hilly terrain, the garden is unique in its own way with having slanting grass field, pavement for walkers, sandy space left for children to play cricket, open gym on a small cemented base is installed with various trees and plants around. Location of this garden is such that on its left is Budh Vihar, Munirka Village and on its right is DDA flats Munirka. This garden is also connected with another smaller garden space allocated within DDA colony that makes its area wider and accessible from multiple sides since many entries are made alongside its boundary to make it easily accessible from all directions. This park is part of the broader drive that aimed at reclaiming previously abandoned and unsafe places as renewed parks and public spaces. Using Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED), as explained by Sharma (2018), civic agencies adopted certain strategies such as "reducing the height of boundary wall, installing wire fences over walls so that everybody can see inside activities, trimming hedges for a clear view, installation of open gyms - play areas for children, gazebos to increase footfall…" (para. 10); to reclaim many abandoned spaces across Delhi. One such space that got reclaimed was Munirka's Rock Garden. This space was available previously also but majorly was used as parking space and portion of it as dump-yard leaving only a small patch of sandy terrain vacant that children used for their play. As part of the reclamation,

> [A] 450-metre walkway was developed to cover the irregular shape of Rock Garden Park while rest of the area was landscaped without cluttering it with hedges or plants. The height of the boundary wall was reduced to four feet. To further increase the footfall, an amphitheatre was constructed later (Sharma, 2018, para. 18)

At different timings of the day on the basis of gender, children's age and class- this space of park is occupied and divided accordingly. During early morning hours people use

this park as jogging and exercise space whereas young children often accompanied by their (one of the) parents or grandparents could be seen running around, trying to master their walk, sitting soaking in sun during winters. During summer evenings, a heavy rush of men, women and children of all ages, mostly senior citizens could be registered. Evenings are lively whereas afternoon and morning hours are majorly dominated by men and young boys who sit, play cards in groups and at times are involved in anti-social activities sitting in shade corners of the park. Summer hot afternoons are utilised by teenage boys (resident children of Munirka Village) for their practice in cricket as during rush hours the elders sitting in the park, refrain them from playing *bat-ball*[50], as it might hit people sitting in the park and children playing on swings. This park is huge in its area, and its unusual hilly terrain provides a distinct experience to children which helped in developing new games. *Lot-pot* (Rolling-over on the ground) was one such game that children from Munirka Village have developed, in which participating children would lie down and roll-over on the call of go and the one who would reach down the slope first, would win the game. Also, climbing up on trees, plucking seasonal berries were some of the leisure activities that children at this park do.

[50] Term used by children from Munirka Village, to refer to cricket.

Figure 21: *Children climbing up tree and plucking berries, other side children playing on swings installed at Munirka Rock Garden on summer afternoon 2018.*

It is important to note that my respondents from DDA flats Munirka though have heard of this park, a couple of them have visited also, but are not very keen to go there frequently, to explore and use this space for play. One of the reasons for this is given that rock garden is mostly used by residents of Munirka Village, Budh Vihar and by children from adjoining slums in the vicinity. The people with whom DDA residents do not like to mingle up. Described often by children from DDA flats Munirka as *dirty looking, not able to talk in fluent English, not having any class,* the people who are regular visitors of Rock garden, are seen as a threat. For parents, sending their children to play at rock garden is not acceptable as one of the senior citizen from Munirka DDA reiterated "*waha se gandi baatein seekhenge, better hai yahi khel lein"* (…[children] would learn bad things there, better they play here only). The strict separation and demarcation of zones leaving negligible possibility of mingling up also instils fear of *other* in people and children. Spoken and unspoken rules around people who are forbidden to be mingled with, inculcates a suspicious attitude in children towards those who are unknown or are culturally different. Children, growing up in sanitised environments further nurtured by a culture of surveillance, begins to demonise *the other* right from their childhood years.

3.1.3 Budh Bazar: Wednesday Weekly Market

Figure 22: *Gubbare wala- vendor selling air filled balloons of various shapes at Budh Bazar weekly market, on a summer evening in 2018.*

This weekly market is set up on the road approaching Chinmaya Vidyalaya and Sarvodaya Vidyalaya Senior Secondary School (Vasant Vihar). Also, it is important to note that this way is very familiar to children from Coolie-Camp as they daily go to school by walk through this way, also visits the bazar weekly for getting the necessary supplies, and apart from Wednesday, this space is relatively free and children at times use it for their play activities- especially for running games. This market serves people from Vasant Kunj, Vasant Vihar, Coolie Camp and Kusumpur. Catering to many localities, this space registers heavy rush and stalls are set up on both sides of the road, leaving the middle space for circulation. But, it is important to note that what do people shop from this market? Different zones of this market registered differential population with respect to their purchasing capacity or say class membership. Near to clothes, cosmetics, food and snacks stall one could mostly see people from Kusumpur and Coolie Camp, whereas on the sides near vegetable and fruit stalls,

considerable number of people from well-off sections could be seen[51]. It is interesting to note that for some specific classes this bazar serves the purpose of just fresh vegetable and fruits shopping, whereas for people from Kusumpur, Coolie-Camp this is one of the space where they can shop for multiple articles ranging from clothes, utensils, cosmetics, school supplies and so on.

With a family from Coolie-camp (Sunita ji and her three children *Kalpu, Tappu and Veeru*), on one such visit to Budh Bazar, numerous instances revealed the presence of class-divide. Sunita ji was negotiating and meticulously managing expenses to meet children's requirements as well as to keep some money for necessary purchase of vegetables for the following week. Referring to her children accompanying to market, Sunita ji shared,

> *ye saare isliye sath ho rahe hain bazar jane ko ki sabko saman leke ana hai…kapde to le ai ab chashma, haath mein pehnne ke liye choodi ,gale mein pehnne ke liye maala leke ayengi (jewellery), shaadi mein jana hai na humko gaon* (all of them are going along, because they want to bring various accessories- sunglasses, necklace, bangles etc. to wear during marriage function- at our village).

This family was preparing to go for a marriage ceremony back in their village for which children were excited to visit to the bazar for buying goggles, bangles, jewellery matching to their new dress. In between children stopped at momo's corner wanting to eat, but their mother said, "*aake khayenge beta ye dukaan to yahi pe hai na kahi nahi jayegi…aake khayenge, pehle samaan khareedenge"* (we will have it while coming back, this shop would stay here only first let us shop). While walking towards the market Sunita Ji was constantly, teasingly, talking and engaging with her children, "*Veeru kya lega…choodi lega pajeb lega, mala lega*" (what would Veeru [boy child] like to purchase bangles…

[51] This observation is made by the researcher after carefully examining the appearance in terms of clothing, shoes, the accessories which people were holding-the smartphone along with car keys in their hands and most importantly, the bag full of vegetables which they could buy-were some of the markers that led to this understanding.

necklace..[jewellery meant for girls]…), listening to which all of them laughed. We entered the market and seeing balloons, purse, different sorts of jewellery, hairband children were getting excited and were asking for different articles to be purchased saying, "*mummy yeri choodi, mala ki dukaan, ye wali…ye waali…ye chashma"* (mummy here are bangles, see necklace shop, this one, this side sunglasses). Their mother managed them by saying, "*sab dilaayenge, aage chalo, abhi to bhot aage chalna hai* .."(We will buy everything, let us walk further), then watching the food and snacks stalls children started asking, "... *mummy gol-gappe, ice-cream, chaat*.." (children asking for snacks and ice-cream), another child said, "*mere liye rumaal"* (handkerchief for me), Sunita Ji again patiently assured them all.

While talking, we were walking constantly. To this one of the children asked in a complaining manner, "*aap kitna aage leke jaoge?"* (how far shall we walk). To pacify them their mother said, "*dekh to lo pehle sab dukaan, aram se khareedna fir"* (at least see the variety first then pick and choose which you like). On the way at another stall, a few children were purchasing school bags, seeing them the youngest one shouted, "*bag mummy naya bag bhi"*(bag, mummy new bag also). Till the time I was present, the family did not purchase anything. So sensing the kind of uneasiness and discomfort probably in terms of money with respect to purchasing power and the way Sunita Ji was settling children's various demands, I took leave from them for some-time. Here the implicit understanding of class is evident where no matter despite our genuine efforts for a sensitive interaction, the class-divide still stands huge, which probably made Sunita Ji hesitant to bargain for 10/- or 20/- rupees articles in my presence.

On the way back I took a packet of popcorn and shared it with children. The mother was trying to manage them saying, "*hairband to hai tumhare pas, mala bhi rakhi hai, chalo do rumaal lelo naye, do ghar pe rakhe hain" (*you have hairband, necklace is also there, we will take two handkerchief, two other are kept at home). In an attempt to bridge the visible-

invisible class-divide between us, in their presence, I too purchased a set of earrings for 20/- rupees, after a lot of bargaining. After which the mother then took children towards vegetable stalls saying, "*pehle kaam ki cheez aur sabzi le lein paise bachenge tab khana ice-cream"* (first we will take all necessary items and vegetables, after that if money left, we will eat snacks and ice-cream). It was very intriguing to note that at this side of the market one could register a considerable number of people from well-off sections. There existed a strange order, where the vegetable sellers would first ask and attend to the needs of *well-off* looking people. Since they were the ones who would take vegetables and fruits in kilograms, as compared to the people from Coolie Camp and Kusumpur- who would just take a few grams of vegetable and occasionally any fruit at times 250 or 500 grams of vegetable (for entire week, for a family of 5 members). The special care towards a particular set of buyers revealed how mundane yet deep are the roots of class divide which is present everywhere.

After all their shopping and as a mandatory and closing act of visiting the bazar, all three children ate *gol-gappe* (street snack of North India) and their mother drank only *jaljeera* (the spicy water which is accompanied with gol-gappe- for free) and walked back to home. It is interesting to note that the whole visit's expense came nearly 700/-rupees in which children purchased fancy hair clips, hairband, bangles, neckpieces, handkerchief, sunglasses, along with necessary vegetables. Sunita Ji remarked, "*sab paise kharch ho gaye, ek baar bazar aane mein hi batao" (*only in a single visit to market, all money got spent).

All these three spaces namely Vasant Vatika, Rock Garden and Budh Bazar discussed above, though provide ample possibilities for intergroup interactions, but mostly registered isolated groups of people including children who hardly interacted with each other cordially. Children too, being aware of their social-locations and in a way learning the social-rules of interaction, were hardly seen crossing the boundaries or surpassing the rigidities of these rules.

3.2 Contesting Spatial Claims: Rigid Realities of Interaction at the Selected Localities

The modern spatial history of Delhi- includes the state as well as private interests in land- which accounts of detailed "contestation over space and identities between extraordinary varieties of claimants to the city" (Srivastava, 2015, p. xxi). In the selected localities, though largely these can be divided on the basis of their socio-economic character as per the residents inhabiting, but it is also important to note here that these spaces are not *homogenous* in character. Vasant Kunj[52] having many sectors and pockets, also houses families belonging to different socio-economic character as compared to the DDA housing. As the space was developed by acquiring villages from nearby areas, the rural settlers (Masoodpur, Rangpuri Pahari, Kishangarh village) still think and treat the DDA lanes and park as their own. Whereas the DDA residents, since have purchased these flats and have been staying here for over 20 years now, claim the space as their own. This tension could be registered often when children from adjoining villages and settlements visit and play at the DDA parks are not in a way welcomed by the DDA residents rather are being *shouted at for making noise*, as observed during fieldwork.

Also, during fieldwork, it was noted that there is a subtle *class* differentiation which reveals that the owners of DDA flats, many of them would not initiate or build a cordial organic relationship with the rentiers/ tenants (at DDA complexes), whereas amongst flat owners, one could still find an ease where they would comfortably visit each-other home and a sense of neighbourhood and community feeling was shared. This difference though is hard to generalise but can hint towards the issues of *trust*, preferences of socialisation with respect to class composition and also maintaining an anonymous lifestyle.

Similar tensions were registered between residents of Munirka region. As described in chapter 1, Munirka region is also divided into specific zones namely Munirka Enclave,

[52] As described already in chapter 1.

Munirka Vihar, DDA flats Munirka and Munirka Village (including Buddh Vihar, Fakkarwada mohalla); these zones and inhabitants of it also have complex relationships with respect to space claims. Munirka Vihar, Enclave and DDA all being DDA flats are also arranged as per subtle hierarchies with respect to the lens of *security and facility* (say of safe parking) provided by the respective to their residents. Munirka Enclave has one entry-exit gate and is considered as the *most secured off spaces of Munirka region*- as claimed by one of my respondent, whereas Munirka Vihar and DDA flats Munirka are relatively more accessible to general public that is the residents of Munirka village and it is this reason it is not considered very *safe*. The DDA locality of Munirka had gates installed in its lanes, which are kept open during the day, had registered children and people from adjoining Motilal Nehru Camp using it. Usage of parks, and newly installed open gym and other swings installed at parks are used by children from Motilal Nehru Camp, and children from Munirka Village and Budh Vihar, but hardly children (resident of DDA flats Munirka) could be seen sitting, playing in parks here. To quote a mother who referring to a speeding car that passed in from one of the adjoining lanes of DDA flats Munirka mentioned, "*dekho aap speed dekhlo, ye Munirka gaon ke paas hai na isliye thoda tension hai- aap kisi ko kuch bol bhi nahi sakte- chhure chaaku pehle nikal jaate hain"* (you see this speeding car, our locality is near Munirka Village, you cannot even say anything to anyone- people would take out knives before striking a conversation- symbolically pointing to the perceived rash behaviour of rural population). The tension in terms of rural-urban is evident here; where the *gaon* i.e. village and its settlers are dubbed as uneducated and uncivilised and therefore, residents of DDA flats Munirka have to put in place their own *security systems*. Of this security system, one is installation of huge iron gates, that claim to turn these spaces into *safe*, whereby following the specific opening and closing time of the gate, thereby disciplining of space with respect to time. Aesthetic regulation of streets and urban confinements (Ghertner, 2015) are not new

phenomena. Tracing back to twentieth-century, Srivastava (2015) mentions that urban confinement (but of different form) were part of urban discourse, which signifies "a lack of confidence in state's ability to provide security and a strong sense of middle class under threat from urban under-class" (p. xxxv). Localities like Vasant Kunj DDA (various sectors and pockets of it), DDA flats Munirka, Munirka Vihar, Munirka Enclave all appear to be safeguarding their residential zones by establishing walls, installing iron gates, by fencing up and so on. Following picture shows one such gate installed in DDA flats Munirka DDA entry/exit towards Baba Gang Nath Marg, depicting opening and closing time of the gate, thereby indirectly symbolising the *claim* over DDA flats Munirka by the respective Residents Welfare Association (RWA).

Figure 23: *Entry –Exit gate of DDA flats Munirka at Baba Gang Nath Marg. Picture clicked in winter of 2019.*

It was interesting to note that from the perspective of residents from Vasant Kunj DDA and DDA flats Munirka, Coolie Camp is another slum (with Kusumpur) which is held responsible for increasing crime-rate, degradation of green-cover in the region and acting as a breeding ground for law and order problems. But, according to the residents of Coolie Camp, though it houses around 500 homes, since is an un-notified slum, is placed low in hierarchy when it comes to providing them basic necessities as compared to Kusumpur- which is a

notified slum, and therefore its residents get more benefits. Comparing to Vasant Kunj and Munirka, residents of camp shared that as the camp is spread over an area adjoining Nelson Mandela main-road and is easily accessible from various directions from where the weekly market Budh Bazar, Vasant Vihar metro station are at walking distance, people want them to evacuate. The colourful boundary wall of the camp as shown in the picture below was constructed years later when the main road got widened and to check the spread of burgeoning slum (Ghosh, 2009). But, as per the residents of the Coolie Camp the density of the population has increased and now the slum is expanding vertically resulting in double storied dwelling units.

Figure 24: *A view of Coolie Camp alongside Nelson Mandela Road. Picture clicked in the winter of 2019.*

The *classed* or say socio-spatial claims to the city and right for safe residential spaces were also exposed during the COVID-19 pandemic where different efforts were made to keep the residential spaces of privileged classes, sanitised off the people from underprivileged background (HC allows RWA to repair wall, 2020). Illegal construction of a wall on the Budh Bazar road towards Chinmaya Vidyalaya was also reported from Vasant Vihar, when some of the residents of Kusumpur Pahari tested positive for the COVID-19 (Slum residents fume over wall construction, 2020), which later on got challenged by the residents of

Kusumpur Pahari. The everyday lives of residents therefore witnessed such entangled and contesting claims to the spatial and residential locations as well as to the city's spaces.

3.3 Visibility of Children in Outdoor Spaces and their Play Preferences

This section discusses children's visible presence with respect to three localities selected. In these selected localities children are present. But the question is- where do they like to spend their leisure time and how? Is it inside home, into structured settings or is it that they do use the street, parks and various open spaces of their neighbourhood areas- be it in group or alone? How children make use of the spaces available- for utility and functional purpose say going to market, to shop, to school or for their leisure or for play activities like taking a walk with their neighbourhood friend, playing a *gully* (street) cricket, or cycling, playing other games, catching up with their friends or so on. Neighbourhood area can be understood as a familiar space around one's home. This neighbourhood I am conceptualising with respect to the idea of *safe-distance*- the familiar and safe space according to children which they can use without the supervision of any adult. With respect to these three localities this neighbourhood space has been used and utilised by children at various times of the day, for various purposes.

3.3.1 Vasant Kunj (B&C)

The lanes and bylanes of locality registered the presence of children (both resident and non-resident)[53] at various hours of the day and weeks' time[54]. During morning hours children in school uniform[55] could be seen with their parents (guardians) waiting for the cab, school bus and other set of children, often in pairs and groups-who are also in school uniform but not similar to the previous set of children[56] walking-down the lanes and bylanes of the

[53] Resident children here means the resident of DDA flats and non-resident here means the children who are from adjoining localities including village and slum areas neighbouring to sector B & C of Vasant Kunj.
[54] Depending upon weekdays, weekends, holidays the density and visibly of children in outdoors varied.
[55] Delhi Public School, Ryan International School, G.D. Goenka School, Bhatnagar School to name a few.
[56] These children were from different government schools in the sec B of Vasant Kunj including Government Girls Senior Secondary School, GBSSS in Sec B1 , RPVV- Rajkiya Pratibha Vikas Vidyalaya (pkt 1 sec B).

locality to reach their respective schools. Both these set of children though were using the streets and by lanes, but for a specific *purpose* i.e. for going to school. With respect to psychologically available spaces, Moore (1986) has mentioned the rules that govern children's behaviour in particular space. Here to be able to use the lanes and by-lanes for going to school is one such activity that children from adjoining settlements do. During afternoon and evening hours one could see children from nearby village– Masoodpur (of Sector B Vasant Kunj) in many parks (of Sector C & B) that are installed with swings, catching off for a quick ride and few minutes of playful time (while going to tuition and back to home). Occasionally, when the resident children catch this site of non-resident children playing in the park they too go for a couple of rides but still staying aloof from non-resident children and hardly they interact. It is interesting to note that older children (10 years old and elder) who are resident of DDA flats Vasant Kunj, could be seen in outdoor spaces during evening hours mostly, where they could be seen cycling, walking with their friends (mostly girls), and sometimes playing other games depending on the availability of other children who are ready to play. Also, it is interesting to note that despite available parks in the locality, resident children would prefer to play in front of their home or at most up to a distance of just a few meters away from their home, on the street, from where they could see their guardians or home and their guardians too see them playing. Their *home zone* (Matthews & Field, 2001) or say *safe-distance* thus, included a few meters of radius from their home. But non-resident children often could be seen in groups *claiming* spaces at the parks (which are understood by the residents as theirs), playing with their siblings on the swings installed in the park. The opportunity or rather willingness to interact between resident and non-resident children is negligible. Often non-resident children are being *shouted at* for making noise, by the residents of adjoining flats. For children from adjoining localities like Masoodpur village and others, home-zone included a much longer distance which they could explore on their

own. This distance sometimes could stretch to a few kilometers, which children were free to explore on their own. However, it is significant to mention that non-resident children would visit these localities in groups or pairs rather than exploring it alone. Concerns of Carr and Lynch (1968, cited in Gaster, 1995) that "children today are (*increasingly*) estranged from their neighbourhoods" (p. 39) is evident in this research also. The restricted use of one's own neighbourhood in the case of resident children whereas relatively careful use of other's neighbourhood by non-resident children speaks of children's relation to their neighbourhood and city's spaces, its environment and people in general.

Figure 25: *Children from Masoodpur village at one of the parks at Vasant Kunj C3 on a summer evening in 2018.*

With the restricted home-range, children have modified their games as well, which they could play in the space and with the opportunities available. In the narrow space left after parking numerous cars on both sides of the lane, children have accordingly modified their games. One such game that was registered which children play was, *gaadi ka number* (car's number). In this one child is supposed to read aloud the number written on any (parked) car's number plate and tell the colour whereas other children have to find out the specified car in stipulated time and reach its location. Also, large play groups could hardly be seen as children either could be seen playing in groups of four or five and at times playing in

pairs.

Figure 26: *Potential Playground behind Police Colony Vasant Kunj Sec C. Picture clicked in the summer of 2018.*

Bhawna- a resident of Vasant Kunj DDA, referring to her brother's children who study at Ryan International School, shared that, "it is my daily duty to keep the AC (air conditioner) switched on beforehand. As when children arrive home, they want their room to be cool and cannot bear the high temperature during Delhi summers." Later, during interactions with children, these children shared that they would like to play at home only. They would not like to go to the huge ground, located a few steps away from their residence saying, *"bohot hi kabhi kabhi"* (rarely), when accompanied by their father. On probing further, they shared, *"ye ground fertile nahi hai, yaha grass nahi hai, agar yaha grass lag jaye, pitch ban jaye tab to yaha khelne ka maza ayega"* (this is not a fertile ground, if it is maintained properly by putting up grass cover, making cricket pitch, then only one could play and have fun). It was shared further by their parents that they play outdoor games inside home only namely cricket, football, running games and so on. These children have vast knowledge of online games and the internet. On probing the children about phone games and video games, they provided me with a list of more than thirty games in one go, with each game and its description, with such enthusiasm. These children are also enrolled for cricket

training, which their parents shared later, hinting at the issue that as there are no children of their age-group in their locality, and so they decided to send them for training. Another mother, a resident form Police Colony shared,

> *Vasant Kunj ek alag hi duniya hai…waha hum jaise local log nahi reh sakte. Ye peeche playground hai jaha hamare bacche khelte hain..lekin Vasant Kunj se log yaha aate hain kabhi kabhi wo bhi apna kutta ghumane. Hindi mein to baat hi nahi karte aur bacche bhi fir aise hi hain… aaj kal ke baccho ka koi bachpan nahi hai*
>
> (Vasant Kunj is another world all together, local people like us cannot survive there. In the playground back side, where our children used to go and play, people from Vasant Kunj come here to relieve their pets, they do not even talk in Hindi and children also talk in English, children nowadays do not have childhood).

Such stories of differential and hierarchical treatment of spaces with respect to localities were registered. Over *dusty and dirty ground*, video games and comfort of AC rooms are preferred by children. Having an added income (of the families), that can buy the comfort and technological resources, children's way of spending their leisure time has been altered. Negating the spontaneity of play that is unregulated, direct and face to face interaction with other children in a socially embedded context, organised sports in academies or games made available through technological resources in insulated space is preferred by children. Both children and their respective families from Vasant Kunj in a way have normalised the consumption of packaged and structured leisure from the perceived comfort of technology and their class specific vantage points. This technology empowers children to play at will from anywhere, as it is not necessary to wait for another potential playmate to be physically present, since games like PUBG provide the opportunity to hundreds of players to play online, simultaneously.

3.3.2 DDA flats Munirka

Similar to Vasant Kunj, at DDA flats Munirka also, I registered the implicit contradictions and claims over space, especially at its parks. Here too children from adjoining Motilal Nehru camp, while going for their tuitions (at one of the homes in DDA flats Munirka only), or while going and coming back from Mother Dairy (for their milk supply), could be seen catching in for quick rides at various parks on the way. The photo attached below shows one such instance, where on the way back to home, from tuition, children from Motilal Nehru Camp took a short stop-over at one of the parks at DDA flats Munirka (which falls on their familiar way back to home). The school-bags resting on seesaw, while children are busy playing on the other side of the park at swings and running around playing catch-catch in a way presents the possible strategic negotiations by children, through which they *take-out time* for necessary play amidst day to day routine

Figure 27: *Children's bags balanced on seesaw while they are having a quick ride at swings installed in the park at another side. Picture clicked at one of the parks at DDA flats Munirka, on an evening during spring 2018.*

It is important to note here that, taking out time separately, and going to the park for just playing was negligible for these children as well. Their *play time* used to be entangled with other tasks, say either with fetching up the supply of milk for home, buying grocery, going to or coming back from tuition and so on. Serving play, education and household related responsibilities all at once, these children found their own leisurely moments in between day to day life. Interestingly, children managed to spend their unsupervised walk back to home in the evening, taking out considerable time (relative to the resident children of DDA flats Munirka), at times an hour (while going back to home from their tuition).

Figure 28: *Children from Motilal Nehru Camp playing at one of the parks at DDA flats Munirka. Picture clicked on an evening in spring 2018.*

In the picture above, such a group of children could be seen on see-saw who on their return trip from tuition, stopped-over this park for catching some *playful* time. But at DDA flats Munirka, the children (from Motilal Nehru Camp and Munirka Village) who use these

lanes and by-lanes on daily basis for various purposes, say going to school, bringing daily milk supply for home, or just casually catching up with a neighbourhood friend, exploring different parks of locality- newly installed with swings and open gym equipment, are much more familiar with the space and places of DDA, than their peers who are resident of DDA flats and are often carried off by their parents in and around locality in their respective vehicles- *car*.

Resident children of DDA can be seen outdoors but they hardly spend 30 to 45 minutes outdoors either, cycling, walking with their neighbourhood friend or playing badminton. Young children at times could be seen accompanied by parents who sit throughout during their play-time. A mother form DDA flats Munirka referring to her young son (5 years old) shared,

> *Ye dekhlo bore ho rahe hain, koi bacha hi nahi hai yaha par khelne ke liye, and we cannot allow them to cycle here, kaha khelenge batao kabhi bike aa rahi hai kbi car. Open space chhodo ghar mein space hi nahi hota hai… Kuch bacche jo hain wo baithe hain apna laptop TV ke aage wo waha khel rahe hain, ab jisko neeche aake khelna hai wo ro raha hai.* (see them getting bored, not a single child is available to play with, we cannot allow them to cycle here, where should they play here? Here is a constant rush of speeding bikes or cars. Forget open space, there is no space inside homes…a few children who are of his age prefer playing on laptop or watching TV, the ones who want to play outdoors have no one to play with).

Many children from DDA flats Munirka too remarked that they would not like to go out and play in summers as would get *tanned*, and therefore, they prefer staying indoors or would rather go to sports academy where they would get at least proper training rather than playing on their own.

A general dis-interest in playing –outdoors was tied up with many factors like availability of playmates, safe space for play, ample time to play at least for a couple of hours are quite a few reasons that have restricted children's presence in outdoor spaces. Preference to stay-back in a sanitised environment was registered amongst parents, also who instead of sending and encouraging their children to go out and play would rather prefer them to be admitted under any *formal* sports training thereby utilising their time, energy and helping them keep fit. A mother from DDA flats Munirka shared, "*ye trend hai yaha pe kyuki bacche ko neeche khelne nahi dete to usko kahi busy karna hai to kahi skating class hai, kahi karate class hai. Paisa sabke paas hai to classes mein daalo bacchon ko busy karo"* (This is the trend here because parents do not allow children to play downstairs, so one has to keep them busy somewhere- for which skating, karate …people have money, it is this way children are kept busy). Similar to Vasant Kunj DDA, here too majority of the children are tied up in structured format of activities including tuition, sports and hobby classes (Elkind 2007, 2010), leaving relatively negligible time to *play* on their own in *free-time*. Parents do not encourage children to roam in streets or mingle with neighbourhood children (from Munirka Village, Motilal Nehru Camp and so on) rather prefer them enrolling for paid services. Having a "disposable income" (Manne, 2005, p. 304) at hand, these parents do not hesitate in spending towards leisure activities provided it maintains rather strengthen their *class-specific* lifestyle.

Pertaining to children's presence in street, Boyden (2015) mentions, "children playing in street corners…have become synonymous in the mind of general public with delinquent gangs" (p. 194) and as "disrupting the moral social order" (Valentine, 2004, p. 12) of street. Considering street as a negative zone for children to be present in, and wiping out every possibility of children to mingle up across classes- a carefully crafted and insulated sphere is put in place by parents and guardians for children of Vasant Kunj DDA and DDA flats

Munirka. It is the dialectic of privilege operating here that could be the reason why children's spontaneous play in the street is discouraged while the structured activities are preferred.

3.3.3 Coolie Camp

At Coolie Camp, there was no available open space meant for play, as was present in Vasant Kunj DDA and DDA flats Munirka. But, despite spatial limitations, children's play did not get restricted. Any space, be it narrow most lane of the settlement or the stairs for climbing up, served as best space as per various games developed and shared by children there. Street, rather lanes and narrow by-lanes of the slum were in a way extension of home space for the residents. Having a small home in some instances 6 feet by 6 feet or even smaller makes it impossible for children and their families to be confined inside. Lanes and by-lanes served as their *home zone* (Matthews & Field, 2001) and various activities say washing utensils and clothes, chopping off vegetables alike daily chores used to be done in the by-lanes or spaces right in front of their homes. In the name of sanitation facility, public toilets and washrooms constructed under Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM- Clean India Mission[57]) are the only option available. *Home* or say *home zone* for them thus included this entire microcosm- from their respective individual home (room) space to the street spaces as well as the public toilet and adjacent footpath, which is used in a multipurpose manner by residents.

Putting cot in front of home and utilising ramps and stair-case of home entrances as seating area in the lanes and by-lanes was a common sight. Such spaces, where the presence of elders (both men and women of all ages) and children (both girls and boys) of various age-groups served as safe home-zones provided opportunities for *sociability* to its residents. Men, women, children of different age groups could be seen at their respective zones in groups and spending their leisure time, where men could be seen playing cards, children could be seen

[57] Launched by GoI on October 02, 2014 is a countrywide campaign to curb open-defecation and to improve solid waste management.

roaming, playing in street spaces, women too sitting on stairs or ramps and catching for chit-chatting session as their daily quota. Children too could be seen in the outdoor space for the majority of the days' time either catching up with neighbourhood friends, roaming around or helping in household chores (fetching water from common tap, bringing any grocery item from nearby shop and so on).

Describing about space-crunch in the locality (Coolie Camp), one child shared about the game that they have developed is *chungi*-which is a bouncy ball like mass made of waste tyre-tube of cycle cut in rings or rubber-bands (which is easily available) tied up together, was made by children on their own. *Chungi* is not available in the market but is self-made by children. This game is quite popular amongst children from Camp (Coolie Camp and Motilal Nehru Camp), but DDA children don't have much knowledge and skills to play it. There are multiple ways *chungi* can be used for play. This game needs a lot of leg work and body balance, in which the player is supposed to be constantly hitting *chungi* (either in air or against wall) and not let it fall down on the floor. As described by the child, one way of playing *chungi* is, "*usko paer se maar kr khelna hota hai, girni nhi chahiye zameen pe, warna gir gai to out ho jayenge. Aur jitney tole hai na utne tole hi marenge utthak baithak" (*one has to hit it with foot and play, it should not fall on ground, otherwise the player would be disqualified, and the more attempts of balance one player earns the other players are supposed to do as many sit-ups). *Tole* here refers to balancing wherein the more one balances the other player is supposed to count and do as many sit-ups. One can add a difficulty level in this by either making front kick or by twisting body and doing back-kicks in order to earn points (which are mutually decided by players).

Figure 29: *Chungi made by children by cutting cycle tyre-tube in rings and tightened together in a bouncy ball-like manner. Picture clicked in spring 2018.*

Another variation of the game is *chungi-cricket,* which boys from Coolie Camp play. In this game, *chungi* is used instead of a ball. Ball, which is relatively more bouncy and if once lost, difficult to find, is expensive also as its price is somewhere 40-50/- rupees for a ball; *chungi* is the better option. It is easy to handle and can be produced by children on their own, without any virtual cost attached. *Chungi or chungi* cricket, according to children is the best game which could be played in narrow lanes of the camp easily as it does not require a large open playground as in cricket (when played with a ball). In the absence of comfort and technological resources, here children have invented their new toy i.e. *chungi* and variants of game to be played with it.

The play of children at Coolie- Camp, I can describe as *care-free and joyful* where they are freely playing, at times bare-foot without getting to be worried of tanned or dirty; with visible injuries and bruise marks. These children would not worry about catching any infection when it comes to playing care-free in the sun and soil. Running in the lanes and by-lanes, the familiarity with their surroundings including the lanes of Budh Bazar, these children in a way have extended their *home-zones* to a considerable distance (at times up to 3-

4 kilometres in their surrounding localities). I must acknowledge that by appearance these children were looking thin but were very active and easily were jumping off the boundary or fences of the park and running around in by-lanes (of Vasant Vihar and Munirka). Exploring their play zones together, I too had taken long walks with them. But in just a blink of a second they are somewhere and at another moment at another place- with such an energy and spontaneity, their life is filled.

One of the important reasons why only a few children preferred outdoor games and others did not could be related to the fact that mostly children from Vasant Kunj and DDA flats Munirka hardly explore their locality on walking alone or in children groups and often are carried in the car by their parents. On the other side, children from Masoodpur, Coolie Camp, Munirka Village often explore these spaces by walking through it on *foot*. The interaction with respect to the geographical space, built environment and with diverse people that children explore- *on foot* in a way provides them with the confidence and familiarity with their space, which is not in the case if children are carried off in vehicles of convenience (car, cab, etc.) from DDA. Many studies have established that children who grow up riding in public transport, walking through their neighbourhoods have a stronger sense of geography and place (Gulati, 2018), which is also true in the case of my work.

But this relation to neighbourhood geography, open spaces inculcating a strong sense of belonging was challenged when the opportunities to be in open were curbed in the wake of COVID-19 pandemic. With the enforcement of mandatory nation-wide lockdown in India from March 25, 2020 to May 31, 2020 and thereafter the phased unlock, the usage and functionality of open spaces have totally changed. Children living under lockdown have their lives highly restricted to their *home-zones*- be it their education, play and other leisure activities and so on. Also, it is important to acknowledge here is that, across the selected localities Vasant Kunj DDA, DDA flats Munirka and Coolie Camp the experiences of

children and their families with respect to COVID-19 pandemic varied as per the socio-spatial locations they inhabit. Primary measures of keeping oneself safe by practising physical distancing; frequently washing hands or quarantine was not at all possible at Coolie Camp. Coolie Camp as described above is densely populated, where home zones or home space of children and their families included even the street spaces and public sanitation spots. Now, amidst the pandemic, even their home zone is turned into a highly risky zone that can act as a potential source of contamination. Their experience of the pandemic is also *classed* where in the absence of basic facilities the residents of Coolie Camp had to knowingly put themselves in risk either when using the public sanitation facilities (the only option available) or by not being able to confine in 6 feet by 6 feet room throughout the day with other members of the family. Whereas for many of my respondents from Munikra and Vasant Kunj DDA, the lockdown phase allowed them for endless extra-time with family, in which they developed new hobbies say- gardening, painting, even opening up YouTube channel, earning cash prizes by playing online (as described in following sections).

3.4 Street: A Space that Embodies Endless Possibilities

This section would describe the public street as a space- as perceived and utilised by children and residents across the selected localities.

3.4.1 Street as a Socialising Space and Potential Play Zone

As described above with respect to children from Coolie Camp, Motilal Nehru Camp, Munirka Village, Masoodpur Village that street spaces of their respective localities served as familiar and home-zones which children had the opportunity to explore on their own. In case of Coolie Camp as there was no dedicated open space available for play, the streets served as major and sole play-space inside the locality for children. Though their homes are not spacious in the Coolie Camp and have mostly one room house occasionally two (one over the above), where in a limited space it is difficult to confine children in home. Thereby the

limited home space provided rightful and easy accessibility of outdoors to children, who were freely moving, circulating in the by-lanes of the settlement. They were freely moving in groups with their friends and playmates. Opportunities for sociability were present to children and they were relatively mobile, could decide to go with their friends, shift to another play space, walk down the street without worrying about constantly updating their movement to their parents or guardian. At Coolie Camp, children play in whatever space is available, often hardly 4 feet by 3 feet in which there is the entrance of two homes (one set of stairs) and stairs of the third home (as depicted in picture below).

Figure 30: *Children playing stappoo[58] and younger ones are sitting on the staircase and enjoying the game. Picture clicked during afternoon hours in spring 2018.*

[58] Indian variant of hopscotch game.

Street space also got transformed as a *socialising space* for the residents of Coolie-Camp, (picture below) could be sensed where children are playing the game called T*itli* (*Butterfly)*- where in two players sit joining hand one over above and other players are supposed to run from a far and jump over the hands without touching it) and at a little distance one could see another group of old men sitting in group where a couple of another ones standing and watching the game of cards in progress.

Figure 31: *Children playing Titli in one of the lanes of Coolie Camp. Picture clicked on an afternoon in the summer of 2017.*

In yet another by-lane (picture below), a group of women can be spotted sitting on the ramp of a home and another lady- daughter in law of the house (community) as seen is keeping *purdah* (a veil, covering her face with saree) catching in for a quick conversation. Women, men and children of different age-groups could be seen claiming street spaces confidently at different times of the day.

Figure 32: *A group of women sitting for conversation while their grand-children are playing in the vicinity. Picture clicked on an afternoon in spring 2018.*

Figure 33: *Two children making paper boats after a rainy morning, while another one playing with the young child in a walker. Picture clicked in the afternoon hours of the rainy season of 2017.*

Children are busy making paper-boats, before rain on a cloudy afternoon, sitting outside their home. Another child could be seen playing with a toddler placed in a walker. Besides probably is the mother of the toddler putting clothes on her roof (made of tin shed) to get dried.

Figure 34: *Four girls proceeding for their play while the young boy teases them. Picture clicked on an afternoon of summer 2017.*

Another group of children I met, in which the eldest girl was carrying doll and other three young girls were heading to a peaceful space in the by-lanes of Coolie Camp, where on the way they were encountered with a boy who was mischievously trying to make fun of the eldest girl saying, *"budhiya gudiya se khelegi"* (mockingly…such an old girl would play with doll). But the group of girls then proceeded just by giving a hard stare to this boy, without giving any much heed and not to waste much time in arguing with him.

Unlike Vasant Kunj DDA and DDA flats Munirka parks, as mentioned already, that Coolie Camp does not have a distinct space as play area for children or for recreation purposes. Children here in a way have claimed *foot-path spaces* as well. Without any noticeable fear they could be seen running, flying kites while standing on the footpath near

the boundary wall which is adjacent to the Nelson Mandela main road. On one afternoon (of summers), around 4 o'clock in the evening, children were flying kites (standing on the footpath) adjacent to Nelson Mandela Marg, which is a busy main road with running traffic. Out of these three, one child was poorly rather minimally dressed (wearing undergarments), another was wearing shorts and the third one was wearing a shirt and denim shorts. But all these three children were running bare feet (on the footpath) and trying to give a push to the kite they were trying to fly. On asking them, "why are they playing near the main road, why don't they go to the Rock Garden or any other park (nearby)? One of the child replied, "*road paaar nahi jate, hamara ghar yaha tak hai"* (our home is till this point, we do not go across road for playing). To which I probed again mentioning that there is another new park set up, there are new swings installed, have you seen it? The child again answered back insisting, "*road paaar nahi jate hum, gaad [guard] mana karta hai"* (we do not go across the road, the guard scolds us). These children, though they had no designated play space, inside the camp which is densely populated, it did not deter them from playing, and they utilised the footpath.

Figure 35: *At the foot-path, Nelson Mandela Road, children preparing to fly kites on a rainy afternoon in 2017.*

Coolie Camp as seen in the picture above (also as shared in chapter 1) has a boundary wall. Children's reference to the another world that exists *road paaar* (across the road) is of Munirka Enclave and DDA flats Munirka, possibly hints towards the experiential class difference, where despite having parks well installed with open gym are still lying vacant (underutilised) and these children are not welcomed there and thereby they are here playing at the footpath of a busy main-road, risking their lives.

The footpath and divider also serves and acts as multi-functional space for adults whereby they spread their wet clothes for drying, during winters a group of ladies or men could be seen soaking in sun, on summer nights people spread their beddings and cot and sleep there. Also, the divider space of the road and its fence serves as functional space for the residents of this settlement.

Figure 36: *Above- Footpath used as multipurpose space by residents of coolie-camp. Below- the divider on road and its fence as space for putting up clothes. Picture clicked in Winters 2019.*

Children can play right in front of the house, on the raised platform made in front of the house, of the temple-like structure nearby or at times on the footpath adjacent to the main road. Yes, playing at footpath is risky and for me also taking observations there was very

fearful activity but children (and families) staying there and using that as their play space (and multifunctional space) seems to have mastered the usage of it. While the road is busy with heavy traffic, still children manage to swiftly cross the road and go to the divider located in the middle of road for their respective work- putting the clothes to get dried up, to pick clothes back from the fence and so on.

It is not to say that parents or guardians here in Coolie-Camp are not worried about the *safety* of their children, they are equally concerned. But the difference is that on the pretext of safety children's movement is not restricted here. Since many of the residents of this settlement know each –other, about their family, children and so on which in a way have built a trustworthy environment whereby many of residents know each-other by name. Also, as most of the household chores say of washing clothes, kitchen utensils etc. are done in street/ outside home, and senior residents including men and women could also be seen sitting in streets, in front of one or the other house talking having a chit-chat serves a *safe* environment for children, which facilitates their usage of street and by-lanes. But this free and easy usage of street and bylanes were changed during the COVID-19 pandemic. The by-lanes were though used for functional purposes say of washing clothes and utensils but children and residents in general became aware and conscious of the potential risks which resulted in decline of casual roaming and playing activities of children. As reported by one of my respondent, 14 years old girl (over telephone), "*aaj kal kam nikalte hain bahar, yaha andar hi sab rehte hain…*" (now a days hardly [we] go out, we mostly stay inside [the camp]…). Here when asked about her general routine, she remarked that they stay inside only mostly. But here inside does not mean inside home, but *inside camp*, as she further elaborated that now all chores which require going out say getting milk or fetching water from tanker or common tap are done by her mother and she is supposed to take care of cooking, sewing and minding chores at home with her siblings.

3.4.2 Street as Parking Space: Stories of Car Abundance and Scarce Open Spaces

Streets occupied with cars, open lanes are enclosed with putting iron-gates making regulated entry-exit are the realities of almost all the middle and upper-middle class localities and so is the case with Vasant Kunj DDA and DDA flats Munirka. As a marker of one's social status, we are endlessly accumulating more and more vehicles, especially *cars*– of the latest model. Such heightened form of "conspicuous consumption" (Manne, 2005, p. 243) to keep the latest model, having different cars for different members of the family has in a way led to the unlawful occupation of street spaces. Street- which is functionally meant for circulation is now increasingly being occupied as a parking site. Shared by one of the residents from DDA flats Munirka that, "*dekho jab pehle bani na ye jagah, this was for lower middle class family. They had provided only scooter garage (in the buildings), now people have got 3-4 cars, times have changed"* (see when this place got constituted, it was for lower middle class family, they had provided scooter garage in the buildings, but now people have 3-4 cars, times have changed).

Another resident of Sector B Vasant Kunj DDA reiterated the similar story mentioning, "*DDA allotted these flats back in 1980s, we too purchased our flat worth 2 lakhs which now is at least 3 crore…that time parking was provided for two-wheelers, but today there are BMWs, Audis and Mercedes cars even in four members family*". Voicing similar concerns from another resident from Sector B Vasant Kunj, Rajput (2016) in his piece mentioned, "people fight over parking space. The colony has reached a saturation point and there is no place to park cars for outsiders. There are illegal taxi stands everywhere where hundreds of vehicles remain parked". The encroachment of commons has happened to the extent that now hardly any considerable vacant space could be seen in the respective localities. Still very relevant, an old piece by Gorz (1973) reminded us of the decorative status that car symbolises, where he says, "…worst thing about cars is that they are like

castles or villas by the sea: luxury goods invented for the exclusive pleasure of a very rich minority, and which in conception and nature were never intended for the people" (p. 1). He further asks, "like the beach house, doesn't a car occupy scarce space? Doesn't it deprive the others who use roads (pedestrians, cyclists, streetcar and bus drivers)?" (p. 2). Public space is being invaded by private vehicles making it difficult to walk freely, especially on weekends when the space gets congested as the density of parked cars reaches to its maximum limit occupying every inch. "The automobile" writes Gorz (1973), "is the paradoxical example of a luxury object that has been devalued by its own spread" (p. 2). Showcasing the purchasing power, in terms of accumulating latest and expensive models of cars are becoming nuisance to some residents, whereas still favoured by others.

With increasing issues of pollution and environmental degradation on rise, still a *car* can be counted as first and foremost priority for few residents. A mother from DDA flats Munirka shared, "*it is because I know driving and have a car, I can go and drop my children to school, can go to market and single-handedly purchase and carry groceries from Big Bazar without being dependent on my husband or anyone"*. She further added that,

> There is a trap you see, having car is not wrong but hoarding cars is problematic…in our family we have just two cars, one in which my husband goes to office and other one which is kept at home and both of these are used frequently, rather many times a day…you cannot run around to catch auto every day in morning or in afternoon…and it is time-consuming also.

Concerning the spread of private vehicles, Gorz (1973) reiterates, "the spread of the private car has displaced mass transportation and altered city planning and housing" (p. 2). Symbolising class and status, with private cars, *class difference* for the first time is to be "extended to speed and to the means of transportation" (Gorz, 1973, p. 3). Now speed

symbolises class. Bursting the myth of freedom and revealing the degree of dependence that automobiles and private cars create, Gorz (1973) reminded us that,

> [T]he seeming independence has for its underside a radical dependency. Unlike the horse rider… or the cyclist, the motorist was going to depend for the fuel supply, as well as for the smallest kind of repair, on dealers and specialists…Unlike previous owners of a means of locomotion, the motorist's relationship to his or her vehicle was to be that of user and consumer- and not owner and master…for the first time in history, people would become dependent for their locomotion on a commercial source or energy. There would be as many customers for the oil industry…as there were families, the entire population would become the oil merchants' customers. (p. 4)

On asking the mother about the option for travelling in public transport say by bus or in Delhi metro, she further reiterated, "*you cannot rely on buses and after getting down from metro again you have to walk or take rickshaw…'having a car' be it small is must in today's time."* From her point of view we can sense the strong preference towards having a car which is a symbol of independence, provides sufficient mobility (which again is questionable)[59] time saving mantra according to this mother.

Rather than saving time, the automobile and ever increasing congestion on the road ends up spending one's time, energy and fuel. Gorz (1973) cites that, "the more widespread fast vehicles are within a society, the more time-beyond a certain point-people will spend and lose on travel" (p. 6). And ultimately citing the over dependence on automobiles, Gorz (1973) reiterates that from being a sign of privilege, the car is perceived as a necessity. He cites,

> between 8 and 9:30 a.m., between 5:30 and 7 p.m., and on weekends for five and six hours the escape routes stretch out into bumper to bumper processions going (at best)

[59] This aspect of mobility is questionable with respect to increasing pollution and traffic rates of the city. Here mobility is preferred ignoring the amount of pollution and traffic which every vehicle adds to. Also, this 'mobility' must be read in context of long hours of 'traffic jam' that such vehicles result into wherein, in the name of mobility people are made to spend a considerable number of hours per day struggling struck in traffic-jam.

> the speed of a bicyclist and in a dense cloud of gasoline fumes. What remains of the car's advantages? What is left when, inevitably, the top speed on the roads is limited to exactly the speed of the slowest car? (p. 7)

The privilege of having a car, to be able to ride it smoothly- during peak hours in the city becomes the disadvantage of people that traps them in traffic and at times massive congestion up to many hours. Ever increasing population of cars and need of ample parking space, is no doubt creating a nuisance to people, where public spaces are being occupied and turned into *fenced-off* spaces, be it at the cost of converting children's potential play space into parking. Also, it is to be noted that the *care-free* way of playing cricket in the street is on decline. As one of the reasons for it is parked cars, which might get damaged if children play cricket or hit or break its window glass while playing. This could also be one of the reasons why *cricket-academies* are preferred rather than encouragement to play in the street. The lanes which were installed with iron gates and were closed at one end were so crowded with parked vehicles that it hardly left three feet of space to walk through the lane. One could hardly even ride a bicycle there. The space left only could be utilised for *careful walking*; careful because while walking or even cycling- one has to take care that the- lustrous, shiny, new and possibly very expensive cars parked there must not get dented. Every open space in the locality it seems is an undeclared parking space.

Following are a few pictures that show numerous parked cars in lanes and by-lanes of the localities.

Figure 37: *Cars parked in Munirka Vihar on a weekday. Picture clicked in the summer of 2018.*

Figure 38: *Cars parked on a regular day at DDA flats Munirka. Picture clicked in spring 2019.*

Following is the picture form DDA flats Munirka, where the previously open by-lane, is converted into a safe *zone for parking*, by installing iron gates on both the sides. The politics of looking at open space is such that idle lying open spaces are understood as *wasted* space where the urge is to convert every bit of it into parking space or any other utility space.

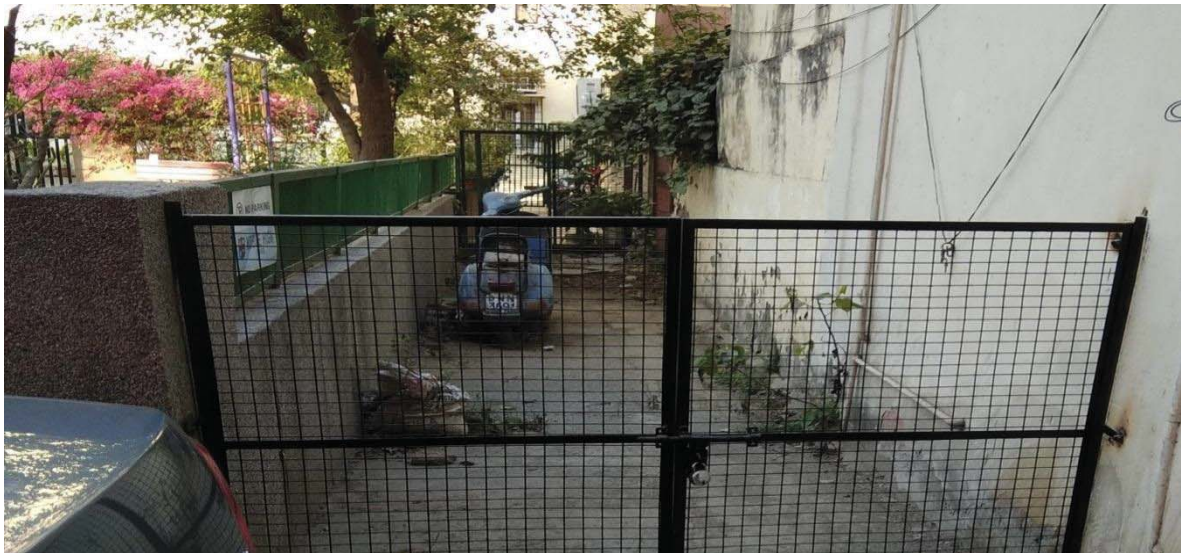

Figure 39: *Earlier open, but now enclosed- a space turned into parking for two-wheelers at DDA flats Munirka. Picture clicked in spring 2018.*

A resident shared, "see as per needs people have done minor modifications…for the benefit of residents". Not provided originally with the car-parking space, the residents have rather *modified* the space by encroaching the previously thought of park or common space. The picture given below shows one such patch of land, which is modified for the benefit of residents that is *car-owners,* without imagining children as part of the residential space.

Figure 40: *Modified open space, turned into exclusive parking for RWA members. Picture clicked in spring, 2018.*

Following are the pictures of yet new *temporary techniques* of converting open spaces and lanes into parking space, by putting link chains.

Figure 41: *Temporary setup for converting open space into parking. Pictures from DDA flats Munirka clicked during spring 2019.*

Referring to encroachment of commons in the context of Mexico city, Illich (1983) writes:

> [C]ity, streets are no more for people. They are now roadways for automobiles, for buses, for taxis, cars, and trucks. People are barely tolerated on the streets unless they are on their way to a bus stop. If people now sat down or stopped on the street, they would become obstacles for traffic, and traffic would be dangerous to them. The road has been degraded from a commons to a simple resource for the circulation of vehicles. People can circulate no more on their own. Traffic has displaced their mobility. They can circulate only when they are strapped down and are moved. (p. 3)

The open space is recently (in the year 2019) only occupied by putting up link chains. Previously this space was lying open and at times was used by street-hawkers for parking their stall, and used by children from Munirka Village, Fakkarwada Mohalla to play running games, badminton and so on. Citing an environment consultant, Manne (2005) also reports that nowadays "more space is devoted to car-parking rather than actual spaces for children to play in open" (p. 291). Such a practice was registered at DDA flats Munirka and Vasant Kunj DDA alike where streets recorded the presence of *more number of cars* as compared to *individuals*. Monopoly of few over the public space i.e. street, the road which is meant for walking on, resulted in children and pedestrians losing their rights. It appears as if with respective apartments, DDA owners have also claimed the lanes and streets meant for public use. More, the efforts are done in creating parking spaces; results in shrinking of and depriving children of *open spaces* in their own neighbourhood. With more and more presence of vehicles and private cars on the street, the street space acquires a new meaning. More than belonging to people, the street spaces are understood as belonging to automobiles, as Gorz (1973) mentions, "at the end of the workday, everyone ought to stay at home, and anyone found on the street after nightfall should be considered suspect of plotting evil" (p. 8). Making us aware of the politics of differentiated space and creating room for more and more transportation and vehicular circulation at the expense of people's pedestrian right, Gorz (1973) reminds us,

> [A]lways connect it to the problem of the city, of the social division of labour, and to the way this compartmentalises the many dimensions of life. One place for work, another for "living", a third for shopping, a fourth for learning, a fifth for entertainment. The way our space is arranged carries on the disintegration of people that begins with the division of labour in factory. It cuts a person into slices, it cuts our time, our life, into separate slices so that in

each one you are a passive consumer at the mercy of the merchants, so that it never occurs to you that work, culture, communication, pleasure, satisfaction of needs, and personal life can and should be one and the same thing: a unified life, sustained by the social fabric of community. (p. 10)

With increasing demarcation and differentiation of even public spaces, life of people and especially children in the city is getting increasingly fragmented and compartmentalised.

3.5 Power-Politics: Converting City's Commons into Inaccessible Zones

City's public spaces are increasingly becoming privatised zones. As seen in the section above, how lanes and by-lanes are converted into parking space, this section would share few more instances of the same with respect to public parks. Maintained under public-private partnership, even park spaces that are part of city commons are increasingly used and turned into class-specific zones of facilities. In the name of aesthetics, public spaces are cleared off, fenced-off and used for private purposes say of *parking*.

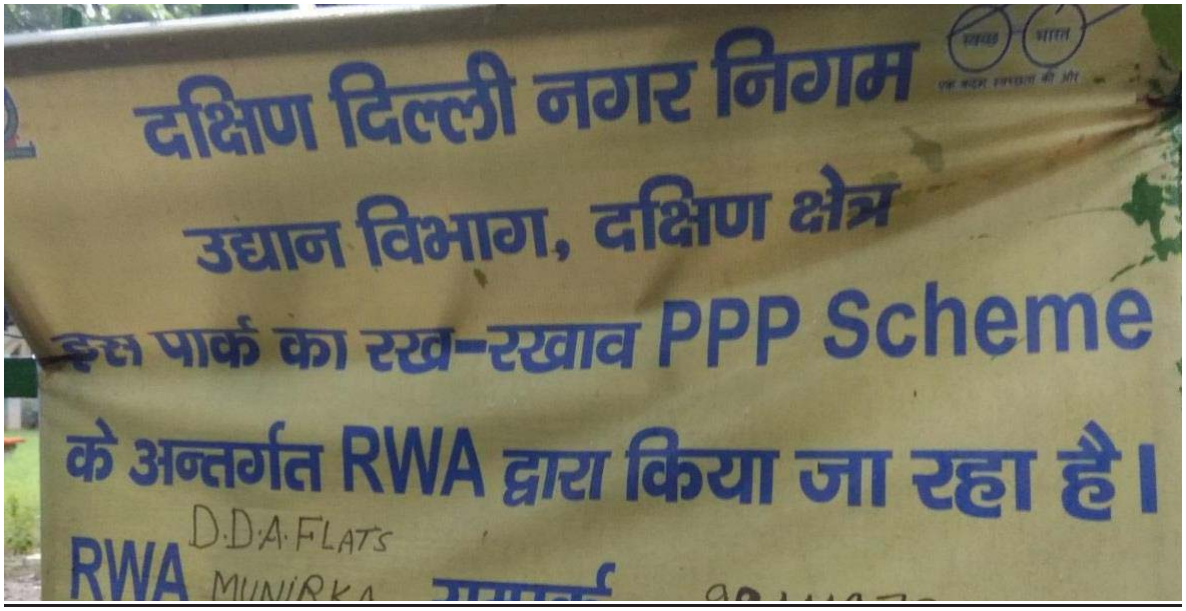

Figure 42: *Display board at one of the parks in DDA flats Munirka depicting its regulatory body - RWA under PPP scheme. Picture clicked in summer of 2018.*

Bourdieu's (1990) concept of symbolic violence can be deployed here which shows the complex class relations between different groups and their respective claims thereby even

on public (private) spaces as well. In the photos below it is shown how this park at DDA flats Munirka, that was used by children from Motilal Nehru Camp is now having two swings locked-up. The swings were fine in condition, not broken and it seemed it was not locked even keeping any safety issue in mind but probably was locked by the residents of the locality who stay in vicinity, in order to claim their right over this park and to indirectly give message to these children and people- who can be classified as lower socio-income group, that they do not belong there.

Figure 43: *One set of swings is locked up at one of the parks in DDA flats Munirka. Picture clicked in spring 2018.*

Figure 44: Another park locked up at DDA flats Munirka. Picture clicked in spring 2018.

Yet another DDA park across the lane was locked up and turned into a private garden. On asking these children, "why don't they go to that park as it has different slides and play equipment, they can easily climb up its boundary wall and go inside"? One of the children shared, "*uspe nahi jate wo bhaga dete hain, gaali deke*" (we do not go there, they would not allow us to play by abusing us). Another child reiterated saying, "*waha jaane ki himmat bhi mat kario, pitai ho jayegi*" (do not even dare to go there, you would be beaten up). Possibly these children have experienced beforehand harsh behaviour (maybe they have got scolded for entering or playing there) of residents in and around that locality which made the child to comment in this tone. The unsaid, unspoken rules (Bourdieu, 1990) about the claim *of space* were so clear to these children, which they were following. It is important to note here that the layers and boundaries of claim of spaces coexist at times harmoniously but also in contradictory and uneasy manner. We can say that children from Motilal Nehru Camp are coming to DDA flats Munirka and claiming the park and play space; but at the same time they also know to what extent can they be allowed (in relatively rich people's spaces), as one

swing was locked in this park also where these children were playing and it seems children were very well aware of who did it who can do it who has the authority to claim it and their own (social) positioning. It is not that these children cannot break that lock or chain. They can break it in minutes by banging a brick against it multiple times but they would not do. Why? Probably because, perhaps they cannot claim it (further)? And somewhere, they too believe that it does not belong to them but to other people- 'who have houses there'. Also, a mother from DDA flats Munirka (whose family is residing there for years but as a tenant) pointing to an enclosed park said,

> *...ab dekho ye park band kar rakha hai, this is not open for anybody, anyone cannot even go and sit there, forget about playing kyuki unhoone usko maintain kar rakha hai wo kharab ho jayega ...buzurgon ko bhi nahi baithne dete... yaha bohot politics hai, groups bane hue hain, ye buddhe logo ke aur koi kaam nahi hai sab RWA mein yahi karte hain* (now see this park has also been locked up, this is not open for anybody, one cannot even go and sit there forget about playing, because they have maintained it, it would get spoiled… they do not allow even senior citizens to go there…here is so much politics, so many groups have been in place, these senior and aged RWA members keep their hold on everything).

Since anyone from their family cannot represent the concerns as they are tenants and not owners, their concerns hardly get registered by the Welfare Association representatives. This instance shows that not only children, but even adults are not spared-off the *class-based* discrimination and groupism, even when they too reside in the same locality. RWA would have absolute control over the locality and its functioning.

3.6 Public Parks as Disciplining Sites: Stories of Instructed Usage and Aesthetics

Public spaces can also be read as disciplining spaces, that in a way direct people of its usage including do's and don'ts. Often public parks have numerous directions installed for various users. Few such directions regarding children's play are depicted in the pictures below. Parks being the area meant for a variety of uses puts restrictions on children playing football, volleyball, hockey, cricket and any other such game.

In earlier sections we have seen how street spaces are turned into restricted zones and now with so many restrictions on different kinds of games that children play, even in parks and gardens in a way adds to the push factors for *paid* and *structured training of children* at *sports academies*.

Also, maintained for beautification and aesthetics, public spaces have increasingly been museumised rather than put to use by the inhabitants. Another such example of it is the space under the flyover Munirka (on Olof Palme Marg) which was used by some communities for their *make-shift* arrangement was made cleared (later in the year 2018) and the Munirka Village Park has been installed in place, which again is being safe-guarded by gates and fences.

Figure 45: *Different boards displaying instructions to use the respective parks and gardens. Pictures from different parks of Delhi, collected from 2016-2019.*

Figure 46: *Beautified space under Munirka flyover. Picture clicked in Winters 2019.*

3.7 Stranger[60]-Danger Syndrome: Felt Need for an Extra Eye for Supervision of Children in Risky Zones

It was registered during the course of this research, that now people have increasingly become sceptical of *public spaces* and often dub it as a *danger –zone*. Numerous stories that children shared include of murder, kidnapping, chain-snatching and so on. No doubt increasing crime-rates in the city have in a way generated fear in the minds of people including children, which has resulted in shrinking usage of public spaces.

About Rock garden, few children shared, "*Didi yaha pe apko pta hai 3 murder ho chuke hain, yaha pe maar dia tha aur light se chipka dia tha jisse lage ki current se chipka hai, aur ek ko chaaku mar ke bhag gaya tha, aur ek baar yaha jhaadiyo ke peeche fenk dia tha usme sariya ghupa tha itna badaa…kisi ne murder kar dia tha, fir police ai thi pooch-taach hui thi*" (…do you know, here 3 murders have happened in recent past, one person got

[60] Using Simmel's (1950) understanding, stranger here means a person who occupies a different symbolic world, in terms of socio-economic and cultural form despite existing in the same 'geographical space'.

electrocuted, another got killed by stabbing, another one was murdered by stabbing with sharp iron rods and was thrown here in the bushes behind, police also came for investigation). The similar is also reported for rock garden by a resident from Munirka village as, "it would be a little stretch to say that the redevelopment of the park has made the place crime free. But yes, there has been a massive improvement" (Sharma, 2018). About DDA park in between Coolie Camp and Vasant Vihar Police Station on Nelson Mandela Road, a group of residents from Sewa Camp (located behind Masjid and Police Colony Vasant Vihar) shared news of yet another murder, following which for few days the park had been locked up and people including children did not go to the place afterwards, due to the fear of *potential risky zone* which this park has become. My own experience and narrow escape from possible abduction, a few meters away from Vasant Vihar Police-Station, in broad daylight instilled fear in me to the extent that it restricted my movement in that zone and for months I have not visited that place alone. Similar instances were also reported in the past where women were dragged into empty buses and assaulted, during the night in the empty buses parked outside the transport department (Nelson Mandela Marg, lonely & unguarded, 2009). Such instances indeed impact the usage of any space (open) and make people roll-back from its usual usage. Increasing *crime-rates* (109 children sexually abused every day, 2020) adds up to this fear multi-fold and thereby making some spaces and zones psychologically *un-available* to people. Following such news, withdrawing from the use of public spaces further instils and increases manifold the fear of the unknown. Valentine (2004) remarks it as "paradoxical" (p. 15) where with such instances the knowledge about one's neighbourhood as well as the world expands on one hand and the opportunities available to children gets restricted in the wake of their protection and safety on the other. Such changes then sets up the base for "micro geographies of risk" (Valentine 2004, p. 15) attached with public spaces.

Jack (2010) describes how *protective discourse* towards children and their usage of space have created anxious parents which in turn has impacted and resulted in reduced freedom of children. Children's independent journey to and from school are on decline. Most of the time it is an adult who is accompanying children or they are to be carried away in a school-bus or cab and not to be left alone. This anxiety is indicative of a wider risky and intolerant society that we have become. Jack (2010) pointing towards the shrinking (geographical) world of children mentions that, "many 'normal' childhood activities, such as climbing trees, playing in the local park or streets and riding a bike to a friend's house, were again not permitted by significant proportions of parents unless children were supervised by an adult" (p. 761). Similar was registered in the case of a mother from DDA flats Munirka, who strongly mentioned, "*somebody has to sit and supervise. yaha akele chhod nahi sakte aap bacche ko…ek second mein bacha gayab hai"* (somebody has to sit and supervise while children play downstairs, you cannot leave your child alone, s/he would get kidnapped within a minute).

In Vasant Kunj DDA another mother shared about her feelings on the similar lines, "*aj kal ka time wo ho gaya na ki safe feel nahi karte anjaan logo se baat-cheet karne mein..aaj kal ka mahaul hi ajeeb sa ho gaya hai… isiliye koi kisi pe bharosa nahi karna chahta*" (today's time is such, one does not feel safe even in talking to strangers, nobody wants to trust on anyone). Referring about her son who is 14 years old this mother further continued,

> *ab ye bolta hai khelne jaane ki mujhe yun rehta hi kaha ja raha hai..kuch ho na jaye is wajah se isko bolti hu beta ghar pe hi khel lo na colony mein hi khel lo… kahi zada jata bhi nahi hai and if I offer him that should I accompany you to the ground then he says aap mat chalo…baaki bacche bolenge ki khelne bhi mummy ko leke aya hai..akele bhejo to darr laga rehta hai sath chalo to usko insult feel hoti hai..aaj kal*

bacche ek pal ke liye bhi aankh se ojhal ho jaye na to darr rehta hai (now he demands for going out and play, but I have this in back of mind where is he going what if anything happens to him and that is why I ask him to play in colony only…he does not go anywhere, if I offer him to accompany to the playground…other children would then make fun of him that he has brought his mother to the play, if I send him alone I would be worried and if I go along then he would feel insulted…nowadays children if gets disappeared even for a second also, is worrisome for parents).

At DDA flats Munirka, a mother of 11 year old girl child shared an instance, which depicts her feelings of mistrust and heightened fear,

Yesterday I had called somebody to clean my car, he was working at the parking lot peeche hi hai hamara parking. 5:00-5:30 baje maine apni daughter ko bola uncle ko chai de ana zara, this is my home. Chai dene gai hai aur wapis ai hai bas…parking is closed area gate hain usme. To main neeche aa rahi thi kisi kaam se I found that there was a young boy who was following her, accha wo saamne mujhe dekh ke shock ho gaya usne naam padha mohan singh aur fatafat usne poocha ye mohan singh ji ka ghar kaun sa hai? Then I saw him ki wo andar gaya hai lekin usne mohan singh ke ghar ki bell nahi bajai fir wo wapis aya, maine usko yaha toka maine kaha apko kisi ke ghar jana tha? to kheta nahi aunty main na kisi ka wait kar raha hu mere aur log aane wale hain, 5 min ke liye bhi aap bacche ko nahi chhod sakte. (yesterday I had called somebody to clean my car, he was working at the parking which is just back side of our house. Around 5:00-5:30 p.m. I asked my daughter to give tea to the person cleaning our car in the parking [showing direction] this is our home. She just went and came back within the gap of a few minutes. Parking area is enclosed with gates. I was also coming downstairs for some work and saw a young boy following her [my daughter]. OK then he got shocked after seeing me, instantly he read the

nameplate and asked me which one is Mohan Singh ji's residence. Then I saw him go inside [the lobby area] but didn't ring the door-bell. I again enquired him asking-you wanted to go to someone's residence? Then he replied, no aunty, I am actually waiting for a few friends…you cannot leave your child alone even for 5 minutes).

This mother further added, "*safe to kuch nahi hai isiliye kuch physical activity nahi hai unless and until school apko promote kar raha hai kisi physical activity mein"* (nothing is safe, and therefore no physical activity available unless and until school provides you with it). But within a few minutes of conversation, this mother further shared about school settings and her concerns for her daughter's safety at school. She added,

"Ab jaise meri daughter jaati hai, back of the mind hame bhi rehta hai winters hain 6:30 a.m. baje school pohochna hai, bilkul andhera hota hai school mein koi nahi hota, main drop karkar aati hu. To itna bada school hain modern school, football team ke bacche aate hain at 7:00 a.m. wo peeche wale park mein jaate hain ye front side pe khelti hai (modern school has got a big campus). Apka muh daba ke koi apko kisi class mein le jaye apko nahi pata chalega, kisi ko bhanak bhi nahi lagegi. But ye trust hain na… main chhod ke ati hu na isko..andar se dhuk-dhuk ho rahi hoti hai meri…main khadi rehti hu waha pe 15 mintute ki jab iska coach ayega jab main isko andar bhejungi nahi to gaadi mein bitha ke rakhti hu. But then again you have to trust the coach…he is a young fellow…jawaan ladka hai wo..kya uski neeyat nahi kharab ho sakti? Ho sakti hai bilkul …par jab tak aap trust nahi karoge to aap bacche ko ghar mein bitha lo… Kahi na kahi to thoda sa karna padega na, usko thoda bohot gyan de rakha hai good touch bad touch ka lekin, hai to bacha hi, 6th class ki lakdi yaar chhota hi bacha hai…trust karna padta hai, par pehle ke jaise blind-faith nahi kar sakte kisi par bhi" (Like my daughter goes to school, back of the mind we too have this fear as she has to reach by 6: 30 a.m. it is very dark in the school [and during

winters]. You won't find anyone else [other students and teachers] in the school. I drop her daily to the school. Modern school is so huge, and children of the football team arrive by 7:00 a.m., they play at the park backside, but she [her daughter] plays at the front side [park]. Modern school has got a big campus. Anybody might press your mouth and may drag you inside any [empty] classroom. Nobody would get to know. But it is trust only…I drop her at school… but out of concern my heart beats get faster, at times I stay there for 15-20 minutes and would come only once her coach arrives, otherwise I keep her sitting in the car only. But then again you have to trust the coach who is a young-fellow. His intentions also may go wrong. It may…but until you trust, you cannot send your child anywhere…for how long would you make them sit at home…somewhere you have to trust. Though I have taught her about good touch and bad touch, she is still a child. Student of class VI, she is still a child only. One cannot have blind-faith like earlier days, but have to trust).

In both the above mentioned narratives, mothers of teen-age children (having boy and girl child) sound equally worried. It could be sensed that these mothers are extremely terrified at even the thought of leaving their children alone for a few seconds. One mother is ready to accompany her child to the playground, whereas the other keeps a close check on her daughter's movement within the neighbourhood as well as at her school ensuring their child's safety. This fear of the unknown and uncertain is deeply ingrained in parents' minds which ultimately get passed on to children as well. Regardless of gender and age, parents are worried about their children's safety alike and are ready to ferry their children to different places be it school or play space.

About sending children to open spaces inside locality only, a mother from DDA flats Munirka shared, "*Hamare yaha pehle ek chowkidaar baitha karta tha to uske chalte ye sab bacche neeche aate the wo bechare guzar gaye…to tabse inka neeche utarna hi band ho gaya*

hai" (We used to have a guard here, due to security children could come and play here, but he passed away and since then children's play downstairs [outdoors] is also restricted). According to this mother, the issue of safety can be fixed to some extent by having a guard in their locality. It is interesting to note that at Vasant Kunj B sector, one could register the presence of guards stationed, within a few meters of distance on even a one stretch of (straight) road. It seems for *safety* and *secure life* residents of DDA (and alike gated communities) are ready to shell out any amount of money- in terms of salary for guards or for installing centralised CCTV).

"No amount of security is sufficient in today's time", mentioned a father from Vasant Kunj DDA. According to him, one cannot secure children from ill-elements. He mentioned that, *"if you try and secure them by not sending to park, who's gonna secure them with ill-effects of technology? Recently this Blue-whale game came in, who knows when and from which source your child fall prey to it"?* He further added that, "*sabse badi security yahi hai, you should teach them, teach your children from starting about right and wrong…aur isiliye aaj ke waqt mein sabse mushkil kaam hai parent hona"* (the best way to secure your children is to teach them about right and wrong, and it is one of the reason why parenting is a challenging task today). Sharing about his and his wife's limitation in terms of parenting, this father shared that, "*ab hum dono job mein hain, how do we know hamari absence mein bacche kya kar rahe hain?...Jitna parents khayal aur dhyan rakh lete hain utna koi nahi rakhta*" (now we both-my wife and myself are into job, we do not know what children are doing in our absence, the way parents can take-care their children, no nobody else can do).

Also, having slums like Coolie Camp and Kusumpur along with other villages in the vicinity, which are always in the constant contestations with the DDA residents here for their respective *spatial* claims, security becomes all the more important for the residents of DDA.

With rising crime-rates and along with it rising salary[61] of the residents here, people's ideas of *security* are also changing; Pathak (2019) also informs us how this *surveillance culture* is on rise.

Whereas when asked about *safety* and *security* issues from the residents of Coolie Camp, there too people are concerned but have in a way their own ways of dealing with it. A mother from Coolie Camp mentioned, "*ab kaam pe to jana hai, nahi kamayenge to khayenge kya, baccho ko sikha ke rakhte hain, aas paas hai jaan ne wale bina bharose ke door desh mein kaha reh sakte hai, ye sab apne hi log hain*" (we have to go for work, otherwise it is difficult to sustain, children are told beforehand to be cautious and in neighbourhood also all are known people, without trust one cannot live in a city- far from home). It was also registered that women who go for work (as domestic help in nearby localities) leave their children in the care of their neighbours- or mothers who stay back at home. Many women at Camp are also working as tailor, and take minor assignments related to stitching and other related works that can be done from staying back at home. An old lady from the Camp, referring to children and their safety mentioned, "*sab apna hi balak hai darr kis baat ko"* (All are our children, why should we be afraid off). Also, it was registered that toddlers mastering their walk (in the by-lanes) could be seen freely exploring their environment, rather than restricted on the pretext of *safety*. The relative safety of children registered here can be credited to the sense of (imagined) "community" (Valentine, 2004, p. 24) amongst the residents of Coolie Camp, which provides them confidence that there are always "eyes on the street" (Valentine, 2004, p. 25) guarding their children.

Middle and upper-middle class gated communities, by demarcating their residential spaces, are creating a new type of *segregation* which further is heightening the *fear of the unknown*. Guterson (1992) in the context of the United States traces the development of gated

[61] As they have the capacity to pay for getting *secured*.

communities, which earlier were designed for having a leisure world are now increasingly targeting a broader market which includes families with children. Lofland (1998) also mentioned how protective spaces in the form of gated-communities are preferred for the kind of promise of *security* which they promise to provide. Tracing the roots of fear through a socio-psychological perspective, Low (2001) also describes how this discourse of fear from potential criminals in a way rationalised class-based exclusion (with respect to housing). Low (2001) further reiterates that how *loss of place* experienced by the residents of city in a new and distant land results in buying (and building up) a defensive space which is safeguarded by a wall, which they call *home*; to quote, "adding walls, gates and guards produces a landscape that encodes class relations and residential segregation more permanently in the built environment" (p. 45). And such discourses around fear then, legitimises and heightens the segregation.

This heightened anxiety of parents and safety-security issues, lead to decreased usage of public spaces and danger of strangers, has led to many market oriented and supervised services a boost. Children's activities are increasingly confined into institutionalised settings and other *class-driven* and *paid services* which claim to provide 24*7 live CCTV feed to parents. Many such services include sports academies, hobby classes, and paid gaming sessions at malls and so on. Also, availability of resources including internet and TV have replaced the need for going out and play, and often act as fillers of children's time.

3.8 Under-utilised Parks: Un-popular Fenced-off Spaces

Following are a few examples from the field that shows that though there are parks installed with latest gym equipment and swings but are still underutilised and not so popular amongst children and residents. One of the reasons could be the strict *fencing-off* and making strict entry-exit gates which opens towards a particular side (of locality), of these spaces which demarcates its class right and makes it separate from public commons and thereby

heighten segregation of spaces with respect to neighbourhood and park space further. Maharaja Surajmal park is located behind the bus-stop of Vasant Vihar (on Olof Palme Marg), is mostly used as a crossing way or short-cut for coming to the bus-stop by the residents of Munirka Village as well as general commuters. This park is also having underground parking facility which is used by the residents of Munirka Village as well as few residents from DDA flats Munirka. Though highly accessible, but for general leisure and play activities, this park is not used by children from DDA flats Munirka. In general parents do not consider it *safe* as due to the close proximity with the main road and bus stop, this space is well in the access of people (strangers) who might act as the potential source of danger to the children. Swings installed in the park are well-used by children while going to and coming back from school, as well as children playing in the presence (and guidance) of supervising adults. But it is a rare sight to spot children alone playing by themselves in this park.

Figure 47: *Maharaja Surajmal Park behind Vasant Vihar bus stop. Picture clicked in the summer of 2018.*

The pictures below are of internal parks from DDA flats Munirka, where it is evident that the common open spaces are also fenced up and even the entry-exit gates are being locked up by the residents (probably members of Residents Welfare Association), which further discourages its usage by children.

Figure 48: *Internal park of DDA flats Munirka on the way to Laxmi Market (towards Canara Bank Munirka) Picture clicked in the summer of 2018.*

This picture below is of yet another park located at Baba Gang Nath Marg side having gazebo as well as swings and open gym equipment installed. Still this park is also not preferred by resident children, as one 10 years old boy responded, " *jagah to hai bhi nahi khelne ki…pitch bhi banegi yaha, sirf girls khel sakte hain (and laughed)"* (there is no space to play…can't make pitch here [for cricket]…only girls can play here). As the open gym, swings and gazebo already occupied half of the park, the child pointed out that there is no space to play [cricket] and therefore would not prefer this as play space. Rather the child mockingly remarked that only girls can play here as they mostly prefer sitting games unlike boys who like running games.

Figure 49: *One of the parks at DDA flats Munirka alongside the main road Baba Gang Nath Marg. Picture clicked in summer 2018.*

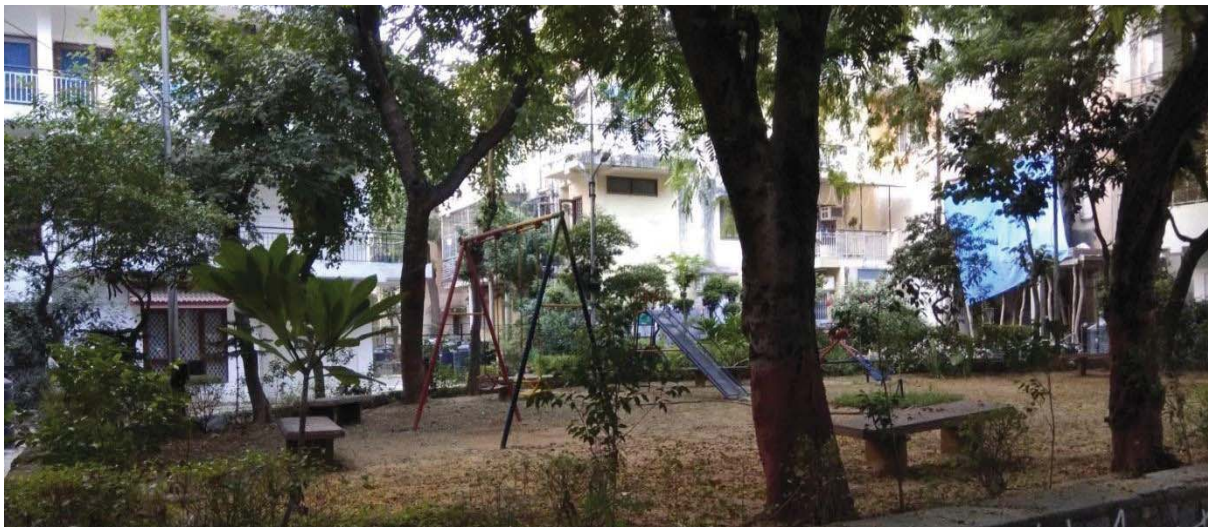

Figure 50: *One of the parks at DDA Vasant Kunj C 3. Picture clicked in summer 2017.*

On one side locking up the common spaces, *fencing-off* demarcates the space as *enclosed* and makes it exclusively available to the selected individuals (who may or may not use it); on the other side- not maintained properly, no ample space to play running games as preferred by children, not considered safe enough are some of the reasons that resulted in abandonment of many of such spaces.

3.9 Paid Play-Services on Rise: Parental Preferences towards Structured Activities

In the sections above, it is seen that- how in order to *secure* children, often their movements in public places like parks and streets are restricted. Discourses around potential *danger* have in a way instilled the fear in parents' as well as children which has impacted their spontaneous and free-play. Sending a child to a sports academy is preferred over letting them go and play in the neighbourhood. Such culture has laid the path for strong preference of *structured activities* which can be classified in a numerous way for sports, hobby classes, for crafts and so on. A mother from DDA flats Munirka mentioned, "*we have been fortunate enough ki hamare dono bacche kisi na kisi activity mein hain…now I am again planning to send him for cricket coaching. Kaha bhejoge na bacche ko warna…*" (we have been fortunate enough that our both the children are into some or other activity…now I am again planning to send my son for cricket coaching. Otherwise where would you send your child, how would you keep them engaged?). Here Gabriel (2004) can help understand the said preference as he writes,

> In many European cities, children's spontaneous play in the streets has been replaced by car-dependent, adult-supervised games that are formally organised and distant from the local neighbourhood. In these situations of spatially demarcated play parents have to exercise more duty and control. (p. 180)

Clear and strict boundaries of zones have made different spaces and segregation at peak. Sports complexes at DDA flats Munirka, Vasant Kunj DDA and Khajan Singh Swimming Academy (at Baba Gang Nath Marg) register heavy membership of children during summer holidays. One could see parents (majorly mothers) accompanying children for the swimming class early morning and during evening hours, in summer holidays. It is interesting that even in this structured setting, accompanying parents keep sitting throughout the session, until the child is swimming and are not ready to leave their child alone.

Figure 51: *Representative picture from Khajan Singh Swimming Complex. Picture clicked in summer 2018.*

Figure 52: *Play area in one of the shopping malls in Delhi. Picture clicked in summer 2018.*

Play-zones in shopping complexes are also a popular destination of children (from DDA) nowadays. As shared by one child from Vasant Kunj DDA, "*side wale mall mein games hoti hain New Year, Christmas par bada maza ata hai"* (In the mall besides our home, they organise games on New Year and Christmas, it is fun to go there). On special occasions

and during festivities, malls too organise various games and programs for children, related to karaoke competitions, craft activities, reading sessions organised by book-shop during summer various activities, which makes such spaces more attractive towards children. Other than festivities, fully air-conditioned and dedicated play zones are maintained well in malls in which by paying per hour rate, children can spend time there meanwhile, their parents can do the necessary *shopping*.

On the other side there are parents who are organising *play-dates* for their children, to provide them social exposure and opportunities for sociality, but in under tightly controlled conditions. Bhatia (2014) in her article writes, "lack of quality time spent with kids and nuclear family set-ups are making Gurgaon parents look up ways to ensure their kids get play time and do not lag behind in social skills". Play date- originally an American concept means organising arranged social gatherings by parents for their children. Often mothers on various face-book pages and WhatsApp groups discuss and plan these gatherings on a mutually decided venue- be it their own home, a neighbourhood park, play zone at nearby shopping mall or so on. Bhatia (2014) compiles various reasons for the preferences of such gatherings in her piece, some of which are,

> [C]hildren learn to deal with unfamiliar situations and people, a good-alternative to joint families, parents not too comfortable with children playing in parks, if children's friends are out for vacations, helping children make new friends, dual benefits- both children and their mums can find new company and make new friends. (para. 3)

It is important to note here that instead of letting children decide and proceed, it is now parents who are playing the key-role in organising these play-dates and trying to provide opportunities for sociability (class-specific) to children in an orchestrated manner. Katz (2001) points out that access to safe outdoor space and safe living environment is a class privilege, where parents as per their class locations and purchase-ability are able to get access to specific leisure and organized sports for their children.

3.10 Google Play: Gateway to the Virtual World of Play and Gaming

With changing urban landscape various other variables influence children's play say the very usage of play material, impact of media, and availability of playmates and so on. Children have mentioned that it is during weekends only they get time to play outdoors with their friends (Rybczynski,1991) otherwise most of the time they play various games on phone, on computer or use the internet. Technology has changed children's play pattern as there is a steep rise in sedentary play. Linn (2008) critiques this irrational dependency on technology that ultimately increases screen-time, hampering children's opportunity of creative play forms and imaginative reflection.

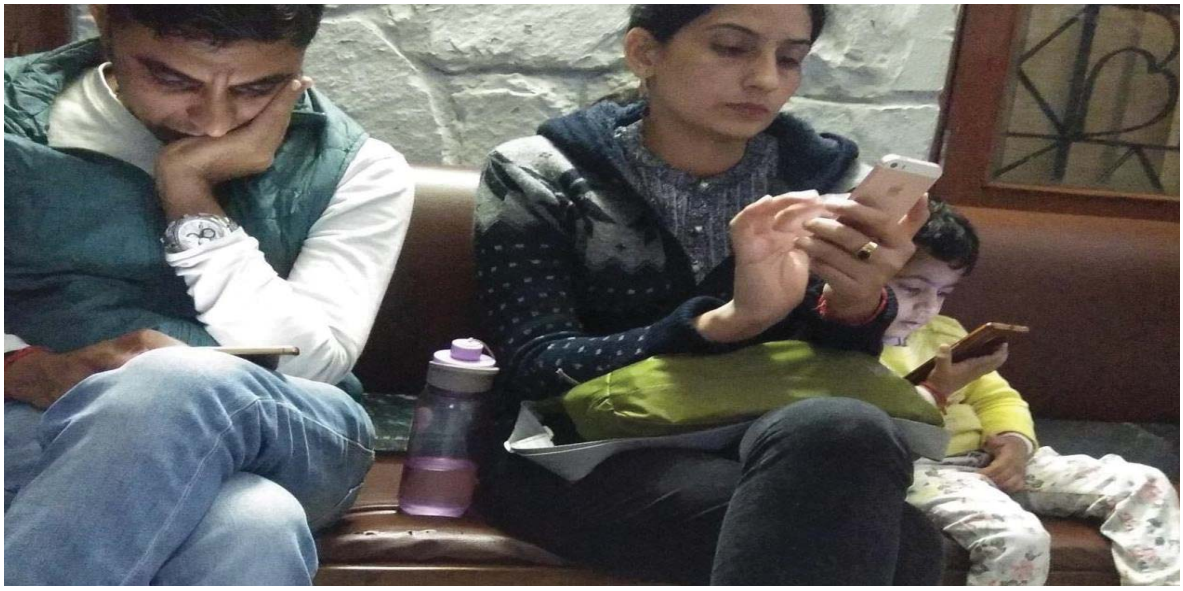

Figure 53: *Family of three- mother, father and the child; all busy on their respective smartphones. Picture clicked in winter 2018.*

In the picture above, both parents and their child can be seen busy in their respective smart-phones. It was registered during the course of this research (and otherwise) that technology and exposure to the virtual world was easily available to children across classes as they have easy access to it. While children from Coolie Camp shared that with their parents having smart phone and active internet connection, they like playing various games online like Ludo King, Snakes and Ladder, Laser game, Barbie Doll for which one need not depend

on the mood of other children (playmates) and they can play whenever they feel like. To quote,

> *Yaha pe apne papa ke phone mein khelti hoon..mere pas to ek hi hai wo barbie hoti hai na us ke baal banana hote hain ..mujhe khud hi aa gaya khelna…wo download karti hu na usme neeche .. ek mike hota hai na usme bol deti hu apne games jaise Barbie doll, set game aise bol deti hu waise hi aa jata hai..main to aram se khelti rehti hu bol bolkr…aur jaise jab meri ladai ho jati hai, main akele bhi khel sakti hu* (I play in my father's phone, I have only one game here that I learnt myself, there is a mike in phone [google assistant] in which can command 'barbie doll set game' and the game starts, whenever I have fight with my friends here, I prefer playing game which I can play alone)

Children have *unsupervised* access to smart-phones and various online gaming platforms which rose after the launch of Jio phone and its unlimited data plans (November 2016 onwards). Despite their economic conditions, people still manage to keep a couple of handsets with active internet connection and children too have open access to it.

A child from Vasant Kunj DDA while during conversation was getting phone-calls (from his friend). On asking him what it is about, if he could share…he shared, "*mera dost bula raha hai game ke liye"* (my friend is calling me for a game). On asking if he would like to go? This child replied, *"bahar jana nahi hai, online match hai"* (it is an online game, I do not need to go outdoors). On probing further this child shared, "*ek game hai PUBG (PlayerUnknown's Battleground), uspr saare friends sath mein khel sakte hain aur score kar skate hain"* (there is one game PUBG, on which we all friends can play together and score). PUBG is an online multiplayer battle game, in which players have to scavenge for weapons and equipment to kill others, while saving themselves from getting killed. The available safe area of the game's map decreases in size over time, with increasing levels of difficulty. In a

single game at one time up to hundreds of players can play together. Another child from DDA flats Munirka shared that she likes weekend the most, since both the parents are at home and she gets an easy access to their phones, when one phone gets discharged, she can play over another phone, "*ek phone ki battery low hoti hai to dusre wale mein game khle leti hu…"*(if one phone gets discharges, I play on the other, meantime the previous I put on charge). This child confidently shared that, *"muje nai nai games explore karna accha lagta hai, aur sab instructions hoti hai kaise game khelna hai so it's easy"* (I like exploring new games, and with easy instructions I can play easily). It is important to note that with the access of the internet, these children, because they have an easy hand in reading and understanding English further adds to their gaming skills.

On asking which all games do they play online, within seconds children shared a whole list of thirty plus games namely,

> Clash of Clans, Castle Clash, King of Thieves, Plant versus Zombies, Clash Royals, Mini Amnesia, Dragon ball Z devolution, Dawn of Steel, Major Mahim, WCC2 (Cricket game), Box Head 2, Dad N Me, Bad Ice-Cream, Ben 10, Electric Man, Toon World, Candy Crush, Farm Frenzy, Slither.io, Subway Surfer, Pokemon Go, War Robot, Lord Mobile…

The endless list which children shared depicts their exposure and confident handling of technology with respect to gaming. Majority of the games which children shared are adventure and fight based- battle games with loud noisy background tones. A 13 year old child from Vasant Kunj DDA shared that he likes to play racing games. He mentioned,

> *Racing games like NFS (need for speed-racing game) GT- race game isme missions hote hain wo complete karne padte hain, black list hoti hai, mainly to race jeetni padti hai different different car hoti hain, milestones hote hain, aur aapko ek challenge milta hai –itne time mein aapko itni race complete karni hai*" (Racing

games like NFS- Need for Speed game, GT race game, in this as players we are supposed to complete our missions, have to win the race with different cars, we receive challenge that in this much time have to complete the race).

On further probing why he likes these kinds of games, the child mentioned, *"ladkon ko to yehi pasand hote hain"* (boys like such games). Here the child linked his gendered identity with the preference for car and racing games and further had legitimised his stand.

Children from Coolie Camp shared that they watch TV and watching TV is one of their favourite activities. On TV they prefer watching Pokemon, Motu Patlu, Doremon, Chhota Bheem, Angry Birds on cartoon kids channel. Apart from these cartoon shows children also watch other daily soaps and movies, some of which they shared are: Businessman 2, Bahubali 2, Kanchana, Rudra ke Rakshak (on big magic is a fantasy TV serial), Tom & Jerry, Shinchan, Mahabali Veer Hanuman and other such programs telecasted. However, children from Vasant Kunj DDA shared that they do not have any specific TV programme which they like or wait for rather they prefer playing video-game.

Allison (2002) in her work has mentioned how *Pokemon,* started in 1997, grew quickly in a multi-stranded empire- including comic books, various games, cards, toy figures and other merchandise items. The basic premises of the game is to discover and catch (by fighting) as many new monsters as possible. Accumulation of these *pocket monsters* hence stems from the name Pokemon. The catch word of Pokemon is, "gotta catch 'em all" (Allison, 2002, p. 178).

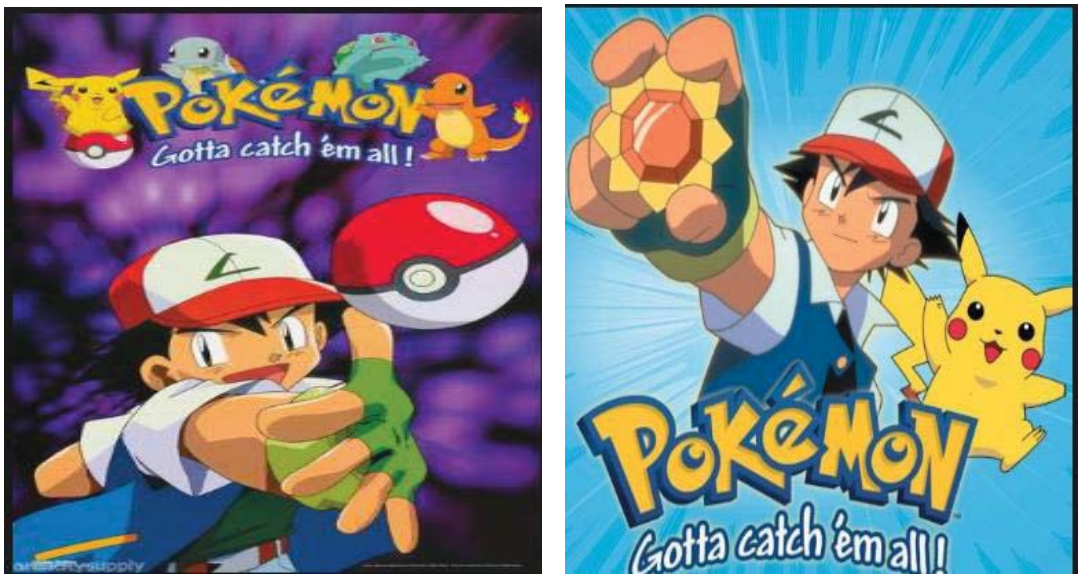

Figure 54: *Representative picture of Pokemon (Source: Google).*

Pikachu- with its smallish, yellow body and cuddly cute features (as explained in Allison, 2002, p. 179) makes the best buddy pokemon of the lead character, Ash. Thereby exhibiting the characteristics of property and pal that is of both capital and companion foregrounds a different form of intimate or cute capitalism, in which Japan has become the leading broker. Constituting a fling theme park in the form of Pikachu painted on aircraft and related merchandise on board, such capitalism is cashing upon the industry set around children and families with children. In similar ways possession of other assets of children namely Hello Kitty, doremon, mickey and other characters figures on clothing, food, even stationary material of children targeting children as consumers.

Video games with time have become the most popular form of entertainment for children and young generation. "Gaming", as Orr (2006) writes, "is no longer the exclusive domain of children…now created for, and marketed to, adults as well" (p. 39). With improved technology, the gaming industry now offers reality like experience through their products. It is also true that with real world-like experiences, the content of many video games has reached at controversial and obscene levels, which are not deemed fit for children and tender minds. "Video games" as Orr (2006) demonstrates, "are reshaping the way gamers

live and understand life" (p. 46) as it has become the central defining part of growing up for millions of children across the world. For gamers, games represent the part of the real world (Beck & Wade, 2004). Referring to widespread reach of the gaming industry, Beck and Wade (2004) mentioned, "penetration of games is almost certainly much broader, economically speaking, than penetration of computers and the Internet" (p. 3). Popular video games as mentioned above, allow interactive online play, where the player along with other players share the same virtual worlds together. The same was also reported by my respondents when they shared of PUBG, Clash of clans and other games like those which they often play with other players playing at the same time online[62]. "Games like GTA (Grand Theft Auto)" writes Orr (2006),

> [A]llow users to wander about a virtual field in a non-linear fashion, to realize their dreams and hopes, to explore, be tense, excites or awkward. It allows gamers to create a new virtual life for themselves…(leading to the) collapse of the supposed barrier between fiction and reality. (p. 47)

Orr (2006) further writes, "it is naïve to believe that they will not transfer any of their experiences from the gaming world to the real world" (p. 47). The similar connection can be established in relation with my respondents where young boys mentioned that they like to play war zones and adventurous games like clash of clans and PUBG etc. as it provides them *"thrill with excellent sound effects"*. But there is also a down side of such gaming addiction as well. There is a plethora of news that reports ill effects of video-games and unsupervised use of technology on children. After Blue Whale challenge (Adeane, 2019), PUBG death (Mekaad, 2019),Tik-Tok challenges (on social media) that have resulted in sustained injuries

[62] Such multiplayer e-games and e-sports have gained quite an impressive presence in Indian context after the launch of PUBG (in 2018) where now many children, and young people are taking up e-gaming as a professional activity which in turn can be translated as a career. The market of e-gaming and e-sports have grown over the period that now tournaments are being organised and professional players even win cash prizes.

to children and has claimed many children's lives (Kumar, 2019) across the world, the latest is skull- breaker challenge (Dey, 2020) in which the goal is to make the person in the middle fall on his or her back as he or she jumps.

In the age of technological seduction, it is important to note that the supposed barrier between reality and fiction collapses making space for simulacra (Baudrillard, 1994). Through such war-zone games children are embedded totally in virtual realities to the extent that they like to play games of war zones. On the other side our everyday life is filled with such simulations where via our respective televisions we also consume simulations of Balakot air strike[63] which is supposedly a real instance. Another example of such simulacra resulting in dissolution of reality and fiction is the teaser of an action game FAU-G (Fearless and United Guards).

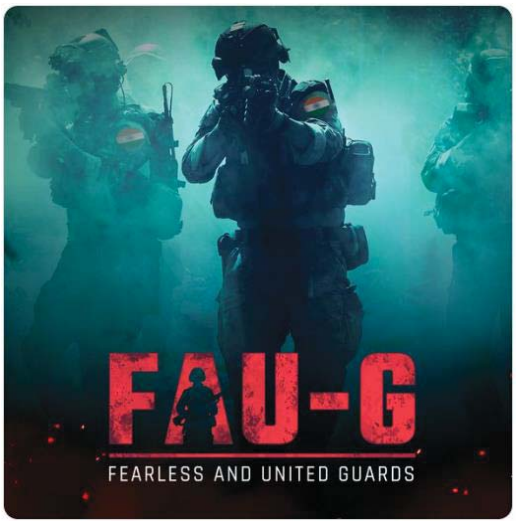

Figure 55: *Poster image of Indian action game-FAU-G, launched in November 2020. (Source: Google).*

After the ban on PUBG, by Indian government due to the tensions on India-China border during June 2020, in answer to it the Indian version of the game under the name FAU-G[64] was announced and its teaser was launched on October 25, 2020 that is on the Dussehra festival. The teaser is based on the clashes between Indian and Chinese army at Galwan

[63] The 2019 Balakot airstrike was conducted by India during the early morning hours of 26 February when Indian warplanes crossed the de facto border in the disputed region of Kashmir, and dropped bombs in the vicinity of the town of Balakot in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province in Pakistan.
[64] FAU-G or Fauji is the colloquial term for a soldier.

Valley, portraying Indian side as victorious (Akshay Kumar shares FAU-G teaser, 2020). This game is based on the "real scenarios encountered by the Indian Security Forces" (India's answer to PUBG? 2020, para. 7), and thereby through it the reality is made available to children via virtual gaming means. At one end through the game we are consuming violence, where in reality the actual tragedy has been celebrated through simulations. The spectacles in gaming as well simulation of supposedly real instances are so overwhelming that we are consumed in it totally. Our realities got constituted and sculpted through simulations that are also normalising violence in everyday lives of children and people in general.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the preference for online games has increased manifold among children (as well as adults). With the easy access of smartphones and the internet the children (gamers) now have the opportunity to earn as well (Hall, 2020; Pariani, 2020; Sheth, 2020). "What could be more rewarding than getting to play your favourite game and at the same time being paid for it", remarked a parent (in a telephonic conversation) from Vasant Kunj DDA while referring to his child's increased screen-time and recently developed e-gaming enthusiasm. On the other side children from Coolie Camp too like to play video games and e-games on the phone but often their parents keep a check. It was shared by one girl referring to her 7 years old brother that "*isne na khel khel ke phone ke saare paise khatam kar diye fir do hafte tak net nahi bharwaya"* (he has spent all the money from phone while playing [video game] then for two weeks we did not recharge for internet). The child while playing had exhausted the limited internet pack of the family's phone as well as the talk-time balance (of few hundreds rupees), following which the parents did not recharge the phone for two consecutive weeks. But had to recharge it later on, since children were receiving their homework and class lessons via WhatsApp, for which the internet pack was needed. Similar story was also reported by Verma (2020), where a teenage boy from Punjab lost nearly 16 lakh rupees from his parent's account which is linked to the smartphone, on buying in-app

items including artillery, virtual ammunition etc. The child had access to a smartphone for studying online, but ended up playing and losing his parents' savings. Referring to the surge in the number of e- gamers during COVID-19, Pariani (2020) mentions that,

> An average player spends around 4-5 hours on a game every day, which has now doubled to 8-9hours a day. Video games have now become a way of social interaction for teenagers. A good amount of working-class is also tuned to games like Ludo king or Chess. (para. 9)

The similar inclination towards video-games was also echoed by my respondents across the three selected localities, though the nature of games with respect to age, individual choices varied. For example- children from privileged backgrounds having access to multiple smartphones in the family preferred playing multiplayer games with their family and friends, children from relatively underprivileged backgrounds were playing mainly with unknown players online to win the cash prizes. With the strict lockdown and quarantine measures in place, most of the time of children's routine during COVID-19 was filled in with the *screen-time* be it for leisure- say playing video games or for studies- having online classes and taking lessons of WhatsApp (elaborated further in chapter 4). During COVID-19 children have been involved in learning coding, getting engaged with other online and technical skills as well. Not only as consumers, but children are involved in production of online content as well, where a 13 years old boy from Manipur, India has developed an online game *'Coroboi'* which is available on Google Play (Watch: 13-yr-old Manipur boy develops Covid-19 themed mobile game 'Coroboi', 2020). Further to explore the engagement of children with online platforms during COVID-19 would need a separate in depth study on the subject matter, which is not in the purview of this work.

The chapter discussed how children's geographies of play are marked with numerous features. Some of these includes- class specific norms of playing in a right manner by

keeping intact the walls of separation, wiping out every possibility of mixing up, safety security issues and the fear of unknown, politics and hierarchisation of space by the powerful and othering rather demonising of the other, encroachment of commons, different play preferences of children from different localities, rejecting the idea of going out and play-side-lining the spontaneity of play in outdoors and preferring the comfort of technology and so on. The chapter also presented how in car abundant neighbourhoods, the need for open spaces for children's play are not given any heed. The mantra that speed denotes class is closely linked to the ownership of *speed* in the form or a private car. As shown by Gorz (1973) and Illich (1974), urban design and spatial arrangement favours the private players and the relatively richer population. Mobility, rather than being distributed in an equitable manner is becoming the monopoly of the privileged and here adults. Illich (1974) has showed as he says,

> People move well on their feet…people solely dependent on their feet move on the spur of the moment, at three to four miles per hour, in any direction and to any place…An improvement on this native degree of mobility by new transport technology should be expected to safeguard these values and to add some new ones, such as greater range, time economies, comfort, or more opportunities for disabled…Instead, the growth of the transportation industry has everywhere had the reverse effects. From the moment its machines could put more than a certain horsepower behind any one passenger, this industry has reduced equality among men. (p. 16)

Illich (1974) remarks, "tell me how fast you go and I'll tell you who you are, if you can corner the taxes which fuel the concorde, you are certainly at the top" (p. 32). He further reminds us that, "the product of the transportation industry is the habitual passenger…(he) is conscious of the exasperating time scarcity…" (Illich, 1974, p. 24). Similar in case of Delhi

NCR can be registered where an entire town – Gurugram, is imagined and set up in place without having a public transportation in the place, entirely for the population that owns their private car. "The transportation industry", writes Illich (1974), "dictates the configuration of social space. Motorways expand, driving wedges between neighbours and removing fields beyond the distance a farmer can walk" (p. 23). The nexus of urban development lobby, car manufacturing companies and banks that provide increasingly subsidised loan- is at the heart of such an imagination.

In the wake of ever rising and hazardous levels of pollution that Delhi NCR region faces, the *car riders* still are not ready to leave their privilege. Bhalla et. al (2018) mentions in their study that, "personal auto emissions and individual car traffic"(p. 54) as the reasons that attributed most to the deadly smog from 2015and thereafter in the city. Corrective measures like the odd-even scheme which was put in place by the Delhi government to curb the air pollution to some extent also got a negative response from the general population. Successively since 2016, this scheme has only been implemented at maximum for one week or 15 days. The absurdity has reached the level that people are ready to buy air purifiers but are not ready to shun car privileges and ready to breathe in poisonous air of Delhi region. With negative connotations attached to playing in public spaces and fabricated mesh of fear and anxieties of the unknown- one's class membership then transforms the very language of play and leisure. The preference for structured play over free play to the extent that face to face interaction, negotiation, and quarrel while playing is becoming as *outdated* and the thing of past, now the power of technology has altered it where the meeting with other playmates happens through virtual screens from one's insulted room. Valentine (2004) takes us to the trajectory that has gradually shifted children from playing in open spaces to the domestic and structured environment, especially amongst affluent classes through supervised leisure activities such as organised sports, music lessons and so on. Similarly, the current chapter has

also traced reasons which pushed children inside the boundaries of home and other institutional setups like sports academies and so on rather than letting children freely play at will in the neighbourhood spaces. Such habituation has furthered during the time of COVID-19 pandemic with mandatory lockdown resulting in exponential increase in screen time and digital activities of children.

Different researches on child development from time to time have reminded us that it is important for children to run, to play in the open which then helps in supporting their bodily growth, making them healthy and fit. But the current chapter reveals another side of the story. Despite such plethora of the studies available and people (across classes) aware enough to understand all this, agreeing with the fact that openness of environment is important for children during their growing up years, still finds their actions contradicting. In the case of Coolie Camp, due to their *class* locations children (and people) living in tiny rooms at times 6 feet by 6 feet, are made to live in constricted spaces. From their constricted and cornered spaces in the city, children from Coolie Camp still try their best in day to day lives to claim the commons in and around their spatial geographies. Contrary to this children from affluent families may be having the privilege of inhabiting a 3000sq. ft. apartment but may not find space to run freely. Homes that are often loaded with furniture do not qualify as a *play space* that can provide ample opportunities with respect to running and playing around. Children's lives enmeshed with parental control; security and safety tensions; abundance of technological resources- has got trapped *indoors*. "Children", according to Sharma (2015), "in cities hardly get to see the open sky as they are mostly confined to closed spaces either of playschool/school, of home, malls, clubs, theatre and so on" (p. 66). Manne (2005) calls such a phenomenon as "McDonaldization of childhood" (p. 299), where children (in cities) are being raised in captivity. A childhood that has not received openness of space, of consciousness, of mind and of environment altogether to grow in but with all kinds of fears,

anxieties and distorted understanding around life may result in a distorted psyche. Living all the time in enclosed spaces, and bombarded with gadgets, it is important to ask here that are we moving towards a constricted childhood? Is such a constricted childhood on offer for the children living in cities? During the time of COVID-19 pandemic (and in post COVID-19 world) asking such questions are of utmost importance as it is the time which would now decide how current generation of children be raised in the coming years- in constricted and isolated spaces loaded with gadgets or by experiencing open spaces in a healthy manner with social responsibility and social-solidarity?

Chapter 4

Timescapes of Children's Play: Dense Intersectionalities of Schooled Routine and Structured Lives

Conduct of our everyday lives is meticulously divided into schedules and routines of small time units. Time is an entity that is making possible our connections, relationships and interpretations possible in diverse manners; giving birth to multiplicity of times as lived, experienced, known, generated, reckoned, allocated, sold, controlled and used as an abstract exchange value. Children's lives are also scheduled in such a fashion that as being part of family, being a member of a school their day to day routine is chalked and predefined by the respective rules of different institutions. This chapter critically examines the role of time with respect to play (and other activities) establishing how routines and schedules decides, directs and influences children's play and their lives in general. The chapter deals with different themes- how children get themselves acquaint with time schedules in day to day lives, educational demands, explorations about their leisure routines, children's views on technology that shapes their play. With the understanding of time, perceiving digital watch as an important accessory, how children manage their time of play vis a vis other day to day activities especially scholastic is also explored. The chapter also examines the role of parents in setting up and ensuring strict routines. The chapter further reflects on the *time of childhood* by contextualising it with the experiences of parents, thereby retracing childhood/s over different time and space.

A critical engagement with the question- what is social time?, requires chalking it out as social phenomena alongside its natural (physical) character. The social aspect of time that is social time unfolds when we understand time as a social entity; it gains the character which represents collective. Time is one of the most central elements around which social life is

organised. "No concept of motion", according to Sorokin and Merton (1937) "is possible without the category of time…time is…a necessary variable in social change" (p. 615). The sociocultural character of time is established by Sorokin and Merton (1937) where they have demonstrated the expression of time and associated beliefs as "social fact" (p. 622). Time expressions reflect the social life of a group as names of days, months, festivals and so on are all fixed in accordance with the rhythms of collective life underlying the social assumptions and not in vacuum.

The importance of studying social construction of time, in relation to children and study of childhood has been established by James and Prout (1997). Explicitly addressed or implicitly present; time is a very much central and omnipresent aspect of children's lives as well as their childhoods. The "time *of* child-hood", according to James and Prout (1997), portrays the "periodization of the life course…as the social construction of the ageing process" (p. 227). In different cultures, time is understood, expressed and experienced differently. Our biological selves say infancy leading to childhood, adolescence, adulthood, middle age and old age are accordingly interpreted in linear fashion and conferred the status of dependent or independent being. Another conceptualisation of time with respect to childhood is "time *in* childhood" (James & Prout, 1997, pp. 227-28), which refers to the conditions in which everyday lives of children are produced, controlled and ordered. Therefore, the time *of* childhood by nature is highly contextualised and gets defined by the time *in* childhood; revealing how at a specific time period, children's childhood is produced through their lived realities. The temporality of the concepts say child, adult, elderly shows us the cultural relativity of these biological phenomena. Hendrick et al. (1997) establishes such temporality intrinsic to the concept of childhood by tracing it historically. The images say schooled child, delinquent child, street child, orphaned child, factory child, and discourses

with regard to children's welfare all depict historicity of childhoods[65]. Therefore, the concepts of childhood and of children must take account of temporal and cultural specificity. The practices and rituals of time *in* childhood, shapes time *of* childhood

Time is an overarching category that has a decisive role in children's play. It has bearing upon children's day to day experiences in the way their lives are organised. Children's understanding around time, division of day's time into study, play and other activities, the preferable time of playing outdoors or indoors, annual patterns of play during vacation as well as during the examination period, play during summers and winters, *taking out time* to play and so on are some of the aspects that are discussed in this chapter. How do children make sense of time, make use of it, how their elaborated routines and schedules are constituted? Within their familial contexts, in connection with schools as formal institutions- how adults and schools to a major extent act as regulatory figures, that in a way constitutes children's learning and understanding around *time*. What does the organisation of children's time reveal to us about their specific childhood and (urban) childhoods in general? , are some of the questions, explored in relation to children's play in this chapter.

As shared earlier, all my research participants are school-going children (enrolled in different schools) and therefore, education figures out as a significant sphere that takes up a major portion of children's times and thereby is acting as a pivotal point which defines their day to day routine. With heightened educational obligations of children (across classes from the selected localities), their association with school and then extension of that schooled routines to their home space; demands an enquiry of children's time routine in relation to play. An investigation of children's lived realities vis a vis their play and general routine can inform us about the *time in childhood*. This would then further help in chalking out the *time of childhood,* the larger understanding of children and childhoods of a particular society. By

[65] These discourses are discussed in chapter 2.

investigating the competing themes and intersectionalities emerged in relation to children's play, across the selected localities, both, time in childhood as well time of childhood/s are discussed in this chapter. The sections below are organised in the manner that the first few sections deal with the elaboration upon the details of children's day to day lives in terms of their play, education and general routine, establishing their time in childhood. The subsequent sections after that deal with broader discourses around children and childhoods by establishing the time *of* childhood as highly temporal and contextual.

4.1 The Advent of Clocked Environments and Meticulously Scheduled Lives

Time measuring devices have a long history, which can simultaneously be associated with the ways of living that societies have evolved. Thompson (1967) shows how different societies initially depending on the natural rhythms of day and night, and task oriented in nature evolved to a factory system of measuring time; where the tasks as well as labour are calculated with the time measuring device- clock. We must keep in mind that such a management of our lives at minute levels is made possible only by measured time. Thompson (1967) has traced the spread of clocks from fourteenth century and onwards. The increasing presence of clock and measurement of time culture, according to Thompson (1967) refers to "bourgeois exactitude" (p. 56). With industrial capitalism, and its dependence on work, on time and meticulously measured labour time, paved ways for clocks, calendars, schedule and routine, both in the factories as well as in household and families.With the advent of clocks only it is made possible to measure each and every minute, every second and therefore to be put it to a use. Being part of the family and of different institutions (school) children too imbibe these rules and rituals and thereby having a concept and understanding of time developed, further organising their lives as per time.

The shift in understanding of time in relation to labour revealed new orientations of time as treating it as "currency…to be spent but not passed" (p. 61) . "In mature capitalist

society", writes Thompson (1967), "all time must be consumed, marketed, put to *use;* it is offensive for the labour force merely to 'pass the time'" (p. 90). The negative connotation attached with *passing the time* is well understood by the selected children as well as their respective families wherein they would rather prefer to utilise time than to pass it. Also, during play waiting for their playmate, children described it as *killin (killing) time*, which again means not using or utilising time but just wasting it and therefore, should not be counted as play-time (elaborated in sections below). "Puritanism, in its marriage of convenience with industrial capitalism", according to Thompson (1967) has oriented people towards new set valuations around time, treating it as money along with providing an implicit message to children, "…to improve each shining hour" (p. 95) and thereby best utilising the finite time. Similar claims are made by Adam (2013) where she demonstrates how in schools, by time disciplines such hidden forms and meanings to understand and experience time are absorbed by children. With reference to strict time tables and disciplining techniques, micro-politics of power, in school and other formal institutions is demonstrated by Foucault (1995) also. This is how, school going children get oriented to time tables and schedules where even the miniscule fraction of time is also laid down with rules and regulations and its respective usage is predefined.

In relation to modern society, Zerubavel (1981) pins down the importance of time, mentioning it as a major dimension of social organisation, "along which involvement, commitment, and accessibility are defined and regulated in modern society" (p. 141). It is the different time slots only that are defined socially as appropriate time for meeting, calling or making one accessible and so on. Bergmann (1992) mentions, "social time reckoning is an expression of a collective's rhythm of activity" (p. 82). This social time is valued all the more in modern society where meticulous measurement could be done, alongside which lives are scheduled. In modern times, time is not only the organiser at a social level but also regulates

the lives of people at a very minute level. There are different sorts of understanding around time that have already entered in our day to day lives, say "proper time" (Zerubavel, 1981, p. 8) for calling someone, sleeping time, eating time, play time, study time etc. Norms for *proper time* are introduced depending on the person's individual, biological and social calendar that decides and lays down rules for what is to be done and at what time. Children being part of families also gained temporal understanding and learned these norms.

Zerubavel (1981) notes, "clock-work environments" (p. 14) are the characteristic of modern life, where different activities, their respective duration, sequencing etc. are controlled and directed by strongly following clock time. Such an overarching clock regimentation is illustrated by Zerubavel (1981) as, "people do not get up because they have woken duly refreshed, and feel like doing so, but because it is getting-up time…from the moment of waking, the rhythm of the day is punctuated by the clock" (p. 47). Here in contrast to biological time pertaining to one's body clock and the natural time pertaining to the time of the day that is morning as waking up time, the primacy is given to the *clocked time*. The same has gained utmost primacy in the lives of children and their respective families, that now it is the clock and the respective schedules that dictates their routine for the day, week or month. The presence of clocks and watches was strongly registered in the lives of children and their families, where every single family (across Coolie Camp, DDA flats Munirka or Vasant Kunj) owned at least two timepieces- wall clock and an alarm clock. With accessible mobile phones (also having time measurement function), and wrist watch, the primacy of working or scheduling as per clock, was registered in children's lives too. Many children owned digital watches, which they used to coordinate with me for the meetings (in the parks) accordingly saying, "*kal aana aap 4 bje, hum yahi milenge*" (come tomorrow at 4:00 p.m. we will meet here). As I have mentioned earlier, all my research participants are enrolled in school; and having adults around, working in tight schedules following clock time, children too have

gained a sense of time. Though not accurate in minutes or seconds, children could make sense of what it means for 6 o'clock in the morning and how it is different from 6 o'clock in the evening. My respondents who are in elementary grades, even shared that they plan their schedules as well, with the assistance of their parents. Children were able to make sense of time due to their association with routine activities that they carry out on school going days as well as during holidays.

Zerubavel (1981) directs our understanding to clock and clock measured time by mentioning that "it is clock time that is at the basis of the modern Western notion of duration and that allows the durational rigidity that is so typical of modern life" (p. 61). Acknowledging the complex nature of modern society, Parsons (1951) also reiterated the indispensability of such "rigid time scheduling" (p. 302), as it allows proper functioning of different activities. The same durational rigidity can be sensed in the urban way of living in Indian context as well, where lives of people and children are meticulously scheduled as per the institutions they are affiliated to- be it office or schools respectively. Working parents from DDA flats Munirka, Vasant Kunj and Coolie Camp alike reiterated similar stories where they have to wake up as early as 4 o'clock in order to prepare breakfast, get their children ready for school and then to drop them at school, before going to the office or workplace themselves. Similarly, children's lives are also paced up in relation to their parents' respective work environments.

"The quantitative view of time", according to Zerubavel (1981) treats it as "an entity which is segmentable into various quantities of duration and, therefore, is countable and measurable." (p. 59). The way we use different slots of time, try to make best possible use, also in a way reflects that we often add up chunks of time; accumulated leave and leisure time (family time during vacations) - are all examples of how mechanistic, utilitarian and commodified is our understanding around time. Time is seen as holding significance as

money. Such a "standard, decontextualized and commodified" (Adam, 2013, p. 14) understanding of time prevails in modern times. The commodified notion of time can be understood by exploring the way it is measured by our meticulous devices, say clocks. Clock time is seen as a finite resource in contrast to the abundant natural time of day and night cycles. Clocks make it possible to divide the abundant natural time into the equally divided sections of the day on the basis of hours, minutes and seconds (also microseconds). It is according to these micro sections or the portions of the day that directs our activities and thereby ensuring every hour, minute is to be utilised. Since the clock time is a finite resource, a notion of scarcity is attached with it which inturn gives rise to the apprehension that time must be used carefully, utilised at best and not to be wasted. "[W]ithin the context of the modern Spirit of Capitalism" according to Zerubavel (1981), "…the popular use of colloquialisms such as 'spending', 'wasting', 'saving', 'investing', 'allocating', and 'budgeting', with regard to time"(p. 56) indicates the reading of time as a commodity. As mentioned about the finite resource that is clock-time, such orientation of time then leads to the ever growing anxiety around losing time. According to Zerubavel (1981) such an orientation towards time then leads to accelerated pace of life, resulting in "quickie" (p. 57). Zerubavel (1981) notes that, "[t]he rise of the fast-food eatery, our extremely negative attitude toward waiting, and the businesslike character of … social encounters today are all manifestations of the growing acceleration of the tempo of life in the West." (p. 57). The impact of *quickie* can be seen across different forms of modern lives where computers, microwave, instant food, and even intelligence tests are all products meant to save time by speeding up the associated processes. The primacy of rigid and all-encompassing character of scheduled time and a routine in modern life is illustrated satirically by C. Northcote Parkinson (1962, cited in Zerubavel, 1981) mentioning,

> [T]he punctual person has substituted a process of subtraction for the simpler process of addition. The important meeting is at 11:45. Punctual Peter takes that as his fixed point and works backward. He must leave his office at 11:40, check his briefcase and contents at 11:30, give instruction to his deputy at 11:25, having transferred incoming telephone calls at 11:23. That leaves time to see Marty (allow ten minutes) at—say, 11:10; and Mac (allow fifteen minutes for a Scotsman) at 10:55. There are two important telephone calls to make, six and three minutes, so it is best to start dialling at 10:45. Allow fifteen minutes for reading the report and estimate (Item 4 on the agenda), so bring the file in at 10:30. (p. 61)

As illustrated above, for the meeting at 11:45 the planning of the schedule took place from 10:30 onwards, in similar fashion the routines of children and their respective families are encountered during the fieldwork. Aarush, a 14 years old boy from Vasant Kunj mentioned about his routine in similar fashion. At the time of interview he was in class IX and was having annual exams; alongside was planning meticulously, in terms of developing a plan- deciding on which coaching to get enrolled in and so on, for his class X- board classes ahead and further career in aviation.

Many families do apply this logic of subtraction whereby calculating the time and scheduling it backwards say if the (morning) school is at 7:00 a.m., then the child must get ready by 6:30 a.m. and wake up by 5:30 a.m., thereby setting the alarm clock accordingly. Such a detailed time schedule is followed by children and their families. Accordingly then the parents (mostly mother) have to pre-schedule her routine from the very early morning say 4:00 a.m. onwards, so that she then can prepare meals for the child as well as making her ready and drop at school on time. In cases where both the parents are working, the parents then schedule their mornings (general routine) well in advance, a day or night before doing the preliminary preparations, say keeping the uniform for the children and themselves ready,

checking up on children's homework, other necessary preparations for meal (breakfast and lunch) etc. so that they could save time and go as per their routine the following day, without getting late. Access to house help was a very important aspect in maintaining these activities as per schedule. This was the nature of planned day to day activities of the families from Vasant Kunj and DDA flats Munirka. But in the case of Coolie Camp, with both parents working, relatively fewer preparations were done. The routines of children were relatively flexible and free floating (after school hours). Though, in some cases children could be seen taking care of household chores and siblings when parents on work duties as house help or as driver or as construction workers had to leave home early, for work. We can relate such laid out rigid routines with respect to Vasant Kunj and Munirka and flexible or say free flowing routines of children and families from Coolie Camp by investigating their social-class orientations.

4.1.1 Lives Planned or Unplanned? Classed Understanding of Time

The relationship between social class and time orientations with respect to play preferences and play patterns are established by many scholars (Lareau, 2011; LeShan, 1952; O'Rand & Ellis, 1974; Sen, 2014a). Social class linked differences are demonstrated by O'Rand and Ellis (1974) in the form of psychological distance and temporal ordering of any event that an individual does. Strict regimentation of children's routine with meticulously devised time-tables, sorting out and portioning time for different activities is established by Lareau (2011) through her concept of concerted cultivation. The structured nature of pre-planned (paid) leisure activities are an indirect measure of one's class location. Having dance classes, hobby classes though allowed children to experience leisure, but in a disciplined manner within a particular time slot only. Such practices points towards the globalising models of childhoods[66] where leisure activities are pre-planned and often take place in the

[66] Discourses on children and childhoods propagated by Global North, discussed in chapter 2.

organised institutional spaces (Sen, 2014 a&b; Vincent et al, 2008; Vincent, 2010; Zinnecker, 1995).

4.1.2. Prioritising Education over Play: Learning Schooled Routines

Children's, day to day activities, their use of time and space-gets determined by the timetable- both at the school and outside of it. The "dominant temporal structures and norms of society", according to Adam (2013) are "absorbed, maintained, re-created and changed" (p. 50) during daily educational practices. It was registered that across the selected localities *education* in the form of (compulsory) schooling and after school tuitions figured out as an important activity of children. As all my respondents are enrolled in school and not into any kind of employment, school constitutes a major portion of their day to day routine. A cursory examination of the lives of school-going children can reveal how their (and respective family's) lives are timed and tuned with their respective school's educational routines in terms of weekly classes, examination time, and holiday time (Adam, 2013; James et al. 1998; Wyness, 2012). Planned activities as per annual calendar, planned classroom activities as per specific syllabus all hints towards hidden rhythms of time which children experience daily. Such a schooled routine gets replicated in home-setting where after-school home routine, family gatherings, vacations are all planned as per children's scholastic engagements. In all the selected localities, it was registered that the time of the day (week and year) gets divided in such a way that first preference is given to school and education (both in the case of girl as well as boy children) followed by additional academic exposure in the form of after school tuitions and lastly, the leisure and play occupies the place.

The strict division and structuration of time, that acts as the basic characteristic of modern civilisation, points toward a typical cultural emphasis that is the utilitarian conception of time. Zerubavel (1981) informs us that the strong condemnation attached with wasting time "entails a devaluation of 'dispensable' and 'unnecessary' activities…A rigid scheduling

of our days and weeks simply does not leave any room (that is, time) for involvements that we consider 'dispensable'" (p. 52). Taking it further, the strong influence of clock work environments is also highlighted by Rifkin (1987) who informs us that the strongly controlled clock times and schedules may lead to the culture of efficiency obsession, where even a second also which is not utilised in profit maximisation activity is considered unfit and therefore wasted. In similar fashion, the life of Aarush (from Vasant Kunj) is also structured. Appearing for annual exams of IX standard[67], Aarush has already started preparing (and planning) for upcoming board examination[68], which are to be held at the end of the following academic year. He shared that since he would be promoted to class X and within a couple of weeks his classes for the following academic year would start, which demands all his time and attention to be on studies and he should not be *wasting time on play or games anymore*. For his regular routine he shared,

> *Abhi to Sunday bhi enjoy karne ko nahi milta...syllabus bahut badh gaya hai...pehle swimming ke liye jata tha lekin ab tuitions thi to chhoda hua hai...4 baje se padhne baith jata hoon, home-work, revision 7 baje tak fir dinner...agar dinner mein time hota hai to TV dekh leta hoon., fir thoda padhta hoon, fir so jata hoon"* (now I don't get to enjoy even the Sundays…our syllabus is [much] elaborated…earlier I used to go for swimming but have stopped going as I have tuitions now…I usually sit for studies 4'oclock onwards, [complete my] homework, revision until 7'o clock, then dinner…if dinner gets little delayed then meanwhile I watch TV, after dinner again I study little bit and then go to sleep).

[67] This interview took place in February month of the year 2018. January and February constitute the time period when most schools in Delhi conduct their pre-exam assessments (for students appearing in boards) and annual examinations. Generally the new academic session starts in the month of March-April.

[68] In India Class X and XII are classified as boards which are considered crucial in the educational journey of an individual. As the scores attained in boards act as defining and deciding factor further in the selection of subject, particular stream- say Science, Commerce or Humanities and educational and professional journey thereafter.

In the wake of elaborate syllabus, strict routines of studies at school and after school tuitions, Aarush has even suspended his swimming classes. Now in his routine, play or any other leisure only exist as a filler- to be carried (or not) between the two consecutive important activities, as he mentions that he only gets to watch TV, if dinner gets delayed otherwise his after school routine from 4:00 p.m. to until sleep, he is absorbed in studies. The understanding which is established here is that home work time should be distinct with television watching time and so on. And spilling over of educational times over other time slots and activities is still considered legitimate and good but extending screen time, play time or just leisure time for a child appearing in board exams is perceived in a negative tone. Normalising his intense educational routine, Aarush pointed out that he plans to take up aviation as a career for which he mentioned *"padhna bahut padega"* (one has to study a lot). Within this schooled discipline, which Aarush is following at home, he has learnt to prioritise some activities over another, by practising careful time budgeting. Learning that every task is to be completed in stipulated time, he has learnt central aspects of work-life[69] that is managing time, to be adhering to the deadlines, and therefore, is getting him-self prepared for following years, as he intends to make a career in aviation.

Play or leisure is considered a dispensable activity, in opposition to education. For play, the separate time allotment is often not placed, and in the wake of examination and over packed educational and structured routine, play time often gets chopped off schedule[70]. Mayank, 13 years old from DDA flats Munirka, when enquired about play or games routine shared that he does not play at school as being in senior-wing, their games period is usually taken by one or the other subject teacher in order to complete the pending syllabus. Such control over play-time was encountered in the home-setting as well. When I arrived for the

[69] Work here refers to formal employment.

[70] Not only in home settings but in school also, as shared by children that mostly their games period is taken by one or the other subject teacher- for completing the pending syllabus or conducting tests. Even recess (break or intervals) got shortened by overspilling of class lessons after the previous period got over.

planned outdoor play session withVihaan, 6years old from Vasant Kunj; he was having a surprise test, taken by his home-tutor. Registering my presence, he could not focus on the test or maybe possibly to escape from the surprise test he asked his tutor to leave and to continue the portion left on the following day. To which his mother instructed him to first finish the test and then go for play, and further articulated the condition that if he does not finish the test, he would not be allowed to go out to play. This situation shows in a crystal clear manner how in relation to education, play is seen in opposition. By such instances then children too absorb valuing certain activities over another.

The timetables developed by the school, to some extent adopted by children and their respective families have such a strong presence felt in their lives that not to finish a specific activity on time, and taking more time would invite the label of being *slow* to the child (Adam, 2013), especially in the context of educational activities. This temporal pace should be maintained as per societal norms, otherwise the child gets judged. Such judgements were recorded during conversation with Sweety, 7 years old child from Vasant Kunj. By nature she is talkative, which her family members presented as a negative trait. During one of the initial meetings at her home, her father asked, "*kya kar rahe ho*" (what are you doing). To which she replied, "*kuch nahi papa inka kaam kara rahi thi games batane hain inko*" (nothing father, I was just helping her in her work, she is supposed to write about games). Listening to this, her father remarked, "*ye baatein bohot banati hai…padhti likhti nahi hai…abhi to ye second mein hai…khair…par isko abhi kam hi aata hai…aap puch kar dekho koi question isse G.K. ka"* (she talks a lot…does not study at all…she is in class II…anyways…but she does not know much…try asking any G.K. question to her). Sweety, who was talking confidently before this remark by her father, went silent for some-time after listening to this. Initially she shared to her mother smilingly, "*mujhe inse baat karne mein maza aa raha hai"* (I am enjoying talking to her); after the remark by her father she did not talk much and

showed that is busy watching TV. The explicit words as well as the undertones of this conversation also sets in place the stratified nature of activities where education is placed at the topmost level and any other act (here talking casually), is not considered important. Talk, when associated with play and games then is further devalued.

Play, as exhibiting spontaneity and for relaxation, gets replaced by the scheduled and organised forms of leisure (elaborated in further sections of this chapter and in chapter 3 as well). Children's lives (across selected localities) exhibited such divisions in the form of school-time, tuition-time, dinner-time and so on. In many cases it was found that though meticulously children's schedule is devised keeping a room for different activities, like mundane routines to studies but a dedicated time for play did not figure out. Play being understood as disposable; found no space in children's planned routines (especially the routine during exams days and regular week days). Such a meticulous measurement and efficient usage of time has become the basis of life in modern life and modern world.

For children from Coolie Camp also, education and going to school, served as an important and not to be skipped activity of day to day routine. Children dressed up in their respective school dress could be seen going to school in groups where younger children with their school bags on their shoulders (occasionally carried by the elder sibling or mother if going to drop children at school) could be seen walking along with their elder siblings and neighbourhood friends to their school. After school, children are provided additional educational support by various NGOs running in the camp. These NGOs also provide classes for singing, guitar, crafts and other such activity as well. Largely the attitude towards education is positive. Children when asked about their favourite activity or time of the day shared, "*hame school jana accha lagta hai, waha par hum nai nai acchi acchi baatein seekhte hain"* (we like to go to school, we learn new and good things there). No doubt, that this is the regular ideal answer when a visitor from outside asks children. But we cannot deny

the role of education which people and children believed here that only education can help them in coming out of their current situations. Mothers who were asked regarding their children's education mostly shared, "*padh likh jayenge to kuch kar sakenge aage, nahi to hamari tarah hi ghar ghar kaam karenge"* (if they would study, they would be able to do something [good in life], otherwise would struggle like us by doing [domestic] chores for others).

Education in English medium is preferred at Coolie Camp. Also, many mothers requested me to teach and give additional lessons to children[71]. While talking about play and during many occasions playing various games with children, I was looked at with suspicion. Being an adult who herself is studying at university, coming to the camp just for talking to children and playing with them was a sort of unapproved activity for some parents. A mother while I was playing with children asked (her children but directing the question indirectly to me), "*aaj padhai nahi karni kya, didi ko khel mein laga lia"* (don't you want to study today, you have also made sister busy into play). Showing disapproval over play this mother established the preference for education, humbly pointing out that children should be studying rather than playing. When asked directly, parents registered strong preference towards education than play. A parent shared, "*balak hain to khelenga, pann aap padhai kar rahe ho kitni zaruri hai ye hum kya batayein…khel apni jagah pann padhai bhot zaruri…chaakri bina padhe nahi milegi"* (children are equivalent to play, but you are studying, you know how important education is, what shall we tell you…play is important but education is more important, without studying one would not get a job). Also, when children were probed further about their favorite games and given situational questions like,

[71] Despite the NGOs working in the camp, many mothers asked me for tuitions for their children. When probed further they shared that because of the irregularity of NGO volunteers -the children and their education is not dealt with on priority basis rather only at some times the NGO would hold classes and during most of the times it is casual in their approach. Citing the reason '*gaana bajan sikhaate hain zada, par kuch naa se kuch to sahi*'- (they teach singing and music mostly but something is better than nothing) that keeps children engaged is the reason why parents send their children there.

"*agar tumhe poora din padhne ko bole ya poora din khelne ko bole to kaunsa wala option chunoge*?" (if you are asked to study whole day or play whole day- which option would you choose). Children in a loud voice collectively mentioned, "*khelengeee…!!!"* (Play…[with an excitement]…). But this *kehelenge* (preference for play) was again added on by certain conditions and reflections wherein a child studying in class VI mentioned, "*maze karenge lekin padhai bhi, school jayege fir college jayenge, mein abhi 6 saal aur rukunga fir college mein ho jauga"* (we will enjoy but will study also, we would go to school then to college. I would stay [in school] for 6 more years after that I would go to college). To which another child added, "*haan padhenge toi aage badh ke kuch payenge"* (yes we will study then only we will be able to do something). At Coolie Camp two major organised activities in which children spend their most of the time includes schooling and after school tuitions. Apart from this children's day to day routines are relatively flexible, figuring out some time left for play as well.

But at DDA flats Munirka and Vasant Kunj, daily routine of children figured relatively stronger presence of structured activities. Especially with respect to play where children at Coolie Camp are free to roam around in groups, girls and boys are sometimes allotted responsibilities like fetching water, purchasing vegetables from nearby shops or other responsibilities. The time apart from all this, which is left to children, was spent by them (in the neighbourhood, with friends and people) without any perceived instructions. At DDA flats Munirka also (like Coolie camp), education still is considered as the most important activity. But alongside children's enrollment in (organised) sports activities was also prevalent. Though the importance and popularity of play in terms of institutionally tied-up activities is rising[72] and so is the emphasis on educational demands- tuition and coaching[73] is rising.

[72] As shared in chapter 3.

4.1.2.1 Recovered from the Rupture: Coming Back to the New Normal

Children's mundane lives constituted unquestioningly following the daily rhythms with pre-fabricated time tables, schedules and thereby routines in connection to school, tuitions, leisure classes and so on. It has so become- the taken for granted discipline that giving it up would leave them puzzled in a manner- what to do, how to spend the abundant time without having it scheduled. But hitting hard with the COVID-19 pandemic, and thereafter the mandatory nation-wide lockdown, resulting in closure of schools, offices etc. led to the collapse of prescheduled, pre-decided routinised lives. Puzzling experiences were shared by children and their parents (from DDA flats Munirka and Vasant Kunj) with respect to their new found routines. In the absence of the previous and pre-defined activities, children now experienced abundance of time. With March –April months being the time when most of the schools start the new session, primary school children were initially happy that during 2020, they will have holidays in advance (in the wake of COVID-19 mandatory nationwide lockdown). As the new session has not yet started, children had no obligations to work on their lessons and prepare for classes; they had now a lot of free-time. Shreyas, 10 years old from Vasant Kunj shared how he enjoys the family time with his parents which otherwise was only possible during weekends, as both his parents are working. Playing chess, cooking together and gardening were some of the activities that in the new found abundant time, Shreyas did along with his parents. All other forms of leisure also shifted to online mode in the form of e-gaming, increasing children's screen-time manifold (elaborated in chapter 3). After a few weeks of such abundant time, working parents had to modify their routine to adapt to the office hours, in work from home mode as well as simultaneously assisting children in their online classes. Soon this abundant time was hard hit by the new set of

[73] Children from Coolie Camp had their additional after school tuitions at NGO centres whereas children from Munirka and Vasant Kunj shared that they have after school classes at KUMON (for Maths and English), ABACUS, SIGMA and alike other subject specific coaching.

routines where children had their online classes in place (July, 2020 onwards) after the summer break.

The strong presence of *schooled child* ideology imposed upon Global South, is firmly registered even during the COVID-19 pandemic, wherein the mandatory lockdown also schools are reconfigured and continued in online mode; without even having to work out the e-infrastructure first. Without any other intention, but to catch up with the syllabus in a mechanical way, these online classes were imposed. Children from Coolie Camp faced the uncertainty regarding their family's work (employment) and crumbling financial status, not having the adequate resources they got marginalised further. Children from DDA flats Munirka and Vasant Kunj, having the necessary resources experienced a more rigid, tightly packed routine further adding on to their screen-time manifold. Adam (2013) mentions this strict compartmentalisation and segmentation as the form of quantitative understanding around time, facilitating the "'ideal' time use" (p.53) understanding say five minutes to complete the next multiplication task, fifteen minutes for science lesson and so on.

Gradually this extra time was also put to use by joining some or the other hobby, craft, cooking, subject specific online tuition (Abacus, Byju's, Kumon, Vedantu and such online educational platforms for children) and even personality grooming sessions online. A parent from Vasant Kunj who was working from home during the entire lockdown shared about her child's increased e-gaming addiction. To curb it she instead enrolled him in online classes which teach children coding. Justifying it that the idea behind it was to keep the child busy and at the same time learn some useful skill. Pallavi, 13 years old from DDA flats Munirka shared that as during lockdown, she has gained weight so she has got herself enrolled with gym, which organises diverse kinds of activities ranging from aerobics to dance (but all online), where she can participate in it from her home space.

The commodified understanding of time in our lives is engrained so much that even during the pandemic; we could not afford to take a pause and have rushed back to the routines sooner or later. To be able to use the time at best, to be productive as possible reveals the utilitarian notion of time. Evident during COVID-19 also, where instead of allowing an individual to unfold at its own pace and deal with the fear, emotional anxiety and worries related to ongoing pandemic; the capitalist and productivity oriented order seeped in soon. It demanded one to utilise every second of the given time whether one may be in position to work or not. The capitalist and productivity oriented nature and understanding related with time, makes one worry of it more where every second is quantified separately which in the capitalist and utility model shows every opportunity to make a profit or to earn to be put to good use rather than wasted.

4.2 Digital Watch: A Desirable Accessory Enabling Children to Keep Time

The digital watch as an invention reveals to us the modern efficiency and endless desire to capture the time with utmost accuracy. Referring to digital watch, Porch (1985) writes "[w]e now look at the time instead of reading it", terming the digital watch as a perfect example of "reductivist esthetic of modernism" (p. 46). Digital watch thereby saves the fractions of time which earlier were spent in the reading of time and simultaneously also informs us with the accuracy in terms of hours, minutes, seconds and even micro seconds available, to be put to use. The access to split second accuracy that once was available to scientists and technicians can now be exploited by everyone through efficient digital watches. Serving the functions of efficiency and accuracy appealing to adults, this gadget is also very popular among young children.

Thompson (1967) shows how owning a separate watch and wrist watch as an "article of convenience" (p. 68) also became a symbol of affluence. This understanding is exhibited by children as well, as children across the selected localities owned their individual digital

watches of different range. Children feel reputed and respected amongst their peers if they own a wrist watch. With digital watches even young (6 or 7 years old) children too can read and tell the time with utmost accuracy, to their peers as well as to adults. My research participants were also fascinated more by digital watches than the regular watches. One of the reasons for preferring a digital watch a child at Rock Garden Munirka mentioned that "*usme nahi aata time dekhna, isme ata hai…"* (don't know how to read time in that [regular watch] but can do in this [digital watch]…). As reading time in minute and hour hand appeared complicated to children, all of them when asked what kind of watch they would like to wear?, preferred for digital watch over regular watch. Many children also exhibited the knowledge of the latest gadgets like smart watches and wristbands. A child from Coolie Camp mentioned that, "*band wali ghadi sabse acchi hai aaj kal sab woi lete hain*" (the band [wrist] watch is best, nowadays everyone wears that only). Here children are referring to activity tracker- the smart watches that are popular and can serve many functions from showing time, date, as alarm, as jogging odometers and even recording sleep patterns. With promising efficiency, digital watches now also are of multitasking nature. With the age-old function of measuring time, now digital watches come with extra ornamental functions that often appeal to children (as potential buyers).

One such gadget is the fastrack reflex 2.0 activity tracker that claims to have an entire range of features one could ask for. The band has steps, distance and calorie tracker, sleep tracker, call and SMS alerts, OLED display, 10 days power reserve, vibration alarm, sedentary reminder and is water resistant[74]. Similar to this band, children from Vasant Kunj, Munirka and Coolie Camp had variants of such wristbands. Below are the pictures

[74] Fastrack smart band: https://www.fastrack.in/product/fastrack-reflex-smartwatch-with-pu-band-swd90059pp06?cm_mmc=GooWARPC-_-1572211360-_-59475873036-_-295833807110&gclid=EAIaIQobChMI_qTj_Lap6QIVGH8rCh3jmg07EAYYASABEgKdpPD_BwE

Figure 56: *First one is the wristband of fast-track brand and other three pictures showing children wearing variants of such wrist band and digital watch.*

It is interesting to note that children (both boys and girls) from Munirka and Vasant Vihar had their own digital watch (or regular watch in exceptional cases), but in case of Coolie Camp, it's only boys who owned digital watch (look alike of smart watch)- that they

have purchased from *Budh Bazar* (Wednesday weekly market) for 50/- rupees, in comparison to the original band that ranges between few thousands to even lakhs.

Many of my participants had their own digital wrist watch that enabled them to start their play, meet or gather for play at a particular time and also helps them to wrap up and go back home at the stipulated time. All this, children could achieve with the help of the time keeping device i.e. digital wristwatch. Many children shared that they wear a watch to school also, as it helps them keep a track of the specific period of *chhutti time* (dispersal time), lunchtime and so on. From digital watches they can easily see the time as well as date in some specific models that children owned. Another child from Vasant Kunj mentioned *"ye easy hai…ab date yaad bhi nahi rakhni padti, isme dekho aur likh do"* (this one is easy…I do not need to remember date now, I can refer to my watch and write down the date). The same is reiterated by Porch (1985) when he mentions that "there are children growing up today who have never owned a watch that simply tells the time" (p. 47). Having a gadget does charms children too, whereby owning a watch like adults, children feels at par with them. Though children had no accurate sense of time but still were able to make sense of time in hours and minutes with the help of digital watch and loosely organise their activities accordingly.

4.3 Accelerated Pace of Life: Concerted Cultivations Leading to Harried Leisure

In the context of urban life when children and their parents are alike tied up with one or the other institution, their lives get intertwined with those respective routines. The option of slowing down in such a set up is not available and one has to keep up the pace with the inculcated routine which one has put in place. For being productive, round the clock one has to start preparing early. In children's lives this is possible by the efforts of their parents and respective families. Terming it as "concerted cultivation", Lareau (2011), elaborates upon such carefully planned and crafted parenting strategies that adds up to children's chances of

getting to deal with institutional structures laterwards. Children belonging to privileged classes have such an experience, as are able to afford to have organised leisure experience. From such organised forms of leisure where children are tied up with as many possible different activities the benefit they reap is two-fold- one is directly learning the skill/ sport and another in a larger schema they learn how to manage their schedules and time accordingly. Such elaborate forms of schedule where children experience different activities with the larger aim of getting prepared for adult roles constitute parental strategies of privileged classes. In such cooperative cultivation of timed lives, parents along with children are equally involved.

But children from the working class somewhere lack this kind of packaged exposure to time management, institutional tie ups and experience to deal with institutional rules and regulations in a time bound manner. As mostly enrolled in schools that are run by the government, children from Coolie Camp had relatively flexible and free flowing lives with their alikes from DDA flats Munirka and Vasant Kunj. Therefore, these children had more control and autonomy over their leisure activities, time, routine and day to day schedule. Resulting which they have stretched play timings sometimes summing up to four or five hours at a stretch, which is unimaginable in the case of children from DDA flats Munirka and Vasant Kunj. Children from Coolie Camp are free to go out and play, meet with kin members, or just casually *chill around* in groups with their playmates.

However, children from privileged backgrounds did not have such flexibility in their schedule. Children no matter how exhausted and tired; they still had to go for respective activity classes, as observed during early morning swimming sessions at Khajan Singh Swimming Academy. Pointing towards deeply involved engagement of parents, Lareau (2011) writes, "children activities create substantial work for their parents…fill out enrolment forms, call to arrange carpools, wash uniforms, drive children to events, make refreshments"

(p. 49) This amount of activity on daily basis kept children and their respective families on toes- to be ready and pacing up. Parental labour in such a scenario increases twofold where they have to put in labour to prepare a child to be able to attend such activities and secondly to watch their children perform. At times the schedules of the entire family gets so tightly packed and sometimes even clash that is labelled by Lareau (2011) as "frenzied schedule" (p. 50), where children have back to back activities, sessions and matches and parents are panickingly making their way to pick and drop and meanwhile attending their child's respective activities (if their schedule permits).

Linking time use with one's consumption patterns, Linder (1970) shows how consumption makes life harried. Such harried consumption then adds to the feeling of time scarcity as the more goods and services that people consume thereby demands more time on the part of the consumer in order to enjoy those goods and services[75]. Thereby harried leisure class, according to Linder (1970) is destined to yield on free time by consuming at an accelerated pace. Drawing a connection between time and consumption along with economic status, Linder (1970) refers to such phenomena as "time famine" (p. 77), ultimately leading to an accelerated pace of life. The modern anxiety over losing time manifests itself in speeding up of daily activities ranging from eating to religious and cultural pursuits. A child from DDA flats Munirka reiterated his inability to play during regular school days and mentioned that he often faces *shortage of time*. Being a student of the prestigious school, this child has already enrolled himself in a number of activities at school only, making his stay at school for extended hours.

According to Linder (1970), consumption takes time. Linder (1970) demonstrates how leisure and non-leisure that is work-time in relation to each other leads to an increased pace and productivity outlook. Linder (1970) notes, "just as working time becomes more

[75] Such orientation towards life, and a continuous attempt to save time can be recorded in children's as well as parents' lives where they are indulged in multiple activities at a given time (even during COVID 19 as well).

productive when combined with more capital, so consumption time can give a higher yield when combined with more consumer goods" (p. 4). Applying the logic of work time, people seek to make their leisure time also more productive by consuming multiple services at once, which Linder (1970) mentions as "the yield per time unit in consumption" (p. 78). Thus, in order to increase the return to time not used for work, consumers tend to consume a large number of goods and services per unit of time. The efficiency model of work is applied in non work time as well, which then leads to perceived scarcity of time in general. Similar competing enrollment under different leisure activities was registered in the case of children from DDA flats Munirka and Vasant Kunj, where children had membership of at least two sports and one of soft skills (including English speaking and grooming sessions). It is important to acknowledge here, is that all these decisions are taken on behalf of and for children by their parents, and children had very limited say in such decisions.

From the medical point of view the similar accelerated pace of life is captured by Dossey (1982) terming it as "time sickness" (p. 10). Dossey (1982) demonstrates that how we get convinced through clocks, watches and myriad of other cultural devices and start believing that time is running out which then affects the bodily functions and acts as the source of anxiety and many diseases. Such anxiety is passed on to children by parents, when out of concern parents' demand careful learning, execution as well as exhibition of their child's learned talent to be showcased in their social circle. In an instance a mother from DDA flats Munirka got her 6 years old daughter enrolled for swimming classes during summer vacation. It was observed that initially the child used to enjoy her time in the swimming pool. But seeing her *wasting the time* in the pool, the mother started keeping a strict eye on the child. Before going into the pool and also while sitting on the pool side seating area, this mother continuously used to point out to her daughter's mistakes- verbally as well as with gestures (from afar). Gradually the mother went so strict that her daughter

after every stroke used to stop and ask for her mother's approval. In order to get her child learn quickly and to make the most out of her swimming class (in the limited time), this mother somewhere was putting on herself and on her daughter the unnecessary pressure. Helman (1987) has termed the same phenomena as "hurry sickness and time urgency" (p. 978), by questioning the western notions of monochronic time. Helman (1987) describes monochromic time as the time which is measured and regulated by external standards as clocks and watches, which he mentions is the dominant aspect of Western time. According to Helman (1987), "[r]ush hours, deadlines, diaries, appointments and time tables all affect the physiology of modern man" (p. 974). With such an orientation towards time and life in general is associated with the pervasive feeling of time running out and resulting in sped up pace with the pressure of getting things done in ever diminishing and limited time span. On regular school days, morning time slots from 6:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m. registered such rush hours in all three localities, where one could see parents rushing children to school, working parents going to work and so on. Even during summer vacations, one could see children rushing to one or the other sports academy or for leisure classes, depicting their respective sped up lives.Demonstrating the accelerated pace and every growing desire to utilise each and every second, Foucault (1995) elaborates the role of discipline. He mentions,

> [It]…arranges a positive economy; it poses the principle of a theoretically ever-growing use of time: exhaustion rather than use; it is a question of extracting, from time, ever more available moments and, from each moment, ever more useful forces. This means one must seek to intensify the use of the slightest moment, as if time, in its very fragmentation, were inexhaustible or as if, at least by an ever more detailed internal arrangement, one could tend towards an ideal point at which one maintained maximum speed and efficiency. (p. 154)

Such an understanding of and around time then gets intertwined in the contemporary forms of day to day human experiences that is based upon the principle of accelerated tempo pertaining to time. Even during summer vacations, early morning classes for swimming and for other leisure activities are preferred and scheduled by parents in order to maintain routine. An employed mother from DDA flats Munirka remarked, "it is good to maintain routine during the vacation, otherwise the gaps and dwindling routine makes it a herculean task for parents like us to bring children back to routine". With children pacing up according to the office schedules of their employed parents allows parents an extra edge to maintain the pace with their own career requirements and respective schedules. In children's lives extension of school routine and through their parents' extension of the office routine has routinised children's lives and disciplined their time usage leading to the *cultures of busyness* (Karsten, 2005). To continue such paced up concerted cultivations, parents even have to adjust their work hours as per children's activities (Van der Burgt & Gustafson, 2013). In the illustration below, hectic and tiring work is elaborated by Lareau (2011) where she mentions

> Ms. Williams is tired from work and has a long Thursday ahead of her. She will get up at 4:45 a.m. to go out of town on a business trip and will not return before 9:00 p.m. On Saturday morning, she will chauffeur Alexander to a private piano lesson at 8:15 a.m., which will be followed by a choir rehearsal and then a soccer game. As they ride in the dark, Alexander's mother, in a quiet voice, talks with her son, asking him questions and eliciting his opinions. (p. 17)

Similar stories of over-worked, highly involved parents echoed from my field as well where mothers from DDA flats Munirka and Vasant Kunj usually had the elaborate morning and evening routine laid down around their child's routine.

4.4 Structured Imagination of Play: Playing freely is actually *Killing time*

Richard Louv (1990) mentions an episode where he was playing catch-catch with his son in a park, meanwhile the players from children's soccer team were assembling at the park. This father was asked by the mother of one child that is he waiting for any team? In return when the father replied that he is just playing catch-catch. To this the mother replied, "killing time eh" (p. 109). The conversation here focuses upon the institutionalisation of sports and leisure activities that has increased to a level that just catching up for a casual meeting or play is seen as in terms of people waiting for *an organised event (thereafter)* and meanwhile have started playing. Qvortrup (1991) has also reported about a study in which 16 industrialised countries have participated which shows that, "more than 50% of children were involved in organized sports" (p. 29). Challenging the nature of such strict regime of structured leisure-activities, Qvortrup (1991) terms it as "planned spontaneity" (pp. 29-30) where he mentions that though these activities might appear voluntary and spontaneous, but are part of a highly structured, closely supervised and rigid schedule. The similar was found when parents from DDA flats Munirka and Vasant Kunj preferred sending their children to sports academies than to encourage them for playing in nearby parks or neighbourhood[76].

Pointing about the structured and organised lives of children, Corsaro (2018) remarked, "kids have less and less time to be kids" (p. 40). With one side commercial establishments like fast-food chains, privatised play spaces and amusement parks, which tries to convince parents that they can provide play experience to children; other side restrictions and negligible opportunities for children to find out their own fun, to set out their own play quests in neighbourhood, in nearby parks and playgrounds charts out children's growing up experiences[77]. Such a shift can be termed as "institutionalization of childhood" (Corsaro, 2018, p. 41), whereby children have less opportunity to have time for free-play (especially

[76] As discussed in chapter 3.
[77] As discussed in chapter 3

outdoors) has led to "nature-deficit disorder" (Louv, 2008). Such concerns are also raised by Kong (2000) in her work, where growing up aloof from nature has a significant impact on children's health as well as orientations to receive nature. Similarly, it was also pointed out by a child from Vasant Kunj DDA, when she mentioned, "I don't have much time to play as I go to piano lessons…then complete homework and then go for badminton practice". This was striking since as per adults children indulged in organised sports are seen as *playing*, whereas this child mentioned that she does not have *much time to play*. This shows the understanding that piano lessons, badminton and alike similar structured activities are seen as *work* and might not amount to be clubbed as play or *leisure activity*. It would be interesting to conduct a longitudinal study on how many children sustain these structural sports and additional training and pursue it as a full-time career as opposed to just indulging in sports as side-hobby whereas by still treating education as the primary priority.

Another interesting feature with respect to structured activities is that annually, April month onwards weekend classes and various workshops (for children) starts flourishing, along with different schools and independent organisations holding their summer-camps. Since May month onwards is the time for summer vacation (in schools of Delhi & NCR), during this time of the year one could see parents and children at various sports academies/complexes and also on the shop for purchasing sports articles- doing preparatory plannings for the vacations and related planned activities ahead of summer vacations. Here the striking impact of *market* and *consumer-culture* could be sensed where even for spending vacations, parents and children are made to believe to be taking up (perceived) mandatory trekking or other adventurous activity, or learning any other organised sports or for that matter mastering the already learned sport- by spending money. Cycling or swimming where earlier used to be learned within the company of family and friends are now to be learned at a

designated spot under special trainers- for which one must shell out the specific amount of money.

Such a way of spending vacation which needs one to have a certain amount of money to be spent on leisure-wear and resources, was a common feature amongst families and children from DDA flats Munirka and Vasant Kunj DDA. But, for children from Coolie camp since there were negligible structured activities- only two regular activities included school and after school tuitions and occasional painting or crafts. Their day to day routine seemed more relaxed in comparison to children from Vasant Kunj and DDA flats Munirka who could be seen mostly running from one activity to another and appeared *uninterested and exhausted* at times.

4.5 Everyday Routine of Children: Is there something called *Free-time*?

With the emphasis on various kinds of *work* say home-work, tuition work and so on and with increasing adaptation of such compact schedules, the attempt here is to explore and locate how children's lives are structured. Do they get free time to carry out free play? Or is it that their routine is so structured where even playful activities are turned and carried away into an institutionalised set up with hobby and training classes and thereby leaving no free-space and will to do anything on their own. A general assumption is that in traditional societies children help with chores and so have less time for play but in modern societies since children are not indulged in work they have ample time to play. In the context of my respondents this is not true. Children from Coolie-Camp though also are supposed to serve household responsibilities, they make time for play[78]. But at DDA flats Munirka and Vasant Kunj DDA, I found children's lives are too structured. David Oldman (1994) shows that most of children's time is ordered in the interests of adults (day care, school, supervision out of school). Children's time is organised in order to free adults for work, and to provide work to

[78] As discussed in chapter 2.

children. The place where they spend time can also be understood as "determined by adult interests" (p. 153). Similarly, Ranganathan (2000) also points out when she mentions, "time spent in play decreases with age" (p. 180).

Traditionally, all leisure activities have been associated with play. Play is usually considered as loafing and wasteful exercise. Time spent in play is considered as *wasted* whereas time spent in *work* is considered as *utilised*. One of the infamous quotes is, "an idle mind is the devil's workshop", where it means that a mind which is not indulged in work depicts the devil. Understanding of leisure or play also differs according to parents and children from different socio-economic classes where in middle and upper class parents and children's lives- appeared strict time division having play time, study time separately. For children from lower classes this division was still there conceptually (at idea level) but was not executed at such a strong level say if 5:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. is homework or play time then strictly one has to follow that. Also, a separate play time hardly figured out in a few cases (superficially) but it was not ensured religiously as in case of education or study time. It is true in the context if any child is enrolled in any hobby classes or tuition then that time frame is followed religiously, but as far as their routine is concerned otherwise, separate time is hardly provided or left for play or leisure activities.

As we have seen in Aarush's case, who is in class 9. He was supposed to devote almost major chunks of his days' time (outside school) in studies and not get indulged in play or leisure. For him play or leisure activities were actually fillers (usually consisting of a few minutes maximum 10-12 minutes between two distinct activities) say he would watch TV while having dinner, or sit with parents once in a while for a few minutes. He would play a couple of games on the phone or play badminton occasionally, when his cousins would visit him. But other times the child was supposed to make full use of his time for *studies*, which may ensure him good grades and later *good- career and life*. The study-packed routine of this

child and unavailability of playmates, virtually restricted his indulgence in any leisure. At Vasant Kunj DDA, it was found that *curbing playtime* as a form of *punishment* was an important strategy a mother used where in she shared, "*isko bolo na ki khelne nahi milega tb padhta hai ya warna majaal hai ki padh le"* (if he would be told that he would not get to play, then only he sits and study otherwise not).

A typical day's routine of (most of) children from DDA flats Munirka and Vasant Kunj included: waking up at 05:00 a.m., getting ready by 6:30 a.m. and taking the school bus. Then by afternoon 03:00-03:15 p.m. , reaching back to home. By 4 o'clock goes to tuition (and some children have two/three tuitions back to back of different subjects). Then after getting back home from tuition they finish up homework, meanwhile playing games at home or watching TV and then after dinner going to bed. Children belonging to middle-class have an added burden of performing academically to secure a good *future* that consumes their free-time for play. During weekdays children hardly get an hour and half to play. Children mostly play on weekends, similarly what Rybczynski (1991) has critically examined in his work. Also, due to other limitations like short daylight hours during winter evenings; or extreme heat during summer's day time, pollution issues etc. children don't get enough time to play. A general routine of children from Coolie Camp includes waking up at 5:00 a.m., going to school by 7:30 a.m. then coming back by 12:00 p.m. then after getting fresh taking lunch, thereafter taking rest for around an hour. After waking up, watching TV studying a little bit then going to tuition 3:00 to 5:00 p.m. (at NGO centre) then playing in the neighbourhood, watching TV and after taking dinner by 9:00 p.m. they sleep. On weekdays in all the three localities selected, children get limited play time, where the duration of play might differ. At Coolie-Camp children at most can spend 2-3 hours in free-play, children from Munirka and Vasant Kunj DDA hardly gets an hour to play at a stretch.

It is interesting to note that children from not so rich backgrounds have school and then back to back tuitions at one or another NGO/ independent volunteer based group or organisation. After school hours these children are still trying hard in brushing up their education whereas children from DDA flats Munirka and Vasant Kunj do have various hobby and organised sports classes even before and after school hours who are busy in attaining the edge in this competitive era by gaining an extra skill- in terms of learning a foreign language, doing good at sports cricket, swimming, tennis coaching and so on. But children from both the localities are so much tied up in one or another goal oriented activity to fetch measurable results in a limited time frame that in their structured routine (Elkind, 2007, 2009, 2010; Lareau, 2011; Sen, 2014a), it leaves limited time for them to just play for fun or have an unsupervised leisure time without worrying about time *wasted* or *invested*.

4.6 Time Dimensions of Play (and Work)

In continuation with the scholastic calendar, there are specific months when the play especially outdoor play is at *peak*. It is the time towards the end of March month when annual exams of schools get over and there are few days gap between starting the new session. This is a time of *no homework* phase and possibly no new books of the new class yet received. Away from scholastic worries these few days' children can spend in outdoor play. It is important to note that the window of this gap is small, that hardly a week's time is available and during this enrolment for structured activities is not possible and therefore this time of the year children are relatively free. It possibly must be the time of year where children enjoy their holidays without any homework, since the final exams gets over. So these last few days of March month are a boon in that sense for children where they can play as much as they can without being worried about their homework or getting to wake up early the next day for school. On asking which time of the year or month children like most, a child from Coolie Camp shared,

March ka accha lagta hai na zada sardi hoti hai na zada garmi, garmi mein meri tabiat kharab ho jati hai-mera gulucos (glucose) khatam ho jata hai, aur sardi mein mereko bukhaar hota hai bhot. Sardi mein khelne ka nahi milta din bhot jaldi jaldi chala jata hai. Garmi mein lambe din hote hain (March month I like, it is neither too hot nor cold, I cannot bear heat, my glucose levels drop and in winters I usually get fever. The day passes by fast during winter [as daylight hours are short in Delhi winter]. In summers have longer daylight hours).

Another child from Motilal Nehru camp shared, *"main batau merko dussehra accha lagta hai, tab chhuttiya bhi hoti hai aur sardi bhi nahi hoti*" (I like dussehra, we get holidays also during that time of the year it is neither too hot nor cold). It is also noted during conversation with children at DDA flats Munirka since it is their dussehra holidays and mid-term exams are over; they are playing till late otherwise they hardly get time to play after school and tuitions in the evening. On probing about the favorite time of the year or month from children at Vasant Kunj DDA, a child shared, *"summer holidays are the best, humlog outings plan karte hain, baaki to school se picnics hoti hain tab maza ata hai…"* (summer holidays are best, we can plan outings, other than that I like when we go to picnics from school).

Summer vacations fall in the month of May-June during which summers are at peak in Delhi. In most of the schools in Delhi, it is holiday's time for children. For some children it is endless play-time, but for some children it is the time for learning a new language or developing a new hobby or mastering an already learnt sport in structured activities. During this time many summer workshops of independent organisations, neighbourhood tuition centres, schools and other agencies are being carried, which makes anxious-parents to get their child enrolled for getting or achieving an extra edge by getting better in co-curricular activities additional to subject studies. Families from Vasant Kunj and DDA flats Munirka,

plan outings to a distant town or hilly place or abroad during summers; families from Coolie Camp also plan their vacations similarly, but to their home-towns or to some or the other religious place. March and April being the harvest months in North India, many children with their families (after enrolling in a new class in April month) hail to their respective villages back in Rajasthan , Uttar Pradesh (U.P.) etc. since after April; May and June months are summer holidays and this is the time when children also visit their hometown and help the families in harvesting.

As discussed in chapter 2, how in day to day lives of children, play and work figures out, this also has the annual pattern whereby children and their families decide and plan for the compressed time for education, scholastic activities as well as for vacation.

4.7 Time *of* Childhood: Re-tracing Culture of Childhood over Time

The understanding of time differed in different socio-cultural contexts, and this understanding then has a bearing on the way one experiences time- the passed by, present as well as futuristic orientations. We have seen how children tied up with institutional settings get used to the time management skills, and growing up with such concerted cultivation (Adam, 2013) children then learn by themselves time-planning and budgeting. Time *of* childhood (James & Prout, 1997) can be ascertained by the close examination of different scholarly works from disciplines like anthropology, sociology, cultural studies etc. published at various periods. Different anthropologists have informed us about societies where the notions of time and life have been differently perceived than in modern societies. The prominence of time and culture was elaborated by Mead (1928) whereby she has carefully demonstrated how the lives of young individuals, situated in particular time and culture differed from her's. Mead (1928) demonstrated how as a function of culture, young individuals in Samoa, experienced time and their growing up years vis a vis her own European experiences of growing up. In yet another such work, Evans-Pritchard (1940)

depicts the diversity around different notions of time in different cultures. In his work on Nuer community, he mentions,

> [T]he Nuer have no expression equivalent to "time" in our language, and they cannot, therefore, as we can, speak of time as though it were something actual, which passes, can be wasted, can be saved and so forth. I do not think that they ever experience the same feeling of fighting against time or of having to co-ordinate activities with an abstract passage of time because their points of reference are mainly the activities themselves, which are generally of a leisurely character. Events follow a logical order, but they are not controlled by an abstract system, there being no autonomous points of reference to which activities have to conform with precision. Nuer are fortunate. (p. 103)

Conceptions around time shape up our experiences of day to day lives. The evidence shared below shows that how conceptions of time in different time-periods and cultures influences time *in* childhood (in young people's lives) and how then over the period of time such constructions get solidified resulting in the constitution of *normal* of that specific time period. The section below, addresses some of such different childhood experiences that parents and grandparents (of my respondents) had, who now are assessing their children's experiences from a distance (in time). While sharing about their children's childhood, many parents contrasted it with their own experiences, reiterating that during their childhood they had a relaxed and abundant time available for play. But children of this generation[79] do not get time to relax, due to heightened educational competition. Recognising the importance of play, education and comparing her own childhood to her child's, a mother from Vasant Kunj who spent her childhood in a small town in Uttar Pradesh shared,

[79] Referring to children growing up in cities in the 21st century.

Khelna bohhot zaruri hota hai, Hamare time mein padhai ka itna pressure nahi tha - jaise hum log padh bhi liye khel bhi liye.Us time wo competition bhi nahi tha. Ab to bacche 90% se to kam marks lene ka soch bhi nhi sakte. Aaj kal to sabse badi baat hai admission. 90% marks lene ke baad bhi Delhi University mein admission nahi. Humlog ke time to log bas division puchte the first division hi bohot badi baat hoti thi aur ab to point-point par baccho ki percentage banti aur bigad jati hai. (Play is very important, in our times we had not much pressure of education, we used to play as well as study. There was no competition at that time. Now children cannot even think of scoring below 90 per cent. The biggest issue these days is of getting admission. Even after scoring 90 per cent, a child does not get admission in Delhi University. During our times scoring first division used to be more than enough, but now even a few points can be a deciding factor in making a percentage).

This mother though recognised the importance of play, but reiterated that due to educational pressure it is now imperative for children to focus more on studies. As referring to the distant past as *our time*, she contrastingly chalked out contemporary scenarios where even after securing even 90 per cent or more one cannot be sure of admission in a good college or university. A strong preference for education can be registered from the way she has established that now even on the basis of minute difference in one's scores their life chances are decided. In another instance, grandmother of a 10 year old girl (my respondent) from DDA flats Munirka shared about her childhood by revisiting the memories of growing up in current time Jharkhand. She shared,

School se wapis aakar bag kahi hota tha hum kahi…khana kha ke jo nikalte the..khelte khelte kai kai kilometre dur chale jaate the…raat mein andhera hone par aate the…aur fir laaltein jala ke padhte the…lekin ab aap aisa nahi kar skate…baccho ko bhi akela nahi bhej sakte khelne (After coming back from school,

> we used to keep our school bag aside and after having lunch used to go out to play...while playing [certain games], we used to go as far as few Kilometres…used to come back only after it gets dark…then in absence of electricity, we used to study in lantern's light…but now you cannot do this…children could not be sent alone for play also).

Here, hinting at the life in urban context, this grandmother contrasted her own childhood experience where even despite being a girl she could explore her neighbourhood with her playmates and had home-range of a few kilometres, which is not possible for children living in cities now due to security reasons. Similar, stories of playing in a carefree manner resonated in the verbatims of parents and grandparents of nearly all my respondents (across the selected localities). Parents from Coolie Camp also shared their experiences of growing up in villages with opportunities of playing in vast expanse of fields, plucking berries, doing agricultural chores with their respective families, which their children are not able to see or experience by the virtue of living in the city. A grand-parent from Vasant Kunj also expressed similar concerns pointing that children are having a limited exposure to nature, and are growing up in closed environments. He mentioned,

> Children now are too controlled. You see, in our days, we used to climb trees and pluck fruits…were free to do anything. But now, parents have one or two children and they are scared to the hell that their child would fall off the tree or even swing. They would not allow them to do things on their own. Nowadays parents are more worried than children.

Pointing out the restrictive parenting style, this grandparent mentioned that now children do not get the necessary freedom in terms of experience that they should get. All their movements are well calculated and decided by their parents. He further remarked, "*chhoti si chot lag jaye to ghar sir pe utha lete hain*" (even on getting small bruises [while

playing] they [parents] would worry unnecessarily). Sharing about his granddaughter who is 12 years old but does not know how to cycle, he pointed out that children's experiences with nature and in the natural environment say of climbing up a tree or cycling, are limited. About the play in outdoors or visit to parks when enquired to a child 8 years old from Vasant Kunj shared, "*jata hoon jabi kuch kaam milta hai jaise project ke liye, plant ke leaf lene ho ya flowers chahye crafts ke liye*" (I do visit when I get any project or assignment for my craft class say to collect leaf or flowers etc.). This child has a very utilitarian experience with nature, where he only goes to a park or garden when is supposed to collect leaves or so for school projects. Such limited interests and exposure towards the natural environment in the long run would make children indifferent to nature (as well as to natural problems- even including air pollution or global warming), as shared by Kong (2000).

Children's contact with nature and the natural environment is very limited in the city (Pathak, 2017). Due to one or the other reason, children do not spend time in open, they do not have time, no preferable spaces to play in, parents do not let them alone and by being busy themselves they restrict or streamline the child's experiences in open spaces. Such experiences are often planned in the form of vacation, picnics and excursions from school. Referring to safety reasons and not leaving her children alone outdoors, a mother from DDA flats Munirka shared about her relatively free and unsupervised outdoor experience while growing up in Haryana. To quote,

> *Hamara childhood to good time tha… aadhe se zada time to doston ke ke ghar hi beet ta tha…Us time logon mein pyaar bhi tha…ek dusre se milte the baat cheet karte the. Ab to kisi ke paas time nahi raha…raat ke 11-11 baje tak khelte the…tab hum khelte the chhupam-chhupai, apko koi dar nahi tha ki koi darwaza khol ke aap ko andar kheech lega. Aaj kal to sabse pehle yei dar hai…Humko to even 10th kya uske baad bhi ye khayal nahi ata tha kuch fikar hi nahi thi lekin ab ye sab cheezein bohot galat*

ho gai hain. Isiliye log prefer karte hain ki bacha ghar mein baithe…kya ho jayega aankh kharab ho jayegi na chashma laga lenge but atleast safe to hai ghar mein (our childhood constituted good time, more than half of our time used to spend at our [neighbourhood] friend's home…people shared cordial relations…used to meet each-other talk to each other. Now people don't have [such] time…we used to play games like hide and seek, till 11:00 p.m. without any fear that anyone would open the gates and would drag you inside [their home]…now this is the biggest fear. Until class 10th had no idea of all this [sexual abuse] but, not even have thought about such thing, but now these things have gone extremely wrong. That is why people prefer restricting their child at home only…at most what could happen [screen-time] would only deteriorate the vision…one can put glasses for that but at least your child is safe).

In relation to outdoors, this mother is also pointing out the relationship with neighbours that have changed over the period of time. Back in those days people used to meet, sit together and talk to each other, but now in hurried lives, people do not have such *spare time*. While sharing her own experience she mentioned that they (with other playmates) used to play games like hide and seek and that too until late night without any fear. But such a thing one cannot imagine these days, where one does not even know properly and trust their neighbours. On the pretext of her child's safety, as a parent she remarked that would rather keep her child at home, curtailing the opportunities for outdoor play and has no problem if the child at home indulges in video games and screen-time, which if affects and deteriorates the vision in long run, can be fixed using spectacles. This also points out that how the practise of curtailing children's outdoor exposure is leading to their over exposure of gadgets and screen time. Practises and discourses that have lead to the shift of children's presence from outdoors to indoors are traced by many scholars (Acar, 2013; Adam, 2013; Bhardwaj, 2012; Blinkert, 2004; Boyden 2015; James & Prout, 1997; Karsten, 2005; Valentine, 2004). This

further strengthens the protectionist and dependent models of children and childhoods and problematising their presence in street and public spaces. Divorced from nature, this generation would then have a different view towards environment and environmental issues. With an apprehension, Kong (2000) has mentioned similar concern where she writes,

> Growing up in a highly urban environment in which contact with nature is limited; overprotective parents families who worry about the 'dangers' that their children are exposed to when playing in natural areas; and the abundance of other recreational and entertainment options- poses a danger that children become predisposed in their older years to adopt the rationality of the state when confronted with situations in which a development priority conflicts with the needs of wildlife and greenery… In time to come, there is a danger that there may be a generation of adults with little concern for nature, and a lot fewer policy-makers and implementers with a genuine affinity for the natural world. (p. 268)

The impact of such a mechanised understanding of environment we can still register in context of Delhi's pollution where family's prefer using air-purifier and not let children play in outdoors, where at the same time preferring automobiles and four wheelers[80]. But such preferences were critically looked at by few parents (whom I had contacted via telephone) during nationwide mandatory lockdown imposed in the wake of COVID-19. Parents from DDA flats Munirka and Vasant Kunj shared their views of how they miss their taken for granted lives. One parent from DDA flats Munirka acknowledged the importance of open space where staying for more than six months in lockdown, she (and her family) realised how important is outdoor green spaces, sunlight which earlier they have not even thought and felt so deeply about. To quote,

[80] As elaborated in chapter 3.

Balcony cover karali thi taaki kuch extra storage space ho jaye lekin lockdown mein bohot miss kia open space ko, aap upar nahi ja sakte terrace locked rehta hai, road pe nahi ja sakte…ghar mein hi raho bas seriously pagal ho gaye andar reh reh kar"

(we had got our balcony covered to get some extra storage space but in lockdown have missed open space. One cannot go to the terrace as it keeps locked, cannot go to road as is lockdown…stay indoors only, seriously we have gone mad staying indoors).

This parent has shared how living indoors in their 2BHK, they feel stuck in their own home. As they do not have any space left to sit in open since they have got their balcony area covered for extra storage, they miss their outdoor trips. Contrastingly, if we compare the lives of children from Coolie Camp during lockdown, they and their families had major concerns related to employment which many have lost in the lockdown (as all economic activities were suspended). Having a constricted dwelling unit, children and their families could not be restricted to indoors and had similar outdoor presence during the COVID-19 lockdown, as before. Similar resonating concerns of people living in squatter settlements unearthed during this time (Pai, 2020), from different parts of the country.

Of my 10 respondents from Coolie Camp, four families have migrated back to their home-town, during the initial lockdown phase, since they had no savings left to pay room rent. COVID-19 has influenced every aspect of human life including children. After getting hit by global pandemic, children and their families are struggling through, surviving through in their best possible manner they can. During COVID-19 the conceptions around children and childhoods in terms of children's role at home, general routine, scholastic demands, their life in general and play patterns all got influenced. Certainly COVID-19 would impact and reconfigure their lives, ways of living in much larger ways in the following years as well.

This demands an in depth study of the pre COVID-19 and lockdown phase, which is out of the purview of this study.

Different instances shared above show different understandings around children and childhoods and its respective times as good times, bad times, childhood as relaxed phase; childoods originated at a particular time in history. This time *in* children's lives, would then define the time *of* their childhood and further inform the discourses on childhoods in the urban context (of Global South). With different situations[81], emerging children's lives and their childhood experiences are constantly changing with every passing day. In such a scenario, it is impossible to attain any sort of finality in the understanding associated with multitudes of childhood experiences even in the milieu of the selected localities.

[81] On the global level COVID-19 pandemic and associated changes, say totally indoor routines, increased screen-time with online education and in the context of Delhi- rising pollution, vehicular traffic, increasing crime rate and so on.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

I don't want a Childhood City. I want a city where children live in the same world as I do.

(Ward, 1978, p. 204)

Ward (1978) in his work *The Child in the City* strongly advocates that cities should be places inclusive towards both adults and children. Highly segregated spaces in adult centric cities seldom take into account the children as equal city dwellers. This marginalisation of children where they do not count in the scene of urban planning is rooted in the general outlook towards children as *becoming*- in the process of becoming an adult (James & Prout, 1997).

The study has attempted to put in perspective children's everyday lives in the context of selected localities from the capital city Delhi, India. Situated in a particular time and space, the study has attempted to explore children's lived realities in home and neighbourhood spaces by studying their play. Living in urban space, in a particular locality- kind of housing, availability of playable space, opportunities of sociability in their neighbourhood; all shapes children's day to day experiences (Van der Burgt & Gustafson, 2013).

By chalking out historically, the spatial development of Delhi, its urban landscape, and the attainment of the neo-liberal character with the modern form of housing reveals a distinct neighbourhood emerging. These neighbourhoods and housing[82], segregated on the basis of socio-economic class (affordability) deepens the contesting claims over common spaces of the city[83]. To be able to access a park or a street without any fear of being scolded or without the perceived stranger-danger speaks a great deal of the environment of our urban spaces and children's relationship to it. Until and unless we know how children perceive their

[82] As discussed in the sections of chapter 1.
[83] As discussed in chapter 3.

neighbourhood and city spaces, we may not be able to advocate for child-friendly urban planning. From experiential psychology, works by scholars like Acar (2013), Barker and Wright (1951), Buss (1995), Dixon (2014), Gaster (1995), Korpela (1992), Spencer and Woolley (2000) informs us about the significance of place and space in relation to growing up years; in identity formation as well as building up of confidence. With this study, by foregrounding children's experiences of play while accessing public parks, streets; I make an attempt to potentially inform urban planners of the requirements and preferences of *children* as equal city dwellers, who are otherwise neglected.

Living in insulated spheres is doing more harm than good to individuals both from privileged as well as underprivileged sections. Children residing in gated colonies and closed residential complexes have developed an acutely suspicious outlook towards the people and life outside those gated boundaries (Low, 2001, 2003; Low& Smith, 2006; Srivastava, 2015). Whereas, children growing up outside such gated localities and in settlements like Coolie Camp, are also well aware of their standing as resident of *jhuggi*[84], who are not welcomed in the privileged neighbourhoods unless they (children's parents) are serving the privileged as helpers. This relationship exhibiting *dependency yet hateful and suspicious view* between affluent and not-so affluent neighbourhoods unearthed strongly during COVID-19 pandemic[85] (slum residents fume over wall, 2020). Gated residential spaces and individual homes constitute the sanitised space- as desirable for children. In contrast to the street and public spaces which are painted in negative, where children's presence in street would invite the label of delinquent or street child (Boyden, 2015). It is perhaps this logic imbibed by privileged class adults (residents of DDA flats Munirka and Vasant Kunj) which resulted in incidents of dismissal, shouting at, rebuking children from Coolie-camp (and other slums and

[84] Colloquial term for squatter settlement.
[85] As discussed in chapter 3.

villages), if found in their sanitised residential zones[86]. Zeiher (2003) notes this as the "societal differentiation of childhood" (p. 66), which is reflected through urban landscape segregating the places for children and for adults. Additionally, parents hinting towards the prevailing not so child-friendly conditions say increasing crime rate, pollution, traffic, absence of playgrounds, also constructed and added to the image of a child as innocent, dependent and in need of care and supervision of an adult. With such a negative undercurrent defining and deciding our relationship with the public space, in the light of a dominant childhood image and associated discourses on child-safety; adults as decision-making figures in the life of children, greatly directs and shapes their daily lives. Such a negative outlook towards public spaces; further is paving the way for organised leisure[87]. Specific places which are frequented by children, according to Zeiher (2003) constitute "landscapes of islands" (p. 66). With children spending much of their time in organised spaces within walls and shelters leads to their "insularisation" (Zeiher, 2003, p. 67), towards domestication of childhood (Zinnecker, 1995). In indoors, children from privileged classes had an abundance of resources including technology. Insulated from face to face interaction, children shared how they *play together online* [88]with their playmates (who are located at different places), thereby enjoying the experience of playing from the comfort of their home as well as playing together with their playmates (situated at a geographical distance). Concerning open spaces it was recorded that selected parks, gardens and green patches are being revived by state authorities (SDMC) by putting up open gyms, installation of swings for children (Sharma, 2018). But still these spaces most of the time are not utilised. Some of the reasons of under-utilisation of available spaces are- concerns of security in public spaces, unavailability of playgrounds with grass, unavailability of play-mates (to play on open), no or low

[86] As discussed in chapter 1 and chapter 3 with respect to contesting claims over space.
[87] As discussed in chapter 3 and 4.
[88] As discussed in chapter 3.

maintenance of parks, cleanliness issues. Accompanying these, easy availability of gadgets, weather constraints including extreme heat and cold in Delhi, no *free-time* to go out and play are some additional reasons that made children stay indoors. With easy availability of technology and negative outlook towards public space; children themselves prefer to stay indoors. Overindulgence in technology and e-gaming was recorded during COVID-19 lockdown[89]. But in a few instances, this preference got reversed[90], during COVID-19, when due to mandatory lockdown one is not supposed to go out. Initially, it appeared habitual to children, but within a few weeks and when the schools reopened in online mode, children (and their families) found it difficult to contain themselves indoors.

The link between leisure and conspicuous consumption is well established by scholars (Bourdieu, 1984; Brosious, 2010; Linder, 1970; Manne, 2005; Veblen, 2007) representing how it is intricately a *classed* phenomenon. This organised leisure serves dual purpose for children from affluent families whereby providing them with the sanitised experience of leisure, at the same time getting them well acquainted with tight schedules[91] and preparing for possibly the future roles as employed adults (Bourdieu, 1978, 1984; Elkind, 2007, 2009; Lareau, 2011; Sen, 2014a). But, if assessed from the lens of flexible play opportunities available, children from Coolie Camp (and other such economically underprivileged backgrounds) in their poverty of resources, gain more on abundance of opportunities for flexible routines and opportunities to roam around in their neighbourhood and play. They had a greater knowledge of their surroundings, of nature[92] and exhibited survival skills than their peers of the same age group from DDA flats Munirka and Vasant Kunj.

Sections of chapter 1discusses how studying childhood demands a multidisciplinary approach. Research with children and about childhood, therefore calls for a wide

[89] As discussed in chapter 3.
[90] As discussed in chapter 4.
[91] As discussed in chapter 4.
[92] Had skills of flying kites- could tell which air (pressure) would help the kite fly well, could swiftly cross the roads (even in heavy traffic), climb up fences.

interdisciplinary field with different approaches to study children. This study is also situated at the intersections of sociology of childhood, experiential psychology, urban studies, anthropology and childhood studies. The study's anchorage in such diverse disciplines has helped in understanding children's lives in the city, along with contextualising it in particular space and time. Well aware and acknowledging the multiplicity and diverse nature of children's lives and their everyday circumstances, this study has best presented those elements as it is, rather than attempting to define, limit and categorise- child, adult, play, work and so on. Perhaps the complexity of this study lies in its limit which halts it to be definitive and attain any finality in terms of representing children's lives in the city which are highly contextual.

For operational purposes, the study has followed *age group* as a marker to decide and select children, being aware of its limitations as well as the underlying politics which this numeric marker of *age-group* holds in the study of children and childhoods. About age as a variable, Finch (2018) reminds us that it is the most elusive variable which is mostly collected but used to the least degree. Finch (2018) shows that age groups are "socially constructed categories" (p. 16) in particular economic, social and political contexts. Age is a social category with a biological basis. By simply reading it in numerical terms we cannot do justice to it, especially when read in the context of children's lives. For example, the right age to begin schooling varies culturally and socially, revealing its social dimension. Concerning childhood studies, such age groups have major implications, when based on age, children's rights in the light of legal framework are formulated- say a 17 years old individual to be considered as an adult or a child? Such vague and ambiguous contestations also prevail in Indian settings where for different laws, the category of child is defined and decided as per age variable. It is perhaps this vagueness that underlines the blurry boundaries between adult and child. Chapter 2 discusses it further by showing how children treat and refer themselves

as *bada bacha* (mature child) referring to their past childhood experiences. Located in the Western understanding of childhood, this temporal distance between child and adult is further demonstrated by Ennew (1986) as,

> The modern form of childhood has two major aspects. The first is a rigid age hierarchy which permeates the whole of society and creates a distance between adults and children. The status difference is enhanced by special dress, special games, special artefacts (toys), special language and stories, which are all considered appropriate to what Aries calls the 'quarantine' period of childhood. The distance is further enhanced by the second aspect which is the myth of childhood as a 'golden age'. Happiness is now the key term associated with innocence—childhood must be a happy time as well as a time of separation from corrupt adult society. (p. 18)

This rigid age hierarchy existed in the children's lives from Coolie Camp, DDA flats Munirka and Vasant Kunj but to varying degrees. Parents description of their own childhood as *good time*, *relaxed phase*[93] vis a vis characterising their children's lives as hectic (but the need of the hour) points out partly to what Ennew (1986) mentions as the distance between adults and child. The status difference between children and adults as rightly pointed out by Ennew (1986) gets enhanced by their respective material culture-possession in terms of toys, educational and leisure schedules of children vis a vis adults, and other roles and responsibilities of the two. Age can also be understood as a marker of time passed (number of years passed), implicitly quantifying the time- left and passed, in the adult becoming (James & Prout, 1997). Our everyday questions to children say- how old are you, do you go to school, what you want to become in future- when grown up etc. points out to the minute yet mundane ways through which children's childhood is ascertained. Also, children's remarkable knowledge of their age well calculated in terms of the number of days and years

[93] As discussed in chapter 4.

passed (birthdays) constitutes everyday practices where adult and child boundaries are created and re-created. It is significant to note here that children's age also has a bearing upon their freedom and flexibility to access public spaces which decides and defines their home-range (Gaster, 1995). Children below 10 years old were registered in adult supervision or with older siblings when visiting public spaces. But this does not hold true in the context of Coolie Camp, where children as young as 4 and 5 years old also could be seen without (strict) adult supervision and at times playing with their peers of similar age in the neighbourhood spaces. Such day to day practices of restricting their free access to public spaces, at micro-level denies children their individuality, rejecting their presence as being- their time *in* childhood and rather adding up to the futuristic patronising view of treating children as adult becomings. By practising such things in everyday lives, children and adults are constructed and re-constructed constituting the time *in* childhood. Over the period of time with repeated and taken for granted practices then crystallises these images of childhoods which adults refer to as "*hamara bachpan aisa tha"* (our childhood was like this), comparing the childhood of their children. "Childhood", therefore according to James and Prout (1997), "appears to be lost in time: its present is continuously banished to the past, the future or out of time altogether" (p. 231).

With class, age has figured out as another deciding variable over gender in this study that majorly had bearing upon children's experiences. For children from Coolie Camp, boys and girls alike had duties of household chores (cleaning, putting up bedding, fetching water etc.) and sibling care assigned. Whereas for children from DDA flats Munirka and Vasant Kunj, the parental perception concerning the safety-security of their child, alike curbed the outdoor experiences of boys as well as girl children.

The problem arises when the temporally situated images and discourses of children and childhoods are seen as universal and accepted uncritically (and at times imposed) in

societies and cultures having starkly different notions of children and childhoods. In the globalised world of ours, such discourses travel through different mediums like policies, media, market[94] and so on. The happy, playing and schooled child image is one such which is accepted uncritically, at least in policy discourses and privileged spheres of the society. This perceived *normalcy* of such an image, has all of a sudden problematised other diverse childhoods and children's experiences. Balagopalan (2002, 2011) has presented that work and labour have always been an integral part of children's lives in the Indian context, which now has been problematised by discourses on children's rights. Other scholars (Bisht, 2008; Boyden, 2015; Corsaro, 2018; Katz, 2004; Kumar, 2016; Nieuwenhuys, 2009, 2010) have also presented such contestations and homogenising tendencies of Eurocentric images and discourses on childhood which are otherwise perceived as neutral and universal. These contending discourses around children and childhoods largely classified as Global North and Global South further complicates the already complex childhood studies. Recognising these contestations, James and Prout (1997) argues that "childhood is a shifting social and historical construction and the corollary of this position is that *all* accounts of childhood must be carefully placed in their proper temporal and spatial context" (p. 241). Therefore, to capture such contextually embedded lives of children, an ethnographic method is best suited. This study has deployed an ethnographic method to explore the critical interlocking between childhood and socio-economic class by following "New Sociology of Childhood" (James & Prout, 1997).

As discussed and acknowledged throughout, the complex multiplicity of children's experiences and the interplay of different variables say- class, caste, gender, age and so on makes it all the more difficult to generalise the claims. At best this study has tried putting a detailed presentation, of the ways how children's lives including their play, relationship to the

[94] As discussed in chapter 2.

city is diverse and can be studied by putting their class-membership at the core. Children across the selected localities are treated by adults as dependents but to varying degrees.

India is a multi-layered society, where notions of childhood across classes (and cultures) are varied. Qualitatively different forms of childhoods and related experiences co-exist even in a particular space and time. In the context of children from Coolie Camp, their lives exhibit their role as helpers (Lancy, 2017) as they served household chores when their parents are away for work[95]. For children from DDA flats Munirka and Vasant Kunj, their routine mostly involved educational activities and organised leisure activities in which constant parental involvement was recorded. Counter-posing of the concepts of work and play in a conventional manner in historical, sociological and policy discourse implicitly maps the boundaries of child and adult. But in actuality these figures out in children's lives quite seamlessly. Children's own understanding of work constituted doing chores at home along with *homework* (the scholastic work). Play for different children held different meanings. For some it included a range of activities like watching TV, talking to friends over the phone as well as at the time spent in organised activities, whereas for some, school time constituted as playful. These diverse ways through which play figures out in children's lives and how children understand play and work are discussed in chapter 2 and 4.

For all the children (across localities) education constituted the utmost important activity, which shows the acceptance of a *schooled image* and accordingly then parental concerns around their child's education led children to enrol for after school tuitions as well. Like education, parents across classes recognised the importance of play in children's lives, but not at the stake of education. Recognising the role of play, parents from Vasant Kunj and DDA flats Munirka who have their children enrolled in organised leisure say for swimming, cricket coaching and so on, categorically mentioned that for them education and play

[95] As discussed in chapter 2.

(referring to organised leisure) is equally important and they would not endorse children for taking up a career in sports. With leisure activities, children are made occupied and busy (Karsten, 2005), so that employed parents may find it manageable with their routines[96] and in their absence children utilise that time to learn a few additional skills, which may help them in orienting themselves for further studies and career.

Way Forward…

Living in urban context children's lives are untouched with global impacts say of anonymous life in the city, market, technology, consumerism and other events like pollution or COVID-19. All forms of childhoods and children's lives can be understood in its socio-cultural contexts rooted in space and time More research should be taken up to explore and inform contemporary childhoods and accordingly suggest healthier and inclusive ways of living in the city. The present study can also be extended further into many possible directions. Some of it can be- market and its impact on children exploring the toy industry, children's media, consumer-culture; children's participation in the economy- by working and by acting as consumers; by exploring the imagination of a child as a *citizen* of the nation; taking up explorations about the diverse childhoods in Indian rural setting and in other cities that are geographically different say hilly terrains etc. could be explored. This would further add to the knowledge about children's lives and which may help us then create a better world for all.

Scholarship from different disciplines has established the link between our dwelling units and our mental health; not repeating the same here, this study suggests few possible ways to make Delhi (and cities in general) inclusive with special focus to children (and families). Delhi occupies the position of one of the high-density cities in India. It is estimated

[96] As discussed in chapter 4.

that by 2030, it will overtake Tokyo becoming the largest population density (UN, The World's Cities, 2018) in the world. But still, with some inclusive practises a healthy and sustainable urban environment can be achieved. To overcome space crunch, achieve spatial inclusivity, re-claim commons and children's right to the city spaces, this study proposes few possible suggestions with regard to urban planning. The perceived crisis of open space (in Delhi) could be worked out by de-structuring the existing spaces of the city by making it available for the public in general and making the city's spaces inclusive. Some State led measures to de-colonise city's commons may include: providing affordable housing for all city dwellers; creation of mixed neighbourhoods (and not class, caste, religion specific ghettoes); revival and proper maintenance of public parks and gardens by making the spaces accessible and aesthetically appealing built environment for children, especially for children with special needs (Philip, 2019); in the localities where additional space is not available- directing schools and other such sports academies to open up their playgrounds and open spaces for general public use (Humphries, 2019);coming up with strict policies to curb insulation of gated-colonies- by pulling down walls, boundaries and gates installed in public spaces, street to make the spaces porous, open and unbarred (Russell, 2020); taking steps for ensuring safety of the city's dwellers regardless of their class and localities they inhabit; strict policies to restrict vehicular circulation in selected zones; long term policies to curb vehicular traffic and strict implementation of policies to curb pollution; involve all stakeholders' including children in neighbourhood and urban planning; encourage equal footing of children in public spaces as of adults (Alice, 2019).

The suggestions provided above are all executable, as in past as well as in other parts of the world, there have been similar city revival activities (Humphries, 2019; Montgomery, 2013; Perry, 2020; Stenning, 2020). One such initiative that led to place-making and re-

claiming city's street was *Raahgiri* (pedestrian) day, launched in Gurugram[97] during November 2013 (Jindal, 2014). Inspired by Bogota's Ciclovia (Bhatt, 2018; Rogala, 2015) where during Sunday and holidays, approximately around 120 kilometers of roads used to keep close to motorised traffic and open to the general public, this got replicated in India. As a weekly event, it involved closing up of the city's streets to cars to celebrate walking, biking, music and socialising activities. It demonstrated that reorienting cities to its people is possible. Turning streets into play and socialising space, initiatives like *Raahgiri* can also help in overcoming the negative outlook towards public spaces.

[97] With more than 50 cities adopting this concept (Bhatt, 2018) later on; of which Delhi, Bhopal, Chandigarh and Jamshedpur named it Raahgiri while Mumbai, Chennai, Lucknow, Bhubaneswar, Pune, Ahmedabad, Angul (Odisha), Bhagalpur (Bihar), Fatehabad, Jhajjar (Haryana) to name a few, held similar such initiatives.

Figure 57: *Representative pictures from Raahgiri Day (Source: EMBARQNetwork)*

But such initiatives need to be sustained over a period of time. As in the long run it would help city dwellers in achieving healthy and sustainable life with strong mental and physical health. Now, the question here is to ask: What do we choose- making our cities (and dwelling spaces) inclusive or insulated?

Ronald Rael- Anti-border wall campaigner and architect (in Herring, 2019), gives us a vision with his work. To create opportunities for children to play together while being located

across the border, Rael has installed three sets of seesaws on the US-Mexico border; enabling children from both sides to play together.

Figure 58: *Set of swings installed at the US-Mexican border (Source- Herring, 2019).*

We must reflect on this and ask ourselves the larger question that- Can we think of such possibilities even with our neighbouring residential complexes, localities and countries (with respect to India) and their respective borders?

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Appendix A- Consent Forms

Though consent forms were devised but both children and their parents refused to make signatures. However, they allowed me to proceed with my research by providing oral consent.

Consent Form for Child Participation in Research

The Dynamics of Children's Play in Urban Context

A Study of Three Selected Sites in Delhi

Dear Participant

Introduction to the Research: The current study aims at exploring children's play. Potential participants of this study are children of age under 15.

I am interested in knowing about the details of play like with whom, where, for how long children play? What kind of toys or resources children use while playing? How much time do children get to play freely? How do children balance their play timings with school and tuition-timings? Are open places like gardens, playgrounds, swings available nearby home or not? What issues children face in accessing various spaces for their play? What are children's demands? What constitutes an *ideal* play space according to children?

Your role as participant: You and your friends can help me in understanding about your play (patterns), games and various other issues that you face in detail. Your participation is voluntary and if at any stage you would like to withdraw from the research you may do so.

Confidentiality and Anonymity: Your identity would not be disclosed.

If you have any query regarding the research process at any time, you may ask me. My details are as follows:

Rituraj Sharma
Ph.D. Research Scholar,
Centre for the Study of Social Systems,
Jawaharlal Nehru University,
New Delhi-110067

Children's Signature: ……..

Parental Consent Form for Child Participation in Research

The Dynamics of Children's Play in Urban Context

A Study of Three Selected Sites in Delhi

Dear Participant/Respondent,

Purpose of Study: The study conducted by Rituraj Sharma, Ph.D. research scholar of the Centre for the Study of Social Systems, School of Social Sciences, Jawaharlal Nehru University, aims to explore about children's play in order to extract the understanding of *childhood* and growing up experiences of children living in cities in current times.

Study Procedures: The study would seek observations (non-participants and participant) of children's (free) play at various spaces of localities chosen. In later phases after taking due consent, in-depth interviews would be conducted with children and parents/guardians. The observations would be carried in the selected sites for the study.

Risk of the Study: No risk is involved in this study.

Benefits from the Study: The research is designed in such a way that in later phases of work, its extracts might be published in leading journals to present the concerns pertaining to urban spaces (and planning) with respect to children's access and to advocate for children's right to play. This research can provide inputs for the policy makers and urban planners, to improve the existing conditions and opportunities so as to benefit children.

Confidentiality and Anonymity: The information you provide is totally confidential and will not be disclosed to anyone. It will only be used for the purpose of research and advocacy, keeping your confidentiality intact. Your case may be presented in such a way that your identity will be hidden.

Voluntary Participation: Your participation in the research is voluntary and you can withdraw from your participation at any time after having agreed to participate. You are free to refuse to answer any question that is asked by the researcher. If you have any queries about this research, you may ask the researcher.

Participant's Signature…… Researcher's Signature…….

Appendix B- Points of Interaction for focussed Conversations

For Parents

Demographic Information:

Details of family: No. of family members, name, age, gender, employment status, approximate income, local residence (permanent residence) If migrated / shifted to Delhi recently or are living for more than 05/06 years?

1. Which school does your child/children go to? How far/near is it from your home? Does the child go to school alone i.e. on her own or with parents/ by bus or cab etc.?
2. What is your typical day's routine? (of your spouse, of your children and of other family members)?
3. How does your family spend their vacations-summers, winters and other festive holidays?
4. How do you celebrate festivals?
5. Do you think there is a difference between a child and an adult? If yes/no, how?
6. Are their separate roles and responsibilities assigned to different members of their family? If yes please share.
7. What do you think are the responsibilities of parents towards their children? (good parenting/child-rearing)
8. What are your concerns for your children?
9. What was your childhood like?
10. What were you like when you were your child's age?
11. Are there any responsibilities assigned to children in your family? If yes, what are these?
12. How do you conceptualise a *child* of today?
13. What is the work of a child of today?
14. What is *play* and *work (studies)* according to you? How important or useful is it for children of different ages?
15. Do you think your childhood was any different than it is nowadays? How? Please explain. Which one do you think is better then and how?
16. *Padhoge likhoge banooge nawaab, Kheloge koodoge hoge kharaab* - To what extent do you think this saying is relevant nowadays?

17. *Aaj kal ke bacche, bacche nahi rahe*- Do you agree or disagree with it? Please explain.
18. What kind of games do you think children should play more –indoors, outdoors, educational play etc.?
19. Can you classify some useful and some not so useful games?
20. Do you go for family outings or picnics? Where? Frequency? May I have the access to picnic photos (if available)?
21. What do you think makes your child happy?
22. In what type of a setting is your child most likely to be quiet? more outgoing? overwhelmed?
23. What are your fears/concerns about your child?
24. What all things (according to you) your child is interested in?
25. According to you, what *good behaviour* consists of, as per your child's age?
26. Are there traditional family games or songs your child enjoys?
27. How does your child like to start the day?
28. What does your child enjoy doing when playing alone? Or when playing with adults? Or when playing with other children?
29. What makes you proud,when you think about your child?
30. What are your hopes and dreams towards your child?
31. What amazes you most about society and children nowadays?
32. What do you miss most about the *old days*?
33. What do you think, are you a strict parent or lenient? How?

Note: The questions mentioned above were open-ended and explored throughout multiple meetings that constituted the research journey. The actual questions were contextualised as per the conversations to gaze through the respondent's understanding on the selected topic.

For Children

Name: …… (Do you have any nickname; what do your family members call you?)

Gender:

Age:

Residence: Current (*previous if any*- Have you lived anywhere else also before, at any other home? If yes, (how was your previous home)?

1. Which school do you go to? Which class/ standard are you in?
2. Share about your daily routine? Around what time do you wake up generally, around what time you go to school, by what time do you come back from school and your general daily activities.
3. Is your weekdays and weekend routine similar? If no, then what are all other (additional or different) things you do on weekends?
4. Who helps you with your homework?
5. Do you go for tuitions or coaching or any other hobby (singing, dancing or any other art form) classes? How frequently do you attend these classes (thrice a week etc.)?
6. What do you like to do in your free-time? How do you spend your leisure time?
7. Do you like playing? With whom do you play? Which games do you like to play? Where do you play? (at the park or at home?) When do you play generally during the morning hours or in the evening?
8. Do you go to any sports academy (for cricket, any other sport or for taekwondo training etc.)?
9. Do you play at school? If yes then when-share about various opportunities of playing at school (before assembly time, during recess, or a separate games period)?

    9a. Which games do you play during recess/ games period? And at home? And with friends (at the nearest park)?
10. Which all things you don't like to do but you have to? (to explore their concept of work)
11. Do you help your parents (family members) with different household chores? How, what are all the things you do? (*Aap mumma –papa ki help krte ho kaam mein? Kaise*?)
12. How do you manage your time between school, tuition, playing and any other activities?
13. What makes you angry?

14. Do you play during exams? If yes then, how do you manage and take out time for play during exams?
15. Do you have toys (May I see your toy collection)? Do you play with toys (at home)? Or with your friends?
16. Where do your friends live? Do you go to your friend's place for playing or studying?
17. What is your favourite time of the day (and year)? Why?
18. What do you do when nobody is around?
19. Who gets you toys? Do you go and choose toys for yourself or do your parents give/ gift it to you?
20. Do you also go to the nearest parks or playgrounds for playing?
21. Can you ride a bicycle? If yes, who taught you?
22. Have you done skating? If yes, where?
23. Do you think playing is important or is it ok not to play but focus on studies only?
24. Which games or play do you think are important (cross-words, Sudoku etc.) and which are not so important (time-pass)?
25. Suppose there is your exam tomorrow, what would be your routine today?
26. Suppose summer vacations are starting tomorrow then what would you do today?
27. How do you spend your vacations? (visit relatives and cousins or family outings)
28. Which is your favourite cartoon/ TV show?
29. Have you seen any movies recently? Which one? Where? With whom you went?
30. When is your birthday? Do you celebrate it (at school or at home)? How?
31. (Notions around Success) What do you want to be in future? (Why?)
32. Questions related to *good boy/girl* image.
33. When did you feel most proud of yourself? (*apko proud kab kab feel hota hai apne aap par)*
34. For which all things do you get scolded- from your parents/ teachers/ elders? (*Aapko kis kis baat pr daant padti hai*?)
35. If you are free to do anything right now of your choice-what would you do?
36. What makes you feel energised and happy?
37. Would you like to share your memories of your younger self?
38. According to you, what makes someone smart or good or bad?
39. What do you think, which activities of yours make your parents happy?
40. [situational- Could you tell me any incident or any memory of your brothers and sisters growing up?]

41. Is there any work that you really hate doing?
42. Do you participate in various school activities and sports?
43. Do you participate in festivals and other cultural programs at your locality/society or at school?
44. What do you think your parents are strict or lenient? Why?
45. Do you know how to operate a phone/ TV, computer/ laptop? If yes, who taught you?
46. Which is your favourite season ? Why?
47. Would you like to stay for hours and hours at your home with your favourite videogames and watching TV shows (..[*this section of the question would be revealed later*] or at the playground playing with friends or stay)?
48. If you want to make friends with someone- how would you proceed with it?

Note: The questions mentioned above were open-ended and explored throughout the multiple meetings that constituted the research journey. The actual questions were contextualised as per the observations and conversations to gaze through children's understanding on the selected topic.