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PRESS NOTE

SAHASANVEDANA SURVEY REPORT: FINDINGS AND OBSERVATIONS

“Women of the 21st century have it easier than women from earlier times” is a statement we’ve been hearing constantly since the past two decades than. It is certainly true, women have evolved and grown much stronger than before and they’ve definitely come a long way. Gone are the days of fighting for something as basic as the fundamental right to vote. But We 4 Change decided to conduct a survey to find out if women are still as safe or are as vulnerable as they used to be in earlier times. It was decided to study women in the age group of 18 to 25 years and 25 years and above while conducting the survey in two groups. This intent behind this social experiment was to honestly understand the issues of women and understand not only their contemporary status but also their state of mind.

609 women aged 18 to 60 years filled the form. This means that from women born around the 1960s to those on the verge of adulthood, i.e., the generation born until around 2005, have also recorded their experiences as women in this survey. That is, in this study, women who fall into the category of young, middle-aged and old women (senior citizens) have participated in this survey.

This survey was primarily filled by women in Maharashtra. This includes towns and cities like Solapur, Kolhapur, Gondia, Ahmednagar, Thane, Gadchiroli, Nashik, Pune, Wardha, Yavatmal, Bhandara, Gadchiroli, Mumbai, Chandrapur, Nagpur, Nanded, Panvel and Akola. Outside of Maharashtra, there was also participation from women in Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka, Punjab, Haryana and Andaman. Many people from countries like Australia and Sweden also filled the survey form recording their opinion. But while submitting such a document, the researchers had put a geographical restriction that the origin of the woman or girl who filled the form should be in Maharashtra.

In this entire process, no woman was asked to tell her name, address, identity. So, it was predicted that these women could fill this form honestly and without any fear. It was observed that women still haven’t possessed the mentality to speak freely in society about their personal experiences of dealing with matters like teasing, insult, threat or rape. In reality, the person doing the injustice is to be blamed, but women consider themselves responsible for the act or incident. They carry this burden by themselves throughout their lives.

Even after being their anonymity was guaranteed, some women avoided sharing such experiences in the form that was shared. Although about 30-35% of the women wrote in the answer form that they had never experienced any incident specified in the form, there were some sub-questions in which they mentioned the sexual harassment they had experienced. It was understood that the pressure of the society and the culture of not expressing such experiences are the reasons behind women not talking openly about the acts of injustice they had to endure.

The second part of the form asked whether women were aware of the legal provisions which can protect them in such situations. From the findings of this study, it was noticed that there is a large amount of ignorance in

the society about laws, administration and order. Laws, schemes and policies are enforced in society, but it often happens that these laws fail to protect the section of society it intended to protect because the vulnerable section of society for whom these laws are made are ignorant about them. So, it should be ensured that these laws are executed properly. For that, along with enacting laws fairly, it is necessary to create public awareness. People should be educated at least about the laws which will protect them from any act of injustice. With this purpose the study has been conducted. It is a very important study that talks about the prevention of violence against women and underlines the need to create awareness.

It is the responsibility of the government to create awareness about law and order. Along with the administration, it is also the responsibility of social organizations to work in the similar direction. The present document discusses the various dimensions and facets of each question answered in the questionnaire and the We 4 Change organization pledges to take up steps to bring change in the society regarding the issues of gender equality, discrimination and violence against women. We 4 Change organization has taken the initiative to make the change happen in order to use this document for the benefit of the society.

CONCLUSIONS DRAWN FROM THE SURVEY CONDUCTED BY WE 4 CHANGE

** (Question No. 5- Have you experienced humiliation/injustice in your life as a girl child?)

Females of 21st century feel more insecure as a woman. This ratio has increased from 12.1 percent to 20.1 percent in the student group.

** (Question No. 6 - At what age was your first experience of the 'bad touch' by a male?)

It is an alarming fact that 60 percent of girls have experienced the 'bad touch' at some point.

** (Question No. 7- What is the age group of the average male touching you without consent?)

67.5 percent of women have experienced unwanted touching from men of various ages.

** (Question No. 8- Where did you experience the 'bad touch' most frequently?)

It is widely recognized that girls are the most vulnerable in public places.

** (Question No. 9- What feelings arose in your mind after experiencing the 'bad touch'/eve teasing/molestation)

After experiencing Bad Touch/molestation/eve teasing, the level of discomfort in the mind is reduced in the student group, but the emotional state of being withdrawn and not wanting to talk to anyone increases.

** (Question No. 10- How many times have you experienced Bad Touch from a man?)

Experience of Bad Touch is a matter of concern. 57.2 percent of female students under the age of 25 have faced such experiences. Senior age women who number 67.8 percent have experienced unwanted touching.

** (Question No. 11- What should be the motive of the person giving you bad touch?)

It was noticed that the bad touch caused by insult and revenge has increased by 8 percent and 3 percent respectively in the new generation.

** (Question No.12- Which of the following atrocities have you faced?)

The rate of rape has doubled. It is only up to the age of 25 that girls have experienced various forms of abuse.

** (Question No.13- Where do you feel unsafe?)

Both generations feel the most vulnerable on the road while going alone. Both generations find themselves equally vulnerable at work and in crowds.

** (Question 14 - Upon experiencing any form of abuse, who do you trust enough to open up to?)

The survey was conducted to know whether women have the right to open their minds in this day and age. Sadly, 14.8 percent of young women and 10.5 percent of middle-aged women who participated cannot open their hearts to anyone.

** (Question No. 15- Have you ever wanted to stop going somewhere because you felt unsafe?)

It is surprising that the new generation has grown up in circumstances of wanting to stop but could not. Perhaps girls are forced to go to places where they feel unsafe.

** (Question No. 16- Has the torture/exploitation or molestation you experienced affected your life?)

25.5 percent of women say that the abuse/exploitation or harassment they experienced had an impact on their lives. There is a need to reduce this by creating peer groups for them. It was felt that supporting them, taking them out of that experience, communicating about it is important.

** (Question No. 17- Do you still see girls facing oppression/exploitation in society today?)

This question was asked only for the age group above 25 years. While 20 percent of women say they do not see such abuse taking place, 79.7 percent of women see such abuse taking place, they even feel it. About 80 percent of women agree that girls face abuse.

** (Question No. 18- What role do you take when you see other girls facing abuse/exploitation or eve teasing?)

7.9 percent of women see girls in distress but do not take any action against them.

** (Question No. 19- Have you ever felt that a woman's life is binding/troubling and you should have been born as a man?)

In the age group of 18 to 25 years, the proportion of women who feel that life is restrictive/troublesome and that they should have been born male has increased by 11 percent in the new generation. While searching for the reason for this, it seems that there is a huge ideological conflict in the minds of the new generation.

** (Question No. 20- Do you use public toilet?)

Non-availability of public toilets is a major problem when a toilet is needed. Many diseases are caused by not excreting the excreta during the natural need. It is very worrying that the young generation is also falling prey to this problem.

** (Question No. 21- What is the reason you do not want to use public toilet?)

Women feel embarrassment over using a public toilet and hence avoid it's use. They don't feel safe and many don't use public toilets because there is no cleanliness. It is noticed that women and young girls do not use public toilets due to various reasons. Some women complained that they want to use but are not available.

** (Question No. 22- What is the law that a woman can take recourse to if someone stalks/sends obscene messages?)

Only 22 percent of girls said they were aware of IPC Section 354. That means 78 percent girls have no knowledge about this IPC Section. Ignorance of this section is highlighted by this question. So, it is very important to create awareness about it.

** (Question No. 23- Under which of the following sections is an offense registered for rape?)

58.7 percent and 58.8 percent of women in the new and old generation do not know about the IPC Section 375 and 376 for rape. Ignorance of the law regarding women was highlighted in both age groups.

** (Question No. 24.- What is section 498-A for?)

Women continue to face domestic violence. The IPC Section has been made keeping in mind that serious domestic violence occurs more often in the first few years after marriage. But, almost 60 percent of women are ignorant about this section.

** (Question No. 25- Which law exists for protecting minor girls from sexual harassment?)

Only 27.3 percent of young women are aware of the POCSO Act while only 36.4 percent of women are aware of the Act. If we want to stop the exploitation of children, it is very important for everyone to know about the POCSO Act.

** (Question No. 26- Have you ever filed a complaint with the police because you were wronged?)

In the senior age group this figure was 47.2 percent while in the younger generation it has almost doubled to 87.2 percent.

** (Question No. 27- Are you afraid to report to the police station?)

30.3 percent of the student group and 32.8 percent of the female group are still afraid to file a complaint at the police station. Looking at the gap between the two generations, there is no significant difference.

** (Question No. 28- Have you used pepper spray on an assailant?)

This survey found that 94 percent of girls and 97.7 percent of women do not use pepper spray, which is a serious matter. Once the pepper spray is used, many people in the vicinity are temporarily weakened enough to be unable to attack anyone. The effect of chili spray lasts for half an hour. Girls can run away from danger by using pepper spray. The pepper spray gives her a chance to get to safety. Pepper spray is not very expensive and can be made at home. Girls don't know about this very important pepper spray.

** (Question No. 29- Who tells you that as a woman you cannot do many things and are not safe?)

16.8 percent of girls between the ages of 18 and 25 say they have never been told that they can't do many things as a woman and aren't safe. This means that 83.2 percent of girls are constantly told by someone that they cannot do many things as a woman and are not safe. Girls are told by family (34.8 percent), society (62.2 percent), education system (10.8) that they are incapable and vulnerable as women. This ratio is significant.

These are the facts came forward in this study. If you read the survey report from the beginning, many such important aspects have been pointed out from which we can paint a true picture of where society stands with respect to women's issues. We 4 Change is committed to making this study more accessible to society. For more information you can contact below.

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