

#Shikshagiri: Voices of children on the Right to Education



#Shikshagiri

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New Delhi



Shikshagiri Panel



Panellists



Areeba, 18 years old, lives with her parents and two brothers in Adarsh Nagar, Delhi. Areeba belongs to the Muslim community. She dropped out of school in 2015 when she failed in class 11. Her friends teased her, and Areeba faced a lot of stigma because of this. She also had financial difficulties at home and has had to face opposition from her family in her continued pursuit of education, as they are conservative and do not like her to travel and go out on her own. She used to see her friends who are doing well in their respective careers, which prompted her to resume her studies. With the help of YUVA learning centre, she took admission in class 12 under open schooling. Areeba wants to become a teacher. She says that after completing school she will enroll herself in college and simultaneously prepare for a career in teaching.

Armani, 17 years old lives in Jahangirpuri, Delhi with parents, two brothers and three sisters. She studies in class 10. Her parents do not want her to study and do not give her money for school fees. They often tell her that she will not achieve anything by studying. Armani says that her mother does not care for her at all and favours her other siblings. Armani arranged for her fees on her own by working in the vegetable market. Now that she has left the job, she faces acute shortage of money. The place where she is now studying does not take any fees from her. Armani wants to become an IPS officer. She is inspired by the movie 'Durga' where the protagonist is a female officer.



Aman, 16 years old, is a Dalit boy who belongs to a migrant family. He dropped out of school when he was in class 9. He dropped out of school due to the negative influence of his peer group. His friends were all older than him, and influenced him to start smoking and drinking alcohol, which made him lose interest in his studies. He started bunking school to roam around with his friends, and became rude to his parents who in turn started neglecting him. When he met the coordinator of YTH, he realised that he should continue his studies. Aman saw his friends were not earning enough, and did not have decent jobs and realised that he must continue his studies. Aman said that he will take admission in class 9 this year under open schooling. He wants to travel all over the world and aspires to be a singer.

Ashish, 17 years old, lives with parents, elder sister, cousin brother and grandmother in Karol Bagh, Delhi. He belongs to the Valmiki community. He left studies in class 9, when he failed a second time. He never understood English properly, and as a result found Mathematics and Science difficult as they were taught in English. When he was repeating class 9, teachers and other students in his class teased and discouraged him. This put tremendous pressure on him to perform. His family supported him through this, and continued their support when he failed class 9 the second time. His elder sister used to go to the Youth Tech Hub (YTH) and informed him about the open school facility, asking him to fill the admission form. With the help of the coordinator, he was able to fill his admission form. Now he is in class 10 in open school.



Azad lives in Adarshnagar, Delhi with parents and two other siblings. He dropped out of school when he was in class 12 before the board exams and he decided to take up job. He was eager to support his family because of their poor financial status. Peer pressure, and watching his friends earning money made him drop out. Later one of his teachers motivated him to give the exams and Azad cleared his class 12. Now he is pursuing B.A first year from Delhi University. He included that there was no one to guide him or to make him understand how important education is for children and their future. He aspires to become a businessman and wants to travel all across the world so that he can bring new technologies from across the world and introduce them to India.



Bharat, 20 years old, lives in Patel Nagar, Delhi with his parents. He stopped going to school when he was in class 9. He used to study in the government school, where the teacher's behaviour towards students was disrespectful. Teachers were never helpful in clarifying the doubts of students. Eventually, growing disinterest in education made him drop out in class 9. He realises that the school atmosphere was the main reason for him to dropping out. He talked about how the school system restricted children in getting formal education. Also, he feels that peer pressure pushes the child to leave the school. Bharat wants to become a musician or an army officer in future.

Bhawani, 13 years old, is a Tamil girl who lives in Kusumpur Pahadi, Delhi with three sisters. She is the youngest one among them. Last year in October, she dropped from school while in class 8. As her mother was very ill, she had to stay back home to take care of her. Her mother died in January 2017. She is going to join the boarding school in Ashram, Delhi, along with her sister. She enjoys studying English. She aspires to become a dance teacher.



Ekta, 15 years old, lives in Karol Bagh, Delhi. Her family belongs to a Mahadalit Valmiki community and comprises of her parents and 3 girls of which she is the second child. She dropped out of school in 2014 when she was in class 8. She studied in a private school till class 5. However, when she joined a government school in class 6 she started getting mocked by fellow students for her dark complexion. Her mother complained to the school authorities but the authorities started blaming Ekta for the problems. As a result of this, fellow students isolated Ekta. She continued to study till class 7, but constant bullying and isolation resulted in her dropping out of school in class 8. Two years ago, she came in touch with the NGO Bal Sahyog where she realised the importance of education, the coordinator took her to Youth Tech Hub and enabled her to resume her studies under open schooling. She is currently studying in Class 10. Ekta enjoys singing and love listening to Lata Mangeshkar. She wants to become a singer when she grows up.

Karan, 21 years old, lives in Patel Nagar, Delhi, and belongs to a Dalit migrant family. He is the youngest among six members of the family. Karan dropped out of school while in class 10 as he was not interested in studying. He was unable to understand whatever was taught in the class. He had failed in class 6, which affected his morale but he somehow cleared his exams from class 6 to class 9. He came to know about an organisation that offers an English-speaking course for free. Soon after starting the course, Karan joined the Manjoorstaff on voluntary basis, and has been there for a year and half. By then he realised the importance of education in life and took admission in class 10 under open schooling. Now he is in class 12. He feels that if his schoolteachers had motivated him then he would have become a good student. He likes dancing, singing and going to parties. He aspires to become an entrepreneur in the future.



Manjoor, 16 years old, belongs to a construction worker Muslim Dalit family. He used to live with his family in a small village of Bihar and later moved to his uncle's house at Adarsh Nagar in Delhi. He was forced to drop out in class 8 and seek work outside the village as the family financial situation was not good. He was a brilliant student while he was at his village school. He took admission in class 6 in Delhi with the help of YTH. He also had to work in the Mandi (vegetable market) for long hours to add to his family income. It was hard for him to get up early in the morning and to go to the school. Somehow he managed to clear class 6 and 7 but couldn't continue in class 8. He loves to play cricket and aspires to become a cricketer in future.

Sanjana, 16 years old, lives with her parents and three sisters in Kusumpur Pahadi, Delhi. She dropped out of school two years ago when she was in class 9. When her grandfather died, she had to go to her village for four months. As she went without giving a formal application, on her return the school refused to admit her back. Despite her father making many requests to school authorities, she was not admitted. Now she has decided to take admission in class 10 at an open school. Her parents want her to study, and her father wants her to become a nurse.



Shoaib Akhtar, 16 years old, belongs to a Muslim community. His family consists of his parents, two brothers and one sister who now live at Karol Bagh, Delhi. In 2015 in Kolkata, Shoaib dropped out of school when he was in class 8 because he met with an accident and could not appear for his exams. As a result, the school removed his name for the rolls and he could no longer pursue his studies. Shoaib stayed at home for two years after being forced to drop out from school. The turning point in his life occurred when one of his relatives from Delhi visited his home. She asked him if he wanted to go to Delhi and study. He agreed to this and his parents also supported this decision. When he came to Delhi, his aunt got him enrolled in Youth Tech Hub where he is currently taking coaching. In the coming session Shoaib will enroll in open school for class 10. Shoaib aspires to be an engineer and his inspirations are his friends who are studying engineering.

Shivani, 15 years old, lives in Kusumpur Pahadi, Delhi with her three sisters. Her father passed away in 2011, of tuberculosis. Her mother passed away in January 2017 after a long illness. Her mother had to be admitted to the hospital often, because of which Shivani's attendance fell short. In February when she went to school, the school authorities didn't admit her and this caused her to drop out of school. Her elder sisters have decided to send her to a boarding school. She aspires to be teacher and wants to teach her students with love.








Who are we?






The panel comprised of a group of 13 children belonging to marginalised identities – girls, boys, Dalits, Muslims, Hindus, Christians, slum dwellers, among others who had dropped out of school. The following word cloud illustrates their identities and their interests.



Our place in education today

The following were marked to show the panellists' current situation in the education system. Against their name, children have marked if they never went to school, dropped out of school, the class they dropped out in, if they made an attempt to reintegrate with the school system and if yes, were they successful or not in this attempt.






Name/ Reasons	Never went to school 	Dropped out of school 	Dropped out in which class? 	Attempt to reintegrate with school 	Successful in reintegration with school 
Aman	X	✓	9 th	X	X
Shivani	X	✓	9 th	X	X
Sanjana	X	✓	9 th	X	X
Ashish	X	✓	9 th	X	10 th
Azad	X	X	X	X	X

Name/ Reasons	Never went to school 	Dropped out of school 	Dropped out in which class? 	Attempt to reintegrate with school 	Successful in reintegration with school 
Karan	X	✓	10 th	X	
Shoab	X	✓	9 th	X	6 th
Armani	X	X	X	✓	X
Bharat	X	✓	8 th	X	10 th
Simmi	X	✓	11 th	X	10 th
Ekta	X	✓	8 th	X	X
Manjoor	X	✓	9 th	X	X
Bhavani	X	✓	9 th	X	Open

Note: Of the 13 children, five have rejoined the schooling system through Open Schooling.

Our friend's place in education today

The panellists then identified how their peers living in the same areas were located on this grid. The following table shows their responses.

Name/ Reasons	Never went to school 	Dropped out of school 	Dropped out in which class? 	Attempt to reintegrate with school 	Successful in reintegration with school 
Aman	X	✓	1 st	X	X
Sahil	X	✓	9 th	X	X

Raja	X	✓	6 th	X	X
Shivani	X	✓	2 nd	X	X
Nadim	X	✓	5 th	X	X
Rahul	X	✓	8 th	X	X
Rahul	X	✓	5 th	X	5 th
Malti	X	✓	9 th	X	X
Raju Singh Rajput	X	✓	9 th	X	X
Mehnaz	X	✓	11 th	X	12 th
Shivani	X	✓	9 th	✓	9 th
Vandana	X	✓	9 th	X	X
Manoj	X	✓	9 th	X	X

Note: Of these children, three re-joined the schooling system through Open Schooling System.

Reasons for dropping out and not going back to school

The following illustration shows some of the major reasons for children dropping out from school, as identified by the children. The reasons have been put in order of importance.

Why didn't you take admission in school?	
Reason	Responses by number of children
Home background	10
Wrong company	10
Work	11
Financial Status	6
Problems at home	8
School refused admission	9
Migration	3
Environment in school	6
Own wish to not attend school	9

Why did you leave school?	
Reason	Responses number of children
Problems at home	9
Environment in school and behaviour of others	9
Disliked school/ teacher	8
Discrimination	8
Failure	8
School refused admission	9
Work	8
Accident/ Mishap	3

Our Voices

“Har bacche ko class main barabari ka haq nahi diya jata, dalit bacchon ko pecche rakha jata, gupa ya Sharma ke bacche ko aage baithaya jata hain. (All children in the class are not given equal rights, Dalit children are made to sit at the back while children from upper caste families like Gupta and Sharma are made to sit in the front.)”

“Teacher hum pe dhyan nahi deti to hum kyon de. (The teachers don’t pay attention to us, so why should we pay attention to them?)”

“School ke barwi tak fees muft ho (School fees should be removed till class 12.)”

Ladki ke hairstyle par dhyan dete hain teacher kehete hain – “Are! Kaise bal hain tumhare?” jisse sunkar ladkiyain dhore dhore school aana band kar dete hain (Teachers focus on the girls’ hair styles and say things like “Hey! What kind of hair do you have?” The girls hear this repeatedly and slowly stop coming to school)

“Ma – baap bacchon par pressure nahi dete ki bacche school jao. (Parents don’t put pressure on their children to go to school.)”

“Jo bacche aache hain padhai main unhain samne rakha jata hain. (The children who are good in studies are made to sit at the front of the class.)”

“Samaj ki bhi jimmedari hai ki vidyalay pe dhyan de” (Society should have a responsibility in looking into the state of schools.)

“Bachchon ke hishab se teacher hone chahie. Aisa nahi ki 50 bachche ho aur ek teacher ho”(Presence of teacher should be on the basis of number of children. It should not be like one teacher teaches 50 children at once.)

“Ghar wale ladkiyon ko tuition nahi jane dete” (Family members do not allow their girls to go for tuition.)

“Ghar par pareshani se kaam karna hota hai aur padne mein man nahi lagta” (I have to work at home because of difficult circumstances, and then do not feel like studying.)

“Teacher aur school hamen nahi samjhayenge, hamen unhe samajhana parega” (Teachers and the school will never understand us, we have to make them understand.)

“Teacher kahte hain ki ye bhangiyon ka bachcha hai” (Teacher says that this child belongs to Bhangi caste (referring the Valmiki caste in a derogatory manner.)

“Teacher bachche ke colour ke upar bolte the, kali si ladki ko khara karo” (Teacher points out to children by referring of their colour. She says, “Make that dark complexioned/black girl stand on the bench.)

“Dakhila karne main documents mangte hain aur kahate hain abhi jagah nahi hai” (During the admission procedure, they ask for documents and also say that there is no place left)

“8-10 saal ka bachcha gaon se yahan aakar kaam kar raha hai” (Children as young as 8 to 10 years have come from their villages, and end up working here.)

“Agar school mein pata chale ki bachcha pahle fail hua hai to who mana karte hain (If the school comes to know that the child had failed in his last class, then they refuse to admit him/ her.)

“Mere ghar mein meri maa kahti hai kyon parogi” (In my house, my mother asks me why do you want to study)

“Valmiki Samaj se teacher hai to who alag baithte hain. Dusre teacher unse baat nahi karte hain (If the teacher belongs to Valmiki community, then s/he will sit separately. Other teachers do not talk to him/her)

“School wapas jane par waise bhi wapas fail hona yaad dilayenge” (If I go back to school, they will remind me again of my failure.)

Our demands

- School should not ask for residential proof.
- Admission should not be restricted because of specific document requirements for migrants.
- School should proactively inform children about Right to Education Act and its key provisions.
- School should display children’s rights in simple language.
- Teacher should conduct a survey to map out dropout children and the reasons behind this.
- All schools should be free from any kind of discrimination based on caste, gender, religion, social networks, disability and economic condition.
- Class sitting arrangements should be in a circular or semi-circular form.
- The provision of one teacher per 30 students should be implemented.
- Teacher should be responsible to ensure learning capacity of the students according to their standard.
- There should be special training provision for dropout children so that they can re-integrate into formal regular schooling. Open school should be stopped.
- Economically Weaker Section quota should be strictly followed in private schools.
- Teaching should be conducted in a friendly manner to avoid children’s disinterest.

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