



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.

The group consisted of a mix of human resource professionals, psychologists and other professionals ranging from 24 to 65 years of age. Quick introductions were done. The group members were curious, lethargic, exhausted or nervous. Members of the group discussed their views of the Delhi rape case that took place on 16 December 2012. A member felt that the world was witnessing a strong sense of intolerance, impatience and a manifestation consumerism and a need to grab whatever comes our way. Another member being a girl felt afraid. She explains how things have changed in her life after this incidence of rape. For someone who had changed her way of life according to the freedom she received from not staying with her family and currently staying in a metropolitan city evoked fear in her. The tradition of going out for a party on New Year's Eve also seemed dangerous to her, even simple things as walking on the street seemed frightening for her. All this because of the thought that "anyone of us (girls) could have been that girl".

Another member, trying to bring a new light into the conversation, mentioned that she felt the country as a whole taking action to bring justice to the girl with petitions and gatherings for a cause. India mainly consisting of small towns had awareness of the case spread wide. Bringing in statistics a member brought into the picture the perpetrators and the consequence for the act. He states that the court should probably give them death sentence or even worse stone them to death. The member knew that, the country being the country it is, would not pass such a sentence. He brought up another case where he thought that there was an unjust verdict was the case of a man in Norway who shot people to death was give only 20 years of prison life based on a report that said he was insane and needed psychological help. Now, he asks, does one get off a brutal killing just because they are mentally ill or delinquent like in the case of the Delhi gang rape? This left him confused.

The other male member spoke about the same, saying that he was also caught in the same equation of death sentence or a much less harsher sentence. He goes on to question what the 'civil society' is doing. What is in the 'civil society' that is leading to such behavior? Alternatively, what is missing in the 'civil society' for such things to happen? He answers his question with another question that questions the role of fear in the minds of the members of the 'civil society' or the deterrent.

There is no deterrent, no fear, which is a strong emotive feeling, which needs to be evoked in the minds of the masses so that they do not cross that line. Now what is the meaning of civil society? He goes on to state the examples of law and order in other countries like America that have strict regulations for such acts. Another member brings into the group an incident that happened following the Delhi rape case of how an elderly man was beaten by the public for misbehaving with a girl in public. She goes on to question the relevance of age in such incidents. She also speaks of the 17-year-old juvenile who was involved in the Delhi gang rape. She asks how he could get off paying a penalty for a brutal act. The country was in a dilemma regarding his punishment. The emotion of anger evokes in her as she talks about the arguments of punishing the juvenile. She also

states that though there are so many protests happening, though the country has woken up to this incident, she asks “where is all this leading to? What is going to be the result?” Rape has been happening all the time for many years in the country, only now is the country waking up to this issue.

A male member feels strongly that we as a society have created this monster. Talking about displacement of aggression and juvenile, a member of the group states incidents from the past of a student displaces his aggression towards his teacher by stabbing her earlier in the year 2012. She feels that these are more of “inhumane displacement of anger and anguish” and sees it as a pattern. Where is it coming from she asks? Are we not teaching the child aggression? Are we not aggressive? Just because we do not rape or murder someone, it does not mean that we are not aggressive. What are we teaching the younger generation about aggression? If such acts are being done, doesn't that mean that it is there in the collective psyche or in the air?

Reacting to this, the male members very disgustingly states that this whole proposition would be nothing different from an appeal for fifteen minutes of fame. He also feels bad for being male, and being male now meant that they are not trustworthy. A member in the group voices her opinion that this was not about male or female, but more a state of mind. Her concern being a psychologist at school was to explain a ‘rapist’ to the lower grade students. The children read the newspaper with news rape happening all over the country. She goes on to share how the student of the 7th grade look at rape as something that happens every other day which doesn't need to be cared about. She asks if these incidents are making us insensitive. Her feeling towards this was to do something that would make a difference. She feels a part of her burning in her for the rape victim and she wants this burning feeling to continue so that such acts do not happen and people remember.

Rape and aggression towards women has been seen in history, a member states. He also goes on to state that it is the failure of the ‘civil society’ which has now woken up. He strongly believes that with the protest and the strike happening all over the country against rape, the number of rape cases will surely decrease but not stop. The fearlessness has sunken deep within the people. The fearlessness is because of consumerism and low tolerance, wanting to grab someone else's things. There should be some kind of fear, or made into a sin by religion.

Talk of the police and the law being insensitive towards such issues and turning it into a joke were also stated. He strongly feels that help lines and women police stations need to be set up in order to help the victims. Members in the group feel that setting up of courts and help lines will have no value, as those who are involved are all the same people who are involved in these acts. The group goes on to question the government and the ‘moral larders’. When the main system that is governing us is corrupt, how do we then make any difference in the society? Cynicism in society is always there. People in India aren't taking an initiative but instead they comment on what is happening thus adding zero value in making a change. Fear of being abused is real amongst the women in the group. What message are parents sending to children? Members of the group were reflective of their own actions and initiatives.

The group goes on to talk about the small differences they are trying to make in their own world regarding bringing about awareness. Families are being more cautious of their daughters. School psychologist are trying to spread awareness in schools though there is a lot of resistance from the management about educating the children regarding such topics. Some members spoke of how as girls they were taught how to be submissive and submitting to the male of the family. This has been coded in them and is being carried on even in their day-to-day transactions with society. The change does not happen and thus fearlessness increases.

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:

- Intolerance and impatience
- Fear – fearlessness
- Parenting styles
- Education
- Empowering
- Fear of law or lack of it
- Public participation
- Individual responsibility/ collective
- Injustice
- Awareness
- Punishment
- Anger/ aggression: displacement and coping
- Change in society, mindset and actions
- Hope
- Confusion or helplessness
- Mental health – a way of escape?
- Age limit and punishment for crime
- Insensitivity / inhumane
- Consequences
- Lack of action/ inaction
- Rampant consumerism
- Hypocrisy
- Gender
- Failure of systems
- Risky behavior

Part 3. ANALYSIS AND HYPOTHESIS FORMATION

In this part of the Listening Post the members were working with the information resulting from Parts 1 and 2, 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

Because of failure of the government/primary system, the members of the society take up the authority of moral policing, and it results in misuse of power by the masses.

- The group felt that the inadequacy of the primary social system in the country reflects on those few people who take up authority of 'moral policing' in turn forcing their own views, values and morals on to the masses.

Because of rampant consumerism and greed to have more, the members of the society empower themselves to take what they WANT and it results tricky behaviour and injustice to others.

- The group feels that consumerism has lost its meaning to greed, which has taken over. People in the society do not know where to limit themselves and since there is no consequences to these violent behaviour.

Because of lack of parenting or inadequate parenting, the members of the society lack awareness of managing emotions, resulting in expression of aggression in violent ways.

- Displacement of anger and feeling of guilt by a male member in the group shows how an act of inappropriate displacement of anger can lead to brutal murder or rape.

Because of failure of the primary system regarding proper consequences for rape or murder, the members of the society show fearlessness which is reinforced by the culture's need of women to be submissive and submitting, thus resulting in injustice, insensitivity. Because of inadequacy of the law and government to take action, the members of the society are taking charge of the situation, resulting in trying to bring awareness, spread the message of justice, empowering women to take action, and to instil fear of consequences.

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