

→ Report 2

**"India and the World
at the Dawn of 2012"**
Report 1 of a Listening Post
held in January



Encouraging The Reflective Citizen

Part 1. THE SHARING OF PREOCCUPATIONS AND EXPERIENCES

In this part of the Listening Post participants were invited to identify, contribute, and explore their experience in their various social roles, be those in work, unemployed, or retired; as members of religious, political, neighbourhood or voluntary or leisure organisations, or as members of families and communities. This part was largely concerned with what might be called, 'the stuff of people's everyday lives', that relating to the 'socio' or 'external' world of participants.

This year the group consisted of a homogenous group by it being a group of women; but at the same time there was a lot of heterogeneous factors with regard to religion, culture, geographical position and orientation of family (patriarchal and matriarchal society).

The group started the discussion with the recent and extended gala about the 'Lokpal Bill' and how as the year 2011 came to an end with the 'eve' of Christmas and the 'eve' of New year the bill also saw an end to its popularity.

Moving on to the year 2012, most of the participants spoke about the world coming to an END and what Religion had to say about the world coming to an end. A whole new level was entered with the mention of religion and the various religious ways and rituals that each of the participants followed in their own culture, the prophecies given by different religion and the cultural differences that stand out within a particular religion. Participants expressed their views about the various questions they had in mind about Religion, and not just one religion, say Hinduism, but a variety of them such as Christianity, Islam, etc.

The major dilemma vested on the group was about two major issues: One was with regard to the split one feels with the values imparted by a religion: Why does religion indulge in contradicting itself? Here the example of the Christian ways of looking at Love, Tolerance and Forgiveness was made a mention backed with how within the same religion there were different dominance which would indulge in hatred, bigotry and prejudice towards the other. The paradox here is that: each of this dominance worship the same god, practice the same values but yet hold negative feelings for the other. This later boiled down to the group stating their inspection of Religion.

Each member/participant expressed how they were in their own way trying to grapple with the basic fact of whether God really exists and even if there is God then what Religion do we believe in? Some of the group members also shared their experiences of being an Atheist and how because of critically thinking about Religion and God

somewhere along the line they found themselves questioning the existence of God. Many of the members of the group shared a similar question about what they were looking for in the end of it all.

Later the discussion also moves on to how god has been given a different look, as in, in each part of India, the same god tends to look different. Thus in turn strongly feeling that people have attributed their wish of god and has given this god a face, a name and so on just so that they have a support system, a vision and something familiar.

The heated discussion later went on to the group talking about the sexuality/gender of the God expressing the view of how society, then and even now, talks about 'mankind', while giving women a diminutive part/position and these positions or parts played by women were more in a negative term than positive. Illustrations of how Eve brought on the sins, the Ramayana and Mahabharata the two major epics in the Hindu mythology were both started by women and how a particular religion mentions that women cannot be trusted just as land and gold. Participants express how religion also is very patriarchal here giving the examples of Jesus, Vishnu, Islam where they signify the lord as 'Him', Buddhism, etc (stating some of the predominant religion in India).

The discussion moves on to how women in most religion have been forbidden to participate in any religious matters while they have the monthly menstrual cycle and this has not changed even till today in some parts of the world even though most of us Indians are now well versed with the human anatomy. This brought about a sharing from a member about the patriarchal and matriarchal society that prevailed then and prevails even now. Two members of the group were strongly of the opinion of how the society would be if it was strongly matriarchal for which another member expressed her view of how she thought she could never see something like that and even if she imagined it would be in the pretext of mockery.

The group also makes a mention of reproduction and procreation as being the main tasks for a woman which has in turn made her fragile. Mentions of use of women in advertisements where in they endorse products that aren't used by them was pointed out. Society making women the 'all in one' where she learns to be the best home-maker, best employee, best wife, good mother and somehow pressurizing her to deal with the family and work life with a smile on her face and zeal in her heart. The group at some point brings in the perspective of men as well with a feeling of empathy and understanding stating that men also go through as much as a woman does. The group moves on to talk about how 'colour' plays a vital part in the society. Racism has been prevalent from a long time and still continues to exist in most of the peoples mind. The very fact that we have fairness creams has proved it.

Part 2. IDENTIFICATION OF MAJOR THEMES

In Part 2 the aim was to collectively identify the major themes emerging from Part 1.

The Listening post session brought about a number of themes. These themes emerged from a personal plane, collective plane and to a great extent societal and religious level.

The themes that the participant shared were:

- View of politics as a changing entity
- Images with regard to women and society

- Patriarchal society: the dominance of it
- Conflict in religion and religious preaching/ belief system
- Conflict in the state of being
- Gender and the struggle for power
- Gender stereotype: in religion and society
- Racism
- Sexuality and what we expect of it
- Mythology: a myth?
- Love, Forgiveness and Tolerance
- 2012 – a sense of an end
- A question of ‘What next?’
- Image of God: does looks really matter with regard to god?
- Religion: a beginning to an end or an end to a beginning

Part 3. ANALYSIS AND HYPOTHESIS FORMATION

In this part of the Listening Post the members were working with the information resulting from Parts One and Two, with a view to collectively identifying the underlying dynamics both conscious and unconscious that may be predominant at the time; and developing hypotheses as to why they might be occurring at that moment. Here the members were working more with what might be called their 'psycho' or 'internal' world, their collective ideas and ways of thinking that both determine how they perceive the external realities and shape their actions towards them.

Hypothesis

The hypothesis can be categorized into 3 main categories:

- a. Time
- b. Religion
- c. Gender/ sexuality

Because of the fear of the end, the members of the society spoke about religion which depicts a beginning of the era, thus resulting in creating a comfort zone to one and extending to others by finding similarities amongst themselves.

- The group started talking about the End, end of a year, end of a bill being talking about, and end of the world. At some point the group felt a sense of discomfort in becoming aware of a closure/finish. This led them to contemplate about what they have done in their life, how much they have to achieve in one's life time. Thus in turn the group unconsciously moved to how this world was started, in turn trying to comfort themselves of being aware of the End.

Because of the sensing of the end, the members of the society are going into regression by talking about the early years of the development of society, thus resulting in trying to either find a sense of hope or trying to escape.

- A fear of death prevailed as the participants spoke about 2012. The members of the society at some point wanted to look at what it was that could have been right about their world so far. This brought about an escape from the thoughts of death by being preoccupied about the thought of the beginning.

Because of the fear of the end, the members of the society turn to religion to seek a sense of belonging, affiliation, identity and relief, thus resulting in critically analysing the religion for better understanding.

The role women play in propagating, maintaining and changing societal stereotypes.

Convener: Manab Bose

→ [Report 1](#)

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In this part of the Listening Post participants were invited to identify, contribute, and explore their experience in their various social roles, be those in work, unemployed, or retired; as members of religious, political, neighbourhood or voluntary or leisure organisations, or as members of families and communities. This part was largely concerned with what might be called, 'the stuff of people's everyday lives', that relating to the 'socio' or 'external' world of participants.

The group was made up of a heterogeneous group where each individual was from a different state, coming from different cultural background. The groups feeling were split into two: one of a negative feeling of a sense of confusion, laziness, tiredness, anxiety, pre-occupation; and another of positive feelings of excitement, curiosity and a sense of thrill for the moment.

Discussing the hot topic of the 'season', the group members expressed their views on the status of cricket: a game almost worshiped here in India. A group member pointed out the association that she had made between the game and the season and went on to express the great importance she places on it during her childhood days. She also goes on to explain how she finds herself less interested in the game now. The enthusiasm in engaging in the game has reduced to a drastic level. The group explored the present status of the game with the introduction of the 'Indian Premier League' (IPL) and commercialization of the game. Members of the group state that the game has lost the charm of inculcating patriotism and unity in the people. It has in turn installed in the people a sense of greed and division. Some members made associations to the history of the country where the British brought in the 'Divide and Rule policy'. (*Split*) A mention of how cricket players have been moving into politics was stated. A comparison was also made of two legendary players: Rahul Dravid and Ganguly, with regard to their own patriotism towards the states they were coming from as opposed to the team they belonged too. This raised a thought of 'belongingness'. Another group member reacted to this statement with his thought of how one might have to go against a place that has nurtured and nourished him, this would leave the person emotionally charged and with a sense of guilt. This leading to the question of 'where do I belong?' and what is my ownership? Do virtues such as 'belongingness' and 'patriotism' exist in the society today? Has this been a shifted to monetary benefit? These questions lingered on the minds of

the members. (*This was depicted in the group as each one of the members were immigrants*)

The group members internalized this concept of 'belonging' to something or somewhere and reflected on how they operated from two standpoints: one standpoint is when they are defending the state they came from and the other standpoint is when they defend the state they have migrated to. A member of the group then threw up an important question of how we as individuals fulfilled this or rather felt about 'belonging' to the company that we worked for or does one just work in a company for the sake of working and would drift to another company that would provide better monetary benefits? This struck a chord in a few members making them ponder over how they operate. Maslow's hierarchy of needs is discussed to explain one's need prioritization. Members explained how one operates and alter their priorities depending on fulfillment of primary needs. (**Hypothesis**) Members also expressed how reaction to a situation depends on the psychosocial background they are from. They carry with themselves the family's traditional method of dealing with such situations. Some members found themselves torn between the psychosocial background they came from and the current psychosocial background they belong to now. Dealing with this split became a challenge. Witnessing a split between immediate need fulfillment and a sense of 'belonging' and 'ownership' and drawing examples of the soldiers who have to fight for the nation irrespective of the monetary benefits yet unwilling to fight on an empty stomach, the group boiled down to the consensus that monetary benefit is extremely important. This alters the person's process to prioritize and influences the virtues of development. Does belongingness become secondary? A member of the group posed a thought where she articulated her experience of 'belongingness' then translating to 'being passionate' drove her to internalize the work/task so seriously that she then became very critical about other people and closed to other perspective thus overlooking the growth of the company. A few members also spoke about how the monetary benefits is accompanied with a sense of pride, honor.

The group continues to see the existence of the shift from one position to another in various forms. Taking the country as an example, members point out the shift from an agricultural country to an Information technology, from being settled to being a nomad, from being a land of values and morals to a land of immediate needs and necessities.

Towards the end the group pondered over the topic title and were amazed to find themselves discussing such 'heavy' topics during the time of summer/spring which is highly celebrated by the Indians in the form of harvest festivals and a new beginning. Again, the duality is pointed in a manner of this period being a financial ending and budgeting for the entire country.

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The themes that the participant shared were:

- Monetary benefits vs. Belongingness
- Job satisfaction Vs. Monetary benefits

- External vs. Internal motivation: what drives us to work?
- Immediate priorities vs. future demands
- Social status vs. need fulfillment
- Materialistic vs. non-materialistic
- Agricultural vs. nomadic
- Belongingness
- Shift in perspective
- Cricket (IPL): a concept of divide and rule
- Need to prove: honor, pride, achievement
- Greed: is there any boundary
- Self sufficient
- Gaining pride from monetary benefits
- Psychosocial background, culture, identity of an individual while dealing with a situation

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Hypothesis

Because of the fulfillment of needs, the members of society strive to prioritize the immediate needs and it results in losing a sense of belongingness to the task.

- The group was with the feeling that virtues such as belongingness and patriotism tend to take the back seat with in competition with fulfilling the basic needs to survival. The members of the group who defended the cricket player by stating that he had a responsibility to fulfill the needs of his family depict this.

Because of the fulfillment of some of the basic needs and roles, the members of the society shift from their origin to another field, resulting in violations of or widening their own boundaries.

- This is explained by stating 'the shifts': from settled agriculture based to traveling or relocating to another place; the shift that the cricket player made from sports to politics; shift from a country well known for its values and morals to a country striving to fulfill the basic needs (this maybe applicable to the individual and the country).

Because of basic needs of monetary benefits, members of the society act greedy, resulting in loss of belongingness.

- The movement from agricultural background to a cold technological/digital country states the hypothesis true.

Because of damaged self-esteem, members of society seek need for fulfillment of needs through recognition, monetary gains resulting in loss of the non-material reality of life.

- The question of 'Where do I belong?' is a clear indication of how individuals have for their own need to increase self-esteem make the shift in their lives/lifestyle thus by overthrowing the basic virtues one used to hold.

Convener: Swetha Rao A Sukrut