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Cultural Heritage and Identities of Europe's Future



## Case Study Reports: Non-formal Cultural Participation and Socialisation in India



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## 1. Executive summary

The broad objective of this study is to understand how non-formal education processes shape cultural identities and perceptions amongst young people. In order to do this, intensive fieldwork was conducted in two organisations based in a Tier II metro city, an important urban centre in Maharashtra that is a state of India.

Research methods used included participant observation and interviews with young people and practitioners. Theoretical frameworks including works on post-colonialism; interactions between nation, culture and globalisation; diversity within Indian culture; and non-formal education were used to analyse the data.

In India, generally the non-formal education is seen as secondary to the formal education. However, in the organisations that we studied, the picture seems to be more complex. We found that while young people view non-formal education mainly in the background of their formal education and planned career paths, the former is not always considered inferior to formal education. Thus, there were many instances where non-formal education was seen either to be providing young people with alternative career paths or filling in important gaps in their formal education. In addition, the institutions we studied impart them engaging and hands on training that enrich not only their formal education but also their lives as a whole.

This study brings about a layered conception about cultural diversity. Thus, while participants articulated diversity in terms of social identities like caste, religion and language, they also seemed to be stereotyping their cultural 'other'. Related to these stereotypes, but also going beyond them, participants seemed to prefer tolerance over resolving every difference. In addition, amongst some practitioners, we also found a keen sense about plurality within tradition and urge to harness alternative traditions in order to further the cause of cultural diversity. Furthermore, we argue, one also needs to have a strong sense of hierarchy and contestation, along with diversity and difference-- in horizontal relationships-- in the country. This is so as India is riddled with hierarchies in terms of caste, gender and religion, among others.

Perceptions about Europe were also mixed. These contain admiration for the continent along with post-colonial anxiety about cultural invasion by and a feeling of lagging behind the West. Angst about colonialism and racism was also articulated.

## **2. Introduction**

This study attempts to understand how young people acquire cultural literacy through non-formal education. We analyse various cultural environments that form backdrop for formation of cultural ideas amongst young people. Views held by various actors involved in non-formal education, such as practitioners and young people, are discussed. These are perceptions on cultural diversity and cultural heritage. In this background, we analyse and document their perception about European culture. Another focus of the report is on different forms of learning involved in the non-formal education. We have analysed the relationship between non-formal educational processes and formal education.

## **3. Methods**

We wanted to understand and report the processes of non-formal education of young people and cultural interventions happening at the site. In addition, we also wanted to assess these processes critically. To do this in a limited timeframe, we decided to recruit the members of the site as field researchers. This meant that on the one hand, access to the site was easier. However, on the other, field researchers needed to be more conscious about having a balance between their insider-outsider roles vis-a-vis the field. We tried to achieve this by having regular workshops and interactions with the researchers before and during the fieldwork. The methodology to be followed for participant observation, report-writing process, role of insider-outsider were the various topics discussed during these interactions.

### **3.1. Selection of non-formal educational settings**

The two non-formal education settings were selected on broad criteria based on strong educational element in their functioning and prominence among young people. While both the sites impart non-formal education in culture, the activities they focus upon and the audience are different. This gave us an opportunity to explore the processes of non-formal education happening in diverse socio-linguistic environments. The majority of participants at site 1 were Marathi (regional language) speaking, whereas at site 2 most of them were non-Marathi speaking. The location of the two sites, each placed in distinctive parts of the city also adds to the sense of demographic conditions, socio-economic environment and diversity.

During the early stages of site selection, various non-formal education organisations were discussed with the team members and a few were shortlisted. This list included some theatre groups, institutes of performing arts, research institutes etc. The organisations working in this field are either for the general public or focus on 'performance' rather than non-formal

education and therefore initially two of them were approached which are involved in socio-cultural activities. Another reason was that the two sites were well known to some of the members in the research team, which led to easy access. One of the sites was related to theatre, but when we approached the practitioners, it seemed that they are now focussing on school children below the age of 14 years. The other was a human and health resource NGO mainly working on social issues. Both the sites did not match the suggested selection criteria.

Finally, the two sites selected as case studies here were finalised. Site 1 seeks to cultivate culture of short films and films and was approached through personal contact of one of the team members who was earlier associated with the organisation. We also looked for various non-formal organisations related to culture on the internet and came across the activities of site 2, which deals with multiple audio-visual art forms including painting, photography, music and games. They were hosting an exhibition related to cultural heritage of the city where the organisation is located, which was interesting and relevant to the research theme. We could gain access to contact of the founder of the organisation through their website and then personally met her. Both the organisations appreciated the theme of the project and showed keen interest to be associated with it.

### **3.2. Data Collection**

To understand and become familiarised with the nature of the activities conducted at both the sites, visits to the field were carried out. The process of data collection was carried out through participant observation and in-depth interviews of young members and practitioners. Based on those observations, detailed field note reports focussed on activities and interactions, were prepared.

Site 1 organises regular screenings of Short films. We attended some of the screenings as well as their pre-and post-screening sessions to get a brief idea of their activities. We observed the interaction between the practitioners and the participants during these screenings. In case of site 1 the participant observation reports were prepared during the monthly screenings and workshops. A part of the field note report also attempted to understand the preparatory activities that some of the practitioners carry out before the main activities. Given that the education process at Site 2 was more unstructured, we followed a few young peoples' internship processes in order to observe their interactions and work to understand their learning process in a non-formal set up. Most of these young people were eventually shortlisted for the interviews.

The interviews were recorded and simultaneously the reflections were noted down.

Regarding the practitioners' interviews there were no changes or additions to the interview questions provided in the fieldwork manual. The practitioners who were founders gave more elaborate answers. During the interviews, the participants responded very enthusiastically. Talking about the topics of their interest and personal endeavours prior to the interviews helped in establishing trust with them. Thus, there were no significant apprehensions while answering questions about family's culture and their views about it. In some instances, participants found questions related to culture either a little repetitive or incomprehensible. It was also interesting that in each interview, especially with young people, every interviewee took time to answer the question- what is culture according to you? The question 'describe your own culture' had to be explained sometimes to include their modern day practices as well. 'How do you and your friends perform your culture' also needed explanations in some cases. The questions that were added were mostly impromptu, in order to investigate a certain aspect that the participant had made a passing reference or a brief mention and that the interviewer felt important to investigate. In other instances, questions were added to prod the participant further when their initial responses were not reflective or when they did not understand what was expected out of them.

A Statement of the data collected:

Site 1: Fourteen interviews were conducted with practitioners and young members with almost 15-20 hours of recorded hours of conversation.

Site 2: Fifteen interviews were conducted with practitioners and young members with almost 20 to 25 hours of recorded hours of conversation.

Participant observations were carried out by attending the activities over a period of 5-6 months.

In case of site 1, most of the participants were in their early twenties. In terms of socio economic diversity, a large number of participants were from small towns, middle class and male. Female participation in all activities was consistently in the ratio of 30:70 to male participation. This means that the process of data collection witnessed an imbalance in terms of region, class, gender and age amongst participants. In addition, the majority of the participants were Marathi (regional language) speaking.

In case of Site 2, the participants were in the age group of 17-26. There were 4 female and 8 male participants and 2 female and 1 male practitioners interviewed. The male to female ratio was a result of the availability of the interviewees. Most of the participants belonged to the

upper middle class, migrants from other states of India, living with/without their immediate families, and non- Marathi speaking.

At both the sites, there was significant absence of people younger than 17. In India the age between 16-18 years is very crucial from the formal academic education point of view. It is considered as a milestone for planning their career and it is therefore seen that young people of this age group mainly concentrate on their formal education and are not significantly involved in other activities. Once that threshold is crossed, some young people tend to associate with non-formal activities besides formal education.

### **3.3. Data Analysis**

We analysed the data in three stages. Initially, we listed a few codes using a combination of inductive and deductive methods. That is, two lead researchers coded the same four interviews based on the data emerging from them as well as the research questions and the questions asked in the interviews. Based on the discussions amongst these two lead researchers on their respective codes-most of which were same- common codes were finalised. In the next stage, one amongst these lead researchers manually coded all the interviews following the codes generated in the first stage. However, care was taken to generate new code/s if data from particular interview/s is/are showing new pattern/s. Based on these codes, new documents were generated out of the interview transcripts using NVivo software.

In the third stage, two lead researchers-- the same ones who had initially coded four interviews- read these coded interview documents of participants from one organisation each. These researchers then sub-coded these coded documents inductively, that is based on the data emerging from the coded interview documents. Each of these researchers then wrote the findings for the organisation based on the sub-codes that she has inductively come out with. Also in this process of writing the findings, the two lead researchers held intensive discussions amongst themselves about those codes, sub-codes, possible findings out of them and the main research questions.

We then moved to relate this data analysis to larger theoretical formulations about Indian culture, European culture; non-formal education and youth studies. We based this analysis on inter-related positions about the nature of Indian culture and post-colonial theoretical formulations. The former highlights long tradition of Indian culture as well as deeply diverse and contested nature of the same. The latter, on the other hand, depicts the colonial connections of various formulations on Indian culture. Our research framework also includes various interventions by post-independence Indian state that not only addressed diversity in Indian culture but may also provide lessons for Europe, especially in its present conundrums regarding

diversity. We referred to formulations like Arjun Appadurai's (1990) who refer to interconnections between globalisation and culture not only in India but the world over. We used theoretical formulations on 'situated' and 'authentic' learning while analysing the non-formal education processes. In addition, various works on youth and culture in India were taken into consideration. Ritty Lukose's work on gendered relationship between consumption and youth in globalised India (2005); formulation by Jeffrey et al (2004) on complicated relationships between education, sense of dignity and disenchantment amongst Dalit youth have been used as frameworks to present data on youth and non-formal education. Thus, we sought to analyse various forces emerging from our data on non-formal education in the broader contexts of post-coloniality of India; diverse, contested, rich cultural milieu of the country; and cultural interactions between India and Europe.

### **3.4 Ethical Issues**

A key ethical issue was involving researchers who were 'insiders' to the organisations that we studied. The debate on insider/outsider underlines that these are not fixed, but shifting locations. In this research, being an 'insider', the researchers could 'get in' easily and gain a certain amount of confidence from the participants during the process of interviewing, entailing better access to data. The shared context also made possible subtle interpretation of participant responses, although the probability of non/misrecognition of responses due to the assumed familiarity with the contexts was also realised by us. Yet the researchers were not at the 'core' of the organisation that had complex dynamics. And they therefore could position themselves as 'outsiders within' by reflecting on their location and assumptions associated with that. Through workshops, informal interactions and continuous de-briefing, they were encouraged to be reflexive, to be conscious of their biases that may influence the research process. A note of their reflections was sought for every interview.

While selecting the organisations, their cultural activity and profile of its young participants were kept as the major criteria. In case of slight familiarity to one of these organisations, we were conscious of the bias. This familiarity bias can be defended on the basis of availability of accessibility to the sites. The consent of organisations, as well as of participants was sought to be obtained in a respectful way. The founders of the organisations were approached by explaining the research objectives through frequent informal and formal interactions. Sharing of information specifically about the potential benefits and risks of this research conducted on their site, ensured a meaningful access and cooperation from them.

To protect confidentiality, the transcripts, translations and audio files were anonymised as per the guidelines. The participant names were replaced by pseudonyms randomly given by the researchers.

## 4. Findings

Non formal education (NFE) emerged worldwide, in the decades of 1970s-80s as a mechanism specifically for the ‘developing world’ to catch up with the educational or literacy goals (Rogers, 2007). In India, twenty-five years after attaining freedom from colonial rule in 1947, it was realised that the formal education system has limited success in universalising education. Hence, the Indian government launched a non-formal education system during 1979-80 with the aims of guaranteeing the right to education for all by targeting populations – from adolescents to adults – left outside the schooling system (Chandra and Shah, 1987). Some of the major initiatives in this direction have been Total Literacy Campaign started in 1988-89, the *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan* (Education to all) started in 2001 as alternative education to drop-out kids, the National Institute of Open Schooling etc. Several non-government organisations also took up the cause by providing education outside the formal organisational structure, reaching out to the underprivileged children.

This conventional idea of NFE is expanded and made broad based by the education-activists. In the last two decades and more, NFE gained a new momentum across the world as the educational force for de-formalisation, urging for flexibility in school setting and active participation of learners. Rather than being just complementary, supplementary or alternative to the formal educational system, NFE has come up as a substantive intervention in it. It has garnered weight as an independent education approach for all – inclusive, cognitive as well as non-cognitive learning. With this new conception, NFE is framed as life-long learning for providing life skills, work skills and social cultural development; and also, as situated learning focusing on the local contexts of its participants, and their active involvement in learning. In India, the new conception of NFE has led to a range of initiatives seeking to redefine the functions, aims, pedagogies, as well as values of learning, depending upon the socio-cultural contexts of children and the initiating organisations. These have included a range of projects, both within and outside the school setting, from nature clubs, environmental societies, to training workshops for gender sensitisation, sex/ health education to *sanskarvarga* (refinement classes) for infusing nationalistic, religious and cultural fervour.

Cultural education in India has also evolved through non-formal avenues within or outside the school setting, recognising the inadequacy of the formal education system in cultural enrichment. The state has recognised its need through a CAFE (Central Advisory Board of Education) committee report noting commitment to integrate cultural education in school curriculum, Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (National Mission for Secondary Education) providing for study tours, art/ cultural camps and teacher training, NCERT (National Council for Educational Research and Training) conducting a nation-wide survey on

cultural content in schools foregrounding students' voices, CCRTs (Centre for Cultural Resource and Training) advocacy and facilitation initiatives focusing on local language and local arts seeking to connect school settings with the local community and everyday experiences of students, or Young INTACH (Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage) seeking to preserve the Indian culture. These initiatives aim at preservation of cultural diversity and heritage of India focusing on local arts and customs, and also at imparting multi-cultural and inter-cultural education; even though they are limited in reach in the context of vast educational sector in India. The cultural education thus needs to be strengthened by articulating culture as discursive and dynamic, rather than fixed, and by enabling youth to see themselves as agents in the continuous making of culture.

The state's vision of cultural education has explicit agenda of underlining 'unity in diversity' of the Indian culture. On the other hand, the non-profit organisations such as GyanAdab, Raah, TIFA, Arbhaat etc. seek to provide more open cultural and artistic spaces and resources for largely middle class youths for encouraging them and nurturing their talent. These platforms are defined by the middle class aspiration for healthy and holistic development of their children, and focus on targeted groups of youth with specific artistic interests. The selected case studies for the research represent a similar non-formal setting.

## **4.1. Case 1**

### **4.1.1. Site Description**

Site 1 is a Short Film Club based in a Tier II metro city. This site is seen as one of the foremost creative spaces in the city because of its founders and the film fraternity associated with it. Moreover, it is perceived as the only organisation in the city to provide a platform for short films and also provide conducive environment to understand the medium of films non-formally. Its activities are directed towards attracting youth to good and meaningful cinema. It engages with youngsters, film enthusiasts, filmmakers and critics through its activities.

The club was started by two film personalities; one is a renowned filmmaker and the other a screen writer-actor, in 2013. They are renowned in international film circuits for their locally rooted films. The club aims at showcasing the best short films across the globe as well as creating awareness among young film makers about the expanse and experimentation happening in short films. It also seeks to develop different perspectives of film appreciation amongst audiences and create new audiences. The objective of this non-formal organisation is to propagate a culture of short films and encourage youngsters to learn the craft of short film making. It also aims to create a vibrant short film culture in the city and provide a youthful platform for young film enthusiasts.

To achieve this purpose, this organisation regularly arranges shows of short films made by Indian or foreign filmmakers. It also conducts regular screenings for children through children's film club. The club also organises a workshop titled- 'Shoot a Short' that teaches the technical and non-technical aspects of short filmmaking.

This short film club runs on subscription basis. On the first Saturday of every month they conduct the screenings of short films for their subscribers. Every 4-6 months they organise a week-long workshop which is attended by more than 100 young people at a time.

The organisation has non-formal set up that conducts educational and awareness activities in the domain of art and culture. All their activities are mostly attended by young people aged 14 to 30. Most of their practitioners and volunteers are also youngsters from the same age group. Many of the films showcased or discussed during their sessions are by various European filmmakers, hence, there is strong European connection to be explored.

During the interview with the founder member of the organisation, it was understood that the funding issues are a major challenge while running the set up. Often they have to invest personally, which has certain limitations. Although the organisation is trying its best to showcase films all across, they believe in enlightening its audience on topics "close to home" and display films on India made by upcoming Indian film makers. The club was started with the intention of focussing on short films that were content driven, but now they screen international as well as regional cinema.

The participants have mainly migrated from small towns to this city with a sense of aspiration to pursue a career in creative field. They also have admiration for the founders of the club. The founders of Site 1 have themselves migrated from smaller cities, from socially and economically marginalised sub-region of Maharashtra state; and are considered to be very significant personalities in the creative field of the state. We conducted fieldwork in a city considered to be a relatively economically, socially and culturally advanced part of the state. Young participants in this organisation share their socio-spatial 'origins' with the founders of the organisation and the founders are considered to have 'achieved' a status in a creative field after coming from 'outside'. This explains the admiration and connection that the young people have for the founders.

On an average most of the members of the organising team who execute the activities are aged 20 to 25. The organisation creates a passionate interest in technical aspects of the film in a non-formal atmosphere and at the same time intentionally or unintentionally associates culture with cinema.

#### 4.1.2. Emerging Themes/Results of Analysis

##### Openness of the Organisational Culture

Site 1 has come up with the conscious decision to encourage new young talent, and to pursue a unique perspective to films, located in its localised surroundings. Most of its participants/volunteers do not have formal training, or even exposure to cinema culture, except some artistic participation, but most importantly have desire to do something new, to make their career differently. The motivation to participate in this organisation is overwhelmingly professional, with the desire to develop their career in filmmaking, or at least as artists. It provides a rare opportunity to meet eminent international artists, a “*cinematic enlightenment*” (Hemant, M, YP), and also equips the volunteers with skills to work within small budgets, learning multiple skills personally. The young men, however, are anxious about not earning enough through volunteering, not getting adequate hands on work experience. The informal, open, democratic environment at the organisation, its perspective that links film with other art forms such as dance or painting, and its encouragement of deep and free thinking located in the localised surrounding are recognised as the breakthrough markers of this organisation. But what is adored the most is an opportunity to be with its founding artists renowned for their new/different perspective in the Marathi film circle. The participants reiterate that having personal dialogue with their ‘idols’ is an exciting, nourishing experience, that challenges their conventional understanding of film, enabling them to not just to ‘consume’ but to ‘appreciate’ the film, and its craft and aesthetic; changes their thought process and develops a more matured perspective amongst them going beyond surface; teaches them to be multi-dimensional exploring different things; and gives them a community with shared interest to do things together. The metaphor of *gurukul*<sup>1</sup> is invoked by the participants, articulating reverence for the idolised teachers and emphasising learning in an informal setting, not just filmmaking, but also life-lessons, by assisting them, spending time with them. Interestingly, there is a near absence of young women as volunteers that is addressed by the practitioners, by linking it to the overall gender prejudices against the film industry, and to the young women’s supposed inability to take risk, to pursue filmmaking passionately, while young women participants do not define the organisational culture open.

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<sup>1</sup> According to some, this system of education ‘dates back to around 5000 BC in the Indian subcontinent...during Vedic ages’ and imparted ‘practical knowledge’ and ‘holistic education’ (Chandwani, 2019). However, others contend that the system was steeped in caste and gender based exclusion (Jamanadas, n.d.). Contemporarily, some institutions like Vedpathsals do try to impart training in Vedas through this system (Chatterjee, 2018). However, these Vedpathshalas continue to admit only Brahmin students (ibid), excluding non Brahmins from it.

## **The New Digital Youth Culture**

The major sites of cultural participation for youths most of whom are aspiring film-makers are OTT<sup>2</sup>, as these can be engaged privately, conveniently and with choice, without having to watch the 'bold' content publicly, with parents. The participants accept and appreciate the violent and sexual, content of the OTT as truthful and as acknowledgment of the dark realities of the world. They rather find the negativity around OTT as hypocritical<sup>3</sup>. Although its exposure to young children is feared, and the loss of 'innocence' in the face of populist and marketable content is lamented. "*Every new generation appreciates the content that is found violent by the earlier generation, like the craze for action hero, Amitabh Bachchan in Bollywood films*" (Akash, M, YP), Akash says. Though the everyday engagement with social media such as Whats App or Facebook is part of their lives, the youths also find it superficial and fake, "*the discussion on internet is only for 'likes', not genuine*" (Chaitanya, M, YP), making them lonely, and overpowering them.

The online hatred, hostility for the opposing views/ persons is common, but seen as merely a projection, to assert one's power, in the absence of filtering and gatekeeping, a venting out of anger. It takes extreme violent form in the virtual space, as it is difficult in real space. So, mediation to resolve differences on social media is hardly undertaken, rather one seeks to ignore, leave, sneak out of such clashes. The youths recognise the need for dialogue with people from different life-worlds and moralities that would enable them to rethink their own viewpoints, and consider tolerance and unity as part of culture. However, significantly thinking differently, articulating the difference and freedom to disagree is also asserted as part of culture, and linked to their identity.

## **Own Culture, Indian Culture and Youth Identity**

The participants in the organisation define culture largely in terms of set rules of living together, customs that are passed on generationally through religion, art, language; and also as the everyday, the ever changing daily living practices from food, clothing to building relationships, handling money etc. They are close to the family culture defined through get-togethers, festivals and celebrations and underline the supportive family as the basis for building stronger values and identity amongst them. "*You inherit the culture of your family like property, can't just leave it*" (Akash, M, YP), says Akash. It is associated with one's caste and religion, directly or indirectly, both to tangible cultural practices and intangible philosophy and spirituality.

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<sup>2</sup>An over-the-top (OTT) media service is directly provided to viewers through internet connection, rather than cable, broadcast or satellite television and can be accessed on diverse digital platforms. Some of the most popular OTT sites include Netflix, Amazon video etc.

<sup>3</sup>The OTT content is commonly criticized for having nudity, violent and sexual content and abusive language due to nascent and lenient regulation of the same. For instance, as of now, India does not have clear regulation of this whereas, films, plays and TV content is subject to regulations and 'censorship' under Indian law.

Abhijeet (Abhijeet, M, P) urges unabashedly to see culture in terms of one's caste and religion, without being apologetic about his upper caste, majoritarian Hindu location. Ashar (Ashar, M, YP) is a rare one to mention being Muslim (religious minority), and then to define family culture not in terms of religion, but of abstract values of being liberal and disciplined, linking it to his parents' profession of teaching.

Interestingly most participants talk about the friends' culture less fervently, perhaps now being adults, recognising how friends come from different spaces, sharing different interests from sports, politics to films. They emphasise bonding, acceptance, being non- judgemental by friends. Some are critical of the culture of their friends as superficial, and do not relate to it, the culture of coming to conclusions quickly, or of dancing in public on DJ remix music, or of pubbing and clubbing. The friends are diverse, in terms of region or familial backgrounds, though 'ultimately as part of the same circle, more or less the same economic group'. "*I have no friend who identifies as Dalit<sup>4</sup>*" (Akash, M, YP), admits Akash (who identifies himself as Hindu, upper caste), further pointing out reflexively how his friends shared the prejudice against Muslims.

With the own culture marked in terms of one's religion, region and caste, Indian culture is defined through its morality and values, and also its arts, from sculpture to music, and the internal bond between those (Gargi, F, YP). It is rather viewed overwhelmingly in terms of 'unity in diversity', different cultural pockets, seeing diversity in fixed, preconceived terms. Significantly, the young participants recognise reflectively and critically the politics of this diversity of the Indian culture, its partial and hegemonic construction, as Akash points out, "*how these diverse local cultures are brought together only in the name of the nation, in the context of anti- colonial struggles, or in the name of religion, by the majoritarian forces*" (Akash, M, YP). Thus, some young women like Nikita (Nikita, F, YP), and some migrant young men like Rohan (Rohan, M, YP) define Indian culture in terms of boundaries and restrictions, as sexism and prohibitions. "*We (diverse religions/ castes) are harmful to each other, ..... Being a girl, you really hate your culture*" (Nikita, F, YP), asserts Nikita.

Significantly, the question, 'are you a European', which seemed somewhat unwarranted for the Indian context, was found relevant by most of the young participants, albeit interpreting European as broadly western, including American. They accept their lack of knowledge of and also relation with the Indian culture, and also being influenced, fascinated, connected to 'western' culture, for example prom nights, which is found 'exciting', giving 'a different kick'. "*The next generation is going to be completely westernized*" (Chaitanya, M, YP), Chaitanya

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<sup>4</sup>Dalit, with literal meaning 'oppressed', is a political term often used for those social groups lowest in caste hierarchy that were treated as socially 'untouchable'.

says, also expressing the negative perception of the ‘western’ as superficial, having no family values (Hemant, M, YP), being racist, having no inside strength like Indian culture (Gayatri, F, YP). European culture is defined in terms of its arts and architecture, its renaissance, and but more importantly, its individual freedom and autonomy, and its discipline, cleanliness and development. Talking about the openness of Europe, Chaitanya (Chaitanya, M, YP) points out how different European countries across language dream of coming together, which is impossible amongst South Asian countries breeding relationships of hostility due to the colonial politics partitioning Indian subcontinent and the corresponding religious nationalisms. While Ashar (Ashar, M, YP) directs attention to Germany’s struggle to remove its identification with Hitler and its identity as a war-torn country.

The youths thus either express dilemma, ambiguity about their cultural identity, as Indian or ‘western’, or accept it as mixed identity, or as Indian, but not ‘original’ Indian identity (Rohan, M, YP). Site 1 urges them to be more connected to their local cultures. Abhijeet is more dismissive of youths for not being proud, not serious about their ‘roots’. Whereas Anil urges for rejecting the inferiority complex about their own culture, “*cultural education would mean knowing your roots, learning to understand yourself in terms of your surroundings, to relate to different people around you*” (Anil, M, P). The Site 1 thus seeks to open the world and its diverse cultures to youths through films across the world, while emphasising the centrality of connecting with one’s local cultural surrounding, as that would enable one to enjoy and empathise with people different from them, to embrace the whole world.

## **4.2. Case 2**

### **4.2.1. Site description**

Site 2 located in Tier II metro city is a multi-disciplinary platform for Creativity and Culture. It seeks to provide an alternative art education through programmes like residencies and workshops. Those who founded the organisation were young people themselves (age 23-25) when they founded the institute in the year 2014. They mentioned that one of the important objectives behind the setting up of site 2 was giving access to various creative activities for the English speaking young community in the city that has traditionally been predominantly Marathi –speaking. The residency offered by the organisation accommodates young people from all parts of India as well as outside India and provides them a facility to conduct research, discussions and experimentation. The organisation was created to innovate and experiment within and outside of the existing educational ecosystem in India with the aim of providing resources, tools and processes to other institutions, art organisations and cultural communities. According to the founders, since the beginning the vision of the organisation was to impart training in various creative processes. However, they also intend to expand the creative cultures across the city not restricting to the enrolled students as done in case of formal educational

system. The core concept is to engage audiences locally. The audience comes from various fields and hence the institute follows a multi disciplinary approach in its activities.

The studio also offers programmes such as cultural workshops related to various art forms such as music, dance, photography, memes etc. and mentorship. The mentorship module provides students an innovative learning experience through a unique pedagogical process. The workshops and projects attract young people between 18 to 25 years of age. These programmes are designed on themes such as Meme Regime, Artist presentations, discussions on contemporary art, gender issues etc. The youth are attracted towards the organisation since the team there helps them understand various unknown and complicated aspects of art and culture that the young people are interested in.

The space where the site is located is an art deco hotel situated in the marked centre of the city. It offers an urban landscape that helps to create a strong connect with the community. The studios in the building are interlinked and provide easy interaction of areas and association between artists. The organisation has set up its own library equipped with books, e-books, catalogues, journals, magazines, board games related to cultural heritage. The organisation provides a non-formal atmosphere for young people to explore various elements of art, culture, creativity and heritage.

The site focuses on bringing contemporary and experimental art to the city. But similar to site 1, the major challenge that site 2 faces is lack of consistent funding. It puts limits on the innovative and experimental activities that the organisation plans.

All the participants are mainly English speaking, which is primarily due to the specific area that the site is located. Most of them are from the Arts and Humanities, Social Science background with strong inclinations towards design, visual arts or music, while a few of the respondents were also engineering or commerce dropouts. The participants include natives of the city as well as migrants especially joining the organisation as interns.

#### **4.2.2. Emerging Themes/Results of Analysis**

##### **Non-Formal Educational Settings**

Formal higher education and career plans of young people seem to provide a backdrop for their participation in this organisation. Thus, some young people were looking at it as an internship opportunity to supplement their formal education and career routes. Others felt that their aptitude did not match the formal education that they were pursuing and wanted to change their career track. In other words, the young people had been coming in not to acquire cultural

socialisation in abstract sense, but to have some grounding in their future careers post-higher education.

However, when a young person enters this organisation, she seems to be in for a very fruitful cultural training and socialisation. The young participants mentioned several of their noteworthy experiences with the organisation. They reported to have experienced non-hierarchical work environment in the organisation wherein practitioners-young participants; and seniors-juniors were seen to be treating each other equally. Young people also told us that they got a lot of hands-on training in various art practices. In this, they got to participate in various activities such as logistics, management, keeping deadlines, working as a team member, apart from contributing to art production. Thereby, gaining a ‘holistic experience’ about art practices (according to Ryan (M, YP), among others). The organisation also seems to be imparting interdisciplinary training in art. Many participants related that here they saw not only how various art forms are intrinsically linked to each other, but also how art and the social world are connected. According to Akshay (M, YP), this training has helped him bridge some gaps in his formal education. These processes must have imbibed confidence amongst these young and aspiring art practitioners. The achievements of the organisation are understood better by the looking at the motivations that prompted the founders to form it. Arya (F, P) and Ishan (M, P) told us that they founded this institution out of a deep dissatisfaction at how art has been perceived in their country, especially the upcoming metros. According to Arya, for example, this perception limits art only to ‘painting or drawing’. While, in other places like USA, from where she got her formal training in art, this perception has gone beyond and encompasses ‘creativity’ within it. They wanted to imbibe this culture in India. This approach represents assumption by people inhabiting the erstwhile colony that their society was backward without taking note of historical conditions (read colonialism) that made for this ‘backwardness’ in the first place. This post-colonial condition also might want to paint the pre-colonial traditions of their society as being completely regressive. However, Arya did have a sense about richness of pre-colonial Indian traditions that according to her had recognised the plurality of sexes.

### **Cultural Environment of Young People**

The interviews portrayed that various forces working in young peoples’ immediate environment including family, peer group, their own cultural activities go a long way in imparting cultural literacy to them.

Most of these young people seemed to be a part of nuclear families living in a place that is transforming from a small city to being a metropolis. Many reported that their parents have come from outside the city, in some cases, hailing from different cities. The parents also seem

to be highly educated, doing professional jobs, having interests in art and cultural activities like movies, theatre dance and paintings. In addition, the young people reported that they have a very lively dialogue with their parents, including art and culture. Some young participants' families have connections with various practices of art and culture. So Manvi (F, YP) and Akshay (M, YP) told us that these networks have actually helped them in participating in various art forms. Some young participants also reported to having differences with their parents or extended families on issues like following traditions or not and sexual choices; they further mentioned their uneasiness to talk with family members about these differences. Many also reported religious rituals to be a part of their families' culture.

In performing culture with their friends, many young participants identified celebrating religious festivals, especially of religions different from their own. For some, the latter seems to be more exciting than taking part in the festivals of their own religion (Akshay (M, YP), Atharva (M, YP)). One of the activities that the young seem to be doing prominently is eating out with their friends. In this, eating 'burgers' was reported by many and others have reported about eating cuisines from different countries. Many reported watching and discussing movies and socio-political issues with their friends. They seem to be having a lot of European influence through their friends. Thus, Ryan (M, YP) told that he talks with friends in English and not in Hindi and Atharva (M, YP) related that he adheres to Western culture with friends and Indian culture with family. Thus, the young people seem to be differentiating between their own and 'other' cultures, in terms of religion, food and language. Secondly, they are happy to interact with these 'other' culture/s. In addition, many of them or their friends' family members have travelled to European countries or USA. All these varied exposures and socio-cultural networks furnished by their families and friends seem to have provided a lot of social and cultural capital to these young people. It is in the background of these exposures to different cultures that an argument made by one of the practitioners, Ishan (Ishan, M, P), needs to be understood. He said that contemporary Indian youth are unable to distinguish between the 'Indian' and 'Western' cultures, unlike earlier generation. For Ishaan, today's youth consider English as their own and not as a foreign language.

The young participants seemed to imagine cultural diversity mainly in terms of religious and linguistic diversity. The emphasis on religious diversity can be seen in the background of religious majoritarian politics becoming dominant in the country. They told us that they have come into contact with various Indian as well as European languages. Another significant theme is that culture is often perceived in terms of food habits that are supposed to be followed by the members of Hindu religion. So, Dipti describes her culture as being 'Hindu oriented' of which "*not eating non-veg on Mondays*" (Dipti, F, YP) is considered to be important part.

## **Internet Culture**

The internet seems to be an important aspect of young peoples' everyday culture. They seem to be using internet for different ways of communication. Manvi talked about a possibility of sharing with 'a total stranger' "*a tweet about mental illness....that I have gone through*" (Manvi, F, YP) and that she might get support in the virtual world. Arush (M, YP) said that due to internet, he could connect with people who have interest in many types of memes- an area in which he is passionately interested. Additionally, for some of them, the internet has a different, unique language. For Arush, abusive language is used so often and casually in online games that none operating in that space take it seriously. Aparna (F, YP) related that the language of websites and internet media is 'Americanised'. Use of social media for debate and discussions seem to be quite widespread amongst young participants. And they seem to have diverse experiences and opinions on that. Manvi mentioned that the medium allows her a lot of flexibility to "*..edit..write..PAUSE for a minute..think what I want to say...then write it properly*" (Manvi, F, YP). Aparna, on the other hand, said that even if she does have social media accounts for a long time and needs to use it for communication, she does not "*enjoy it AT ALL*" (Aparna, F, YP), finds it 'taxing' as it is an energy sapping experience. All the respondents related that they had to face bitter, unpleasant experiences while engaging in social media debates. In such instances, nearly all of them maintained that they ensure that they indulge in such debates only with the people they know personally. And hence, they also ensure that the disagreements are dealt with in person and not online.

## **Perceptions about Culture**

Most of the respondents have known about Europe through internet, electronic media, formal education, family and travelling there. Some of them were keenly aware that Europe is a place with diverse culture (Ryan, (M, YP), Aparna (F, YP)). Many young respondents related Indian and European cultures with reference to each other. For Dipti (F, YP), India has a diverse culture unlike Europe which has more homogeneous culture; in Europe, people celebrate festivals privately, within their families, while in India they are celebrated publicly. Atharva (M, YP) presented both these cultures using a couple of related binaries such as being 'practical' (European) vs 'emotional' (Indian); 'contentment' (Indian) vs 'growth' (European). Many also identified themselves as being Indians with European influences. This can be understood via the increasing interaction of these young people with Europe through actually travelling there, media exposure and learning European languages.<sup>5</sup> Another strand of perception about Indian culture seems to be diversity. Aparna (F, YP) mentioned how Indian culture changes according to person's surroundings like family, while for Arush (M, YP), due to his upbringing in multi-lingual environment, Indian culture is simply 'confusion'.

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<sup>5</sup>The complexity of this interaction is discussed later in the section on Discussion.

Amongst practitioners, perceptions about cultural education included necessity of inculcating values such as tolerance, inclusiveness; and qualities such as questioning and assessing everything. For them, cultural heritage can be tangible and intangible; heritage always evolves, Indian heritage has evolved by including various forces into it at different historical periods, such as Mughal and British; and some of those influences may be foreign ones, nevertheless we have to accept them as our own heritage. This position notes the diversity and difference in Indian heritage. However, it shies away from recognising hierarchy and contestation as other important and related components in India's heritage and culture. The hierarchy in Indian culture may be clear from the structures and identities of caste, for example. Thus Romila Thapar, among others, has pointed out how caste hierarchy evolved in India wherein '...those that laboured for others had a low status.' (2018: xxiii-iv). Furthermore, in modern India, Dalit movement signifies an attempt to contest this caste hierarchy (Omvedt, 1993 and Zelliott, 2012).

For nearly all of the young participants, while resolving differences is a significant part of culture, many looked at it in a more nuanced manner. For Arush, not all the differences need to be resolved for that might lead to "*death of individuality*" (Arush, M, YP). Others mentioned that whether they would be interested in resolving the differences would depend upon the context that includes the issues on which difference has arisen, the person with whom they have difference; so, they would want to resolve it only if they value the person with whom they have difference. Many also mentioned about the possibility of differences coming in the way of maintaining friendship. Additionally they seem to value friendship too much to allow difference to spoil it.

## **5. Discussion**

This study on understanding the relationship between non-formal education and cultural literacy of young people brings out various interesting findings about non-formal education practices, cultural environment of young people and perceptions about cultural diversity, difference and European culture.

### **5.1. Non-Formal Educational Practices**

The conception of non-formal education has emerged with the thinking that learning cannot take place only within the confines of formal educational structures and that emphasis only on formal education cannot guarantee employment opportunities to the students (Hamadache, 1991: 111-2). In this sense, our study shows that non-formal education provides the students with exposure to various real life situations wherein skills that formal education has imparted can be applied. Moreover, non-formal education imparts non-cognitive learning and training

in various life-skills for holistic development of young people. Thus, we found that non-formal education both supplements and supplants the formal education. One also finds complicated relationships between formal and non-formal education here. Even though non-formal education is seen in the background of formal education, the former is not always seen to be secondary to the latter. Thus, some young people reported to have found their callings—that were completely different from what the formal education would lead to-- during their explorations with non-formal education, while others maintained that the non-formal education has filled in various gaps in their formal training.

The non-formal educational practices that we studied can be viewed as part of ‘authentic learning’. Authentic learning, Anderson and Anderson have argued, is a process whereby learners’ experiences, their perspectives are taken to be genuine ingredients of learning process instead of viewing the same as imparting some abstract knowledge to the pupils (2005: 420-4). The hands-on training imparted in site 2 and insistence on taking one’s own, local surrounding as significant parts of creative process in site 1 point towards imparting ‘authentic learning’.

One of the differences in two sites emerges from their position on gender. Thus, various participants in Site 2 specifically mentioned that they try to be not only gender sensitive but also queer sensitive and become an inclusive space. On the other hand, not only were the practitioners in Site 1 not very willing to address the issue of near absence of young women in their organisation, they also linked the issue with broader prejudice existing in the art field they are active in. While male participants emphasised openness in the organisational culture, a young woman participant underlined the need for the organisation to be more open.

This inclusivity reported at site 2 must also be seen along with the fact that most people we interviewed there came from a relatively privileged families. This can be seen in two interrelated aspects. One, many reported to have gained exposure to Europe through travelling there and learning various European languages. This was nearly absent in the case of young people from site 1. Secondly, as mentioned in Appendix 1 of this report, none out of eleven young participants from site 1 mentioned English as languages/s spoken in their family; while in the case of site 2 seven out of twelve participants mentioned English as only or one of the languages spoken in their families. Considering that even though English is a colonial language in India, it is still considered to be advantageous in the educational, cultural and employment fields (Roy, 1993: 57); this familiarity with the language and lack of it makes young people at site 2 socio-culturally dominant as compared to young people from site 1. Thus, even though members of Site 2 claim to be inclusive, in practice they may be less so due to their own structural position of being materially and culturally advantageous. However, a practitioner from this site did realise these limitations to their inclusivity and reported to have made some

efforts to overcome those. Like translating their programmes that mainly happen in English into the Marathi language. But she also mentioned limitations in conducting those activities due to budget constraints.

Another related difference is regarding issue of hierarchy. Many actors in Site 2 related various concrete experiences to underline non-hierarchical and informal nature of functioning there, especially with regard to relations between the trainers and the trainees; established and novice artists; superiors and subordinates etc. In case of site 1, however, even though the participants recognised the democratic environment in the organisation, many seem to be idolising a couple of founders of the site, partly because of their expertise in the field, partly due to glamour around their names. Additionally, a practitioner of the site referred to *gurukul* while underlining the hands-on nature of training available. This further reinforces the hierarchical tendencies considering that the *gurukul* system required students to revere and unquestioningly submit to the teacher.

Both the organisations that we studied realise that their art should reach to the masses. However, they seemed to be struggling in achieving this concretely. In this, both claim to be thinking about various forms of art and culture in an out of the box and experimental manner, while the masses, according to them, have a very stereotypical understanding of art. In addressing this challenge, both underlined the need to change the conception of art in the masses' minds. Here, a couple of issues seem pertinent. One, there seems to be a gap between conceptions of culture that are held by these organisations and the mass audience. Does this make these organisations elitists? And therefore, second, these organisations seem to be doing precious little to learn about common peoples' understandings about art, and processes of formation of these ideas. This reinforces ridicule for the popular culture instead of engaging with the same, albeit critically.

The conceptions of art practices held by the practitioners also seem influenced by Western ideas in various ways. Thus, as underlined in sections on findings, practitioners from site 2 wanted to imbibe 'creativity' culture instead of established 'painting and drawing' concept of art held by Indians—this conception in turn has been shaped by their training in the USA. This, indeed reflects what post-colonial theory has referred to as idolising the West by the erstwhile colonies because the West is assumed to be superior to the non-West. This has converted the former colonies of the West into '...an imaginary waiting room of history' (Chakrabarty, 2008: 8)

## 5.2. Young Peoples' Cultural Environment

Young people from both the organisations seem to be talking about their cultural environment, especially, their family and friends, in different ways. The participants in site 1 described their families with reference to socio-cultural identities like caste, religion, region and language; and also in terms of bonding which those identities tend to create. However, they are also unhappy that their families tend to adhere to the 'traditional' identities. In the case of site 2, some participants mentioned about their differences with family members on issues like following traditions and exercising sexual choices. Nevertheless, here family predominantly comes across as a space where art and cultural forms are appreciated and discussed. Moreover, their family members have various types of links with art world that might make their kids' entry in it easier. This implies that these kids possess a lot of what Bourdieu (1986) has called 'social capital' in the form of various 'network of connections' (ibid: 22) provided by their families' and acquaintances' socio-cultural networks which in turn makes their entry into art world easier<sup>6</sup>. On the other hand, while young people from site 1 lack these social networks at the level of their families, their participation in the site itself provides them with these networks. This also means that the young people at site 2 get a relative temporal head start in terms of their access to these networks. This implies that young people at site 1 relatively lag behind in terms of having and accessing these networks.

While site 1 empowers the young people with an awareness of their having access to the concrete socio-cultural realities of the country, and with the training to convert this awareness into art forms, for young people in site 2 this cultural training predates their exposure to the site. Thus, young people and practitioners in site 2 gain their formal education at better institutions, are better connected with the West and have families endowed with greater art-related consciousness - passing on this sense on to their offspring. This means that they are also better endowed with Bourdieu's 'cultural capital', especially the 'embodied' and 'institutionalised' forms of it (O'Brien and Fathaigh, 2005: 69). However, alongside possessing social and cultural capital, some participants in site 2 expressed a feeling of social alienation due to being part of nuclear families.

Friends are painted mainly in negative and positive lights by participants in sites 1 and 2 respectively. Youths in site 2 reported participating enthusiastically in various activities like eating out, watching movies, discussing socio-political issues, with their friends. On the other hand, site 1 participants are not very forthcoming about their friends. And whenever they are, they tend to be critical about their friends for being involved in activities that the former

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<sup>6</sup>Bourdieu has defined Social Capital as '... possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition—or in other words, to membership in a group—which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectively owned capital, a "credential" which entitles them to credit, in various senses of the word' (1986: 21)

consider as superficial like dancing in public, pubbing and clubbing. This means that similar activities are valued differently by young people at these two sites. Part of the explanation of this difference lies in the socio-spatial travel that young people at site 1 have to do. For youth at site 2 there seems to be a cultural congruence between their friends and their broader social environments- both of which belong to the urban space of the city. Many young people at site 1 had migrated from rural Maharashtra to this city. Their latest lives in the city and with the organisations like site 1 has made them conscious about several 'cultural' aspects. This new consciousness, in turn, seemed to be culturally dwarfing the rural friends they had been mingling with until then.

While the participants in site 1 are predominantly regional language speaking (Marathi), the site 2 participants are either multi-lingual or those who are more comfortable with English than regional language/s. This might seem that site 1 is closer to local (Marathi) culture than site 2. However, the participants in both the organisations defined 'local' in different ways. Site 1 participants equated local with their surroundings and everyday practices. Site 2 participants pointed out at the diversity within the city and the fact that the place where they are located in the city has always been multi-lingual and multi-religious apart from the fact that lately proportion of non-Marathi speakers has been increasing in the city. This also points out that 'local culture' is not a monolith and can be interpreted differently from various locations and standpoints.

### **5.3. Perceptions about Cultural Diversity and Difference**

Practitioners in both the organisations spoke about Indian culture and diversity within the same when speaking about cultural heritage. However, both sets of practitioners emphasised different aspects. Thus, site 1 practitioners, defined diversity in terms of religion, language and caste, site 2 practitioners spoke about evolutionary nature of India's heritage and the need to recognise various diverse influences like Mughal and English as part of country's heritage.

Additionally, many participants in site 1, while talking about cultural diversity and in other contexts emphasised on drawing from some alternative traditions within Hindu religion, such as Charvaka and Lokayat which were based on materialism and rationalism. This raises several interesting issues regarding tradition and diversity in India and the world over. Often, it is assumed that challenges to cultural diversity lie in the fact that several groups follow different traditions. However, the aforementioned point about diversity within Hinduism is also about diversity within every tradition; and the advocates of diversity do not have to talk about the same by always remaining outside the tradition. On the contrary, the tradition itself provides them several unconventional forces that can be used to counter the regressive interpretation and proposition of tradition. Here, one is reminded of Asish Nandy's argument about getting

the religion out of ‘the metaphorical closet’ where the practices of secular Indian state has put it into and enable ‘a dialogue within and between religions’ (Chandhoke,2010: 337). This understanding is based on the assumption of ‘difference’ within the tradition. What it does not consider, however, is that this difference can turn and has turned into hierarchy and contestation between these different versions and strands of tradition.

Young women at site 1 related that Indian culture and digital culture are masculine and restricting for women. However, many young participants also mentioned diversity as an important component of Indian culture. This understanding has two limitations though. One, in some cases, this diversity turns into stereotyping religious minorities, for example, in identifying them essentially as followers of their religious festivals and rituals. Second, at least one young person has labelled linguistic diversity in his surroundings as being ‘confusion’. This stereotyping and confusion arises mainly because, as Rustom Bharucha (2000) has pointed out, the Indian state and society have attached only symbolic significance to celebrating diversity while doing very little institutional work to ensure that this diversity turns into meaningful dialogue between and within different cultures.

Another related element is young participants’ views on difference and resolving the same. While participants from both the sites maintained that resolving difference is part of culture, they also emphasised that not every difference is and can be resolved. This is so as they seem to relate difference with ‘individuality’ and individual difference both of which they wanted to preserve; and further, resolving difference, for them, might threaten individuality. Here, the emphasis seems to be on tolerance rather than on coming to agreement as a way to deal with difference. This is because coming to agreement would mean compromising the positions of one or both the parties. This would in turn mean compromising the specific individualities involved in the process of difference. This would endanger the autonomy of the atomised individual assumed here; And because the emphasis is to maintain the autonomy of the individual, thereby preserving rather than resolving the difference is preferred. However, in Indian society, like any other, individual is many a times not autonomous in concrete terms. Individuals operate within the context of various structures like caste, class and gender. These structures are deeply embedded in hierarchies, inequalities and contestations of the same; and, differences are often the products of these structures in the first place. Therefore, even though there might be efforts at adapting with and negotiating within these structures, individuals often do not remain autonomous but may be compelled to act within the framework of these structures. This may, on numerous occasions, make tolerance difficult and conflict inevitable.

These young people also seem to be quite mature when it comes to dealing with the difference in the virtual world. They seem to be participating in debates and discussion on social media.

However, participants from site 2 seem to be more enthusiastic about it and site 1 participant find the same 'superficial and fake'. However, what is common for young participants from both the sites is that they are conscious about the divide between the virtual and real and realise as well that many differences emerging in the virtual world need to be dealt with in the real world.

#### **5.4. Perceptions about European Culture**

The participants' perception about Europe is substantially based on their own or acquaintances' travels to Europe. So firstly, there is a profound understanding, especially amongst site 2 participants about India's colonial linkages with Europe. Secondly, their understanding about Europe seems to be in its relation to India; and there is a strong sense about India 'lacking' in comparison with Europe. Here they seem to be following the post-colonial condition exemplified in what Dipesh Chakrabarty has called the perception of 'cultural distance...that was assumed to exist between the West and the non-West' (2008: 7). Thirdly, there also seems to be a disjunction when a young participant talked about his family being a sphere of Indian culture and his friends circle being a sphere of European culture. Since in the Indian case European influence is often treated as synonymous with globalisation, this finding can be illuminated in the background of debate on relationship between nation and culture in the process of globalisation. Appadurai (1990) has argued that globalisation has given rise to cultural forces that have de-territorialised the nation, wherein the cultural relevance of nation is assimilated in the global culture. However, Leela Fernandes has later shown how '...the production of meanings of the global occurs through the idiom of the nation' (2000: 616). Our study shows that young people recognise difference between local and global, and further actively try to compartmentalise both in different spheres of their lives; and in the process, perhaps try to avert the possible conflict between both. Fourthly, there is a lot of appreciation for Europe being a place where great artists, architecture; modernity is found. Fifth, there also seems to be a streak of anxiety about 'us' falling prey to westernisation, especially amongst some participants in site 1. This goes in line with what Leela Fernandes has argued about 'politics of purity' that arises to manage the disruptions caused by cultural hybridity due to India's integration in the process of globalisation (ibid: 625). However, as Vamsee Juluri (2003) has pointed out, increasingly there is also a sense that Indians, instead of being on the receiving end of 'cultural imperialism' are actively shaping the globalisation process by intervening in the same by invention, entrepreneurship and more (quoted in Pathak-Shelat and Cathy, 2014). Thus, one of the practitioners at site 2 asserted that Yoga is 'our cultural export'.

Thus, there seem to be two related types of perceptions about Europe. Firstly, fascination about the continent and thereby a sense of something lacking in Indian society. Secondly, anxiety at possible loss due to the cultural influences of Europe. Both the perceptions are created due to

post-colonial conditions because the first one comes out of a grand assumption whereby the West is considered to be harbinger of modernity, and second is a typical response in post-colonial societies that is rooted in the anxiety that ‘our culture’ would be overridden by the Western one. Further, as pointed out by Leela Fernandes (ibid), anxieties about Western cultural dominance gives rise to ‘politics of purity’ that might uphold specific kinds of local cultures that would legitimise the hierarchical social structures like gender.

## **6. Conclusion**

This report tells us many interesting things about cultural diversity and difference. Young people do realise the importance of resolving difference. However, for them, not every difference needs to be resolved as doing that might endanger individuality and autonomy. They are for tolerating some differences rather than resolving all of them. Their perspective about differences in the virtual world is also interesting. They do engage in debates and discussions on social media. However, they are deeply aware about the difference between the virtual and real worlds. Hence, they assert that differences on social media often need to be dealt with in the real, not virtual world.

Culture and diversity are articulated in terms of caste, religion and language. However, most of the times these forces are articulated in stereotypical manner like taking pride in one’s identity and imagining religious minorities only in terms of their religious identities. However, some practitioners did articulate nuanced understanding about diversity and tradition. Thus, instead of understanding tradition as a homogeneous and anti-diversity space, the participants stressed on plurality within tradition and significance of drawing upon the pro-diversity voices from within the tradition. This perspective lends a strong possibility for the advocates of diversity to place themselves inside and not outside of the tradition. This might make the struggle for diversity socially and politically more viable.

Amongst young minds, conception of Europe seems to be multifaceted. Europe’s image as a colonial country seems to be intact in the minds of India’s young generation. However, along with this image, a strong element of fascination and attraction for various European things was also palpable. Additionally, Europe was often juxtaposed to India and there was an anxiety that ‘our’ culture might get usurped by the European one.

A couple of issues need to be kept in mind while identifying policy interventions on cultural diversity in India. One, cultural diversity must include openness to critique from outside and within. In India, cultural diversity is often articulated in terms of groups and communities; and

while diversity is seen to be for regulating relations between these groups, the diversity internal to them is overlooked and the groups are often assumed to be monolithic. The critique from outside the groups is about diversity and difference between these groups. While critique from within refers to closer attention being paid to this diversity and difference within the groups. And two, diversity must include everyday, non-standardised versions of cultural articulations instead of relying only on textual and standardised versions of culture.

Regarding specific policy interventions, our data points at two issues. One is about funding. Practitioners from both the organisations emphasised the need to have better funding to realise the full potential of their activities. One can, therefore think in terms of encouraging multiple sources of funding including from government and private players. However, funding provided by these agencies can be a double-edged sword in that it may result in compromising autonomy of the institutions.

The second issue is about the need to have institutional support for inter and intra cultural dialogue in India. This could go a long way in making diversity a practice instead of only a norm. The socio-cultural heterogeneity could be better sustained only if we have facilities for transmitting 'other' cultures in various parts of India, for example, imparting training in Tamil language in the north Indian states. However, here also caution is in order. The three language formula that was implemented in the 1960s to tackle the issue of linguistic diversity in the country failed miserably due to various loopholes in the policy (Brass, 1994). Moreover, this institutional mechanism must also be conscious that apart from difference, Also, Indian culture is deeply enmeshed in hierarchy and contestations. Thus, to continue with the point about linguistic diversity, one often finds that Indian governments give greater institutional encouragement to the Hindi language as compared to other 'regional' languages. Also, linguistic reorganisation of the states imparted greater institutional prominence to the historically advantageous regional languages in the states compared to say various so called 'dialects'. This linguistic hierarchy is indeed only one example and India is replete with such social and cultural hierarchies based on religion, caste, class and gender; and contestation of those inequalities.

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## 8. Appendices

### 8.1. Table sociodemographic data young people

NO	PSEUDONYM	Site	CODE	Age	Gender	Language spoken in family
1	Akash	Site 1	WP4_IND_YP_Akash_Site1	19	M	Marathi
2	Gayatri	Site 1	WP4_IND_YP_Gayatri_Site1	23	F	Marathi
3	Hemant	Site 1	WP4_IND_YP_Hemant_Site1	25	M	Marathi
4	Sakshi	Site 1	WP4_IND_YP_Sakshi_Site1	27	F	Marathi
5	Rohan	Site 1	WP4_IND_YP_Rohan_Site1	25	M	Marathi
6	Ashar	Site 1	WP4_IND_YP_Ashar_Site1	29	M	Marathi, Hindi
7	Pankaj	Site 1	WP4_IND_YP_Pankaj_Site1	25	M	Marathi
8	Chaitanya	Site 1	WP4_IND_YP_Chaitanya_Site1	24	M	Marathi
9	Nikita	Site 1	WP4_IND_YP_Nikita_Site1	21	F	Hindi
10	Vivek	Site 1	WP4_IND_YP_Vivek_Site1	22	M	Marathi
11	Gargi	Site 1	WP4_IND_YP_Gargi_Site1	25	F	Marathi
12	Atharva	Site 2	WP4_IND_YP_Atharva_Site2	23	M	Marathi
13	Arush	Site 2	WP4_IND_YP_Arush_Site2	23	M	Marathi
14	Aparna	Site 2	WP4_IND_YP_Aparna_Site2	23	F	Bengali, English
15	Manvi	Site 2	WP4_IND_YP_Manvi_Site2	21	F	Marathi, English
16	Akshay	Site 2	WP4_IND_YP_Akshay_Site2	23	M	Marathi, English
17	Veer	Site 2	WP4_IND_YP_Veer_Site2	25	M	Sindhi, English

18	Diya	Site 2	WP4_IND_YP_Diya_Site2	21	F	English
19	Ryan	Site 2	WP4_IND_YP_Ryan_Site2	17	M	English
20	Dipti	Site 2	WP4_IND_YP_Dipti_Site2	21	F	Marathi
21	Parth	Site 2	WP4_IND_YP_Parth_Site2	21	M	English
22	Rohit	Site 2	WP4_IND_YP_Rohit_Site2	21	M	Hindi
23	Yusuf	Site 2	WP4_IND_YP_Yusuf_Site2	19	M	Hindi

## 8.2. Table sociodemographic data practitioners

NO	PSEUDONYM	Site	CODE	Age	Gender	Language spoken in family
1	Anil	Site 1	WP4_IND_P_Anil_Site1	42	M	Marathi
2	Abhijeet	Site 1	WP4_IND_P_Abhijeet_Site1	44	M	Marathi
3	Ajinkya	Site 1	WP4_IND_P_Ajinkya_Site1	26	M	Gujarati
4	Arya	Site 2	WP4_IND_P_Arya_Site2	28	F	English, Hindi
5	Ishaan	Site 2	WP4_IND_P_Ishaan_Site2	30	M	English, Hindi
6	Neha	Site 2	WP4_IND_P_Neha_Site2	26	F	English