



AN ORGANISATION FOR PROMOTING UNDERSTANDING OF SOCIETY

india and the World at the Dawn of 2017
Report of an OPUS Listening Post®
held in Bangalore on 21st January 2017

PART 1: THE SHARING OF PREOCCUPATIONS & EXPERIENCES

In this part, the Listening Post participants were invited to identify, contribute, and explore their experiences in their various social roles, be they: in work, unemployed or retired; as members of religious, political, neighbourhood, 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': the 'socio' or 'external' world of participants.

PART 2: IDENTIFICATION OF MAJOR THEMES

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

The members of the group were invited to share their preoccupations and experience of the previous year while stepping into a new year of 2017.

The members with no delay began sharing their preoccupations of demonetization. Everyone agreed that it was a good plan but poorly executed. Due to the unplanned execution there was unwanted chaos affecting the people of middle and lower socioeconomic status. It was inconvenient for many citizens as they had to take an off from their busy schedule and stand for hours in the bank to exchange their currency. However some member felt that though it was chaotic many people started using technology to make their life easy. They also shared their disappointment with no information being shared regarding the same. They feel that it was abrupt and the government was not transparent to share to the citizens about the effectiveness of this plan.

The members moved on to express their fear towards violence and abuse that occurred in the city of Bangalore during the last year. One of the members shared her experience during a strike for the reason of Cauvery water distribution between the state of Tamilnadu and Karnataka. She was extremely frightful on her ride back home as she witnessed violence in the form of burning the tires and throwing stones to destroy the vehicle. She was scared where in this process she would be hurt. Another female member expressed her insecurity to walk on the street in western outfit due to a sexual abuse incident ar Bangalore on the New Years Eve. One of the male participant voiced out his disappointment with the insensitivity of the leaders of the country who stated in a public forum that the reason of abuse was due to the

seductive western outfit the girl had been in.

The members claim the above incidents to be the result of poor leadership. One of the members questions herself and others about the role of the citizen in choosing our leaders. Responding to this one of the members pointed out that not many people participate in casting their votes as they don't find the candidates competent. Even those who cast their votes do so based on their caste and religion. Another member states that the citizens of India are comfortable with corruption as it is an easy way out. Any time people violate rules they get away with it easily by bribing the officials. For example it is not legal to put up a stall on streets, but since they cannot afford to rent a shop many people conveniently pay off the police and put up a stall on streets. At the same time another member revealed that the government has certain provisions for the economically weaker groups to establish a shop but sadly not many people are aware of the various provision made by the government. This evoked anger and disappointment among certain members because the media does not provide such important information rather has become a place for gossips.

One of the members moved on by questioning the sense of morality of people in today's generation. The older generation is trying to discipline the youngsters by instilling fear. Questioning the traditions and rituals are not encouraged but are expected to follow them blindly. Most people in our country are not aware about the fact that boys attain puberty. So when they experience bodily changes they cannot question and speak to their elders as they were always discouraged from questioning and expressing especially about sex and sexuality. Hence they exploring through various means which may not be reliable. Some people repress their sexual feelings and needs which at times come out in the form of harassment and violence. The education system also does not provide sex education but rather the teachers impose their stereotypes on to the adolescents. Due to the differences in the level of awareness and exposure there are clashes between the generations. Often time the parents and teachers instill shame towards sexuality. The older generation people believe that sex is only for procreation and not for pleasure. This creates confusion in the minds of the young adults. Hence most members in the group claim that sexuality education needs to be made mandatory in education sectors.

Some of the main themes that emerged are as follows:

- Demonetization
- Corruption
- Sexual education
- Harassment
- Importance of social media
- Stereotype and Blind beliefs
- Leadership
- Shame and fear
- Teacher student relationship
- Exploration and experimentation
- Conservative versus openness
- Anger and disappointment
- Relationship and marriage

PART 3: ANALYSIS AND HYPOTHESIS FORMATION

In Part 3, the participants were working with the information resulting from Parts 1 & 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, participants 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.

In this part we tried and analysed the data obtained from the first two parts of the discussion to find the deepest layer of the social system. The themes were interconnected and one theme led to another. The members of the group worked together in forming the hypothesis. The following are the hypothesis:

1. Because of lack of competent leaders the members of the society are not taking responsibility resulting in corruption.
2. Because of poor leadership members of the society experienced corruption resulting in demonetization.
3. Because of demonetization members of the society experienced chaos and confusion resulting in disappointment.

Disappointment with regard to the efficiency of the leaders was predominantly seen among the members of the group. They believe that there are not capable and trust worthy leaders elected to govern our country. Even if there are any efficient and competent leaders once they are in power they tend to forget their duty and become corrupt. Due to this the citizen does not take responsibility in choosing the leaders, thus resulting in the persistence of corruption. Even when an attempt to evade this corruption was made, it was poorly planned and executed which affected the middle and the lower socio economic group leaving the real cause of corruption untouched.

Other hypotheses formed were:

- Because of sexual repression members of the society are exploring and experimenting resulting in sexual harassment
- Because of lack of openness the members of the society are experiencing shame and guilt resulting in dysfunctional relationships
- Because of fear and shame the members of the society are misinterpreting relationship resulting in poor teacher student relationship.

Another preoccupation among the members of the group was with abuse and harassment happening around the city. Wee agrees that because our elders are not open and comfortable to talk about sexuality to our adolescents they are exploring through various means. Hence we do not know whether the information they receive are accurate or not. The adolescents and young adults are not allowed to express their sexual needs at home or school resulting in sexual repression. When opportunity strikes they grab it without analysing the impacts of their actions. This could be one of the reasons for increase in abuse and harassment. People also hold on shame and fear towards sexuality hence misinterpreting any boy – girl

relationship. The members were disappointed with the rule of banning sex education in schools and agree that it is essential for them.

- Because of social media members of the society are exploring resulting in questioning the blind beliefs.
- Because of ease in access of information younger members of the society are questioning blind beliefs resulting in intergenerational clashes.

Stereotypes and blind beliefs were few themes that were emphasized and is regulating the members of the society. Social media has played a major role in providing information to the younger generation and thereby reducing the blind beliefs and stereotypes. However this gap in awareness has created issues between the older and younger generations.

During the entire discussion the members of the group got in touch with their helplessness with the situation around them- the inefficient leaders the abuse and harassment resulting in anger and disappointment. Hence the below hypothesis was formed.

- Because of disappointment the members of the society are experiencing anger resulting in rebellious behaviour.

Convenor: Cicily Manil, Sukrut Human and Organization Consultant Pvt. Ltd.