

CRITICAL THINKING

What can we learn from research in rural India?



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1. Tasks

1. Read the article of Neha Khandelwal concerning research in the rural parts of India focusing on the villagers' attitudes and aspirations. You will find it on the last slide.
2. Write a summary of the article, stressing its main points.
3. What types of discrimination against girls and women are described in the text?
4. Compare the predominant ideology in rural German communities and rural Indian communities. If you yourself do not live in a rural community, do some research in the Internet before you start writing. Explain differences and parallels. Also highlight historical and cultural factors.
5. Do you think in Germany we learn to think critically? - Discuss.
6. How does your personal monopoly look like? Do you feel pressured by society to do certain things? Do you think everybody in Germany has the means and opportunities to follow their dreams or are there people who are systematically privileged in society? - State your opinion.

2. Text: Why the kids need to learn to think critically?

By Neha Khandelwal

The influence of the society's expectations is so huge that it teaches young minds to restrict themselves even before they begin to dream. Therefore, there is a need to Change attitudes which can only begin when the adolescent girls think critically.

बेटा तो चाहिए ही चाहिए ! (Son is a must !)

Woman: Everything you say is right, but a boy is a must. Do you have any brothers?

Interviewer: No, we are two sisters. Why is it necessary to have a brother?

Woman: Well my brother has a huge petrol pump so he can help me in times of need.

Interviewer: But my sister can also help me with money!

Woman asking a 3 yr old girl : Don't you want a babu (baby boy as a brother)?

The girl nods.

Woman: See even she thinks boys are a must!

Girls are raised with an expectation that they need help from the male family members during situations of conflict and especially when they need money. Girls are not raised to be independent women even now because that is the job of a man. One of the woman from the group has 5 girls. They only have one earning member in the family, her husband. Another woman in their village has given birth to 8 girls in the hope of giving birth to a boy. The expectation is that boy means another earning member. Girls put their own self inside boxes because the society has defined their roles already.

हम कर ही क्या सकते हैं ? (What can we do ?)

Girl: We only have Rs.100 in our house at this moment.

Interviewer: Who works in your house?

Girl: No one. My father died a few years ago.

Interviewer: Your mom cannot work?

Girl: We are Rajput (a higher caste). The women from our caste cannot work outside the house. Our society doesn't allow.

Girl's Mom: I am thinking about leaving this village and working somewhere else.

The society is blamed for the woman's inability to work. Even not having money to feed self is not a big enough motivator to push aside the belief system built by society! I sat there with an NGO worker for 2 hours. We discussed multiple ways the family could make money but most of them were struck down because of what the society will and will not allow!

लोगों ने कहाँ लड़कियों के लिए ये काम ठीक नहीं (People said this job is not meant for girls)

Girl: I wanted to be a police officer.

Interviewer: Arrey waah! Then what happened?

Girl: People said this job is not meant for girls since girls have to travel at odd times.

Interviewer: What are the daughters of these people doing?

Girls: Nothing. They sit at home.

Interviewer: Why are you listening to what others are saying? Why not follow what you

want to do? Did you know that Kiran Bedi was India's first IPS officer and she is from Jaipur, Rajasthan?

Girl: Haan. I have again decided that I want to become a police officer.

Interviewer: Won't you change it again if somebody tells you otherwise?

Girl: (Laughing) No!

I was surprised by the fact that the girl was inspired to become an Ips officer from this character in an Indian TV show, but she had no idea how she will pursue further education. Even she was inflicted by the same society bug as her own mother.

The group of girls belong to a Kishori Group of the village Lakhola. They were an animated bunch of girls. The one who wanted to be a police officer has just broken her collar bone trying to learn how to ride a bike with two other girls on her bike! Her friends looked at her for counselling, her friend's parents also listened to her advice. When it came down to deciding her own career choice, even she was easily swayed with what the people of the society told her she can and cannot do.

Changing attitudes

Thus, there is a need to build a foundation for the adolescent girls to help them aspire which I cannot do without challenging them to question these beliefs. I have designed a series of games/activities to get them to think about the following topics:

- 1) Society and I
- 2) Discrimination against self
- 3) Where is the money?

I noticed that once the training is over, these girls go back to a very different environment when they go back to their houses. Therefore, I have created small activity

books around the same topics for them to reflect and do when they are back at their houses. It is also a way to assess what and how they absorb from these sessions. I also created a board game inspired from Monopoly. The idea behind the game is to teach the girls that if they aspire, they can change the story of their lives. To teach them that the money they usually spend on marriage and religious functions can also be spent on receiving a good education. That it becomes a matter of choice. The game asks the girls to pick an aspiration (मेरी इच्छाएँ) and to prioritise marriage, education, things to buy etc. in order to fulfil that aspiration. It also helps them field the usual society questions (लेकिन समाज क्या कहेगा?) as they appear as roadblocks. They have a series of power cards (शक्ति) which teaches them about the various ways they can jump over society's bouncers.

You can find the original article under the following link:

<https://medium.com/@neha.khandelwal/why-the-kids-need-to-learn-to-critically-think-e9a0ea6b96be>