Interviewer - You said you are 20 years old? Till what class have you studied and what are you doing now?

Subject – I’m in 12th standard.

Interviewer – So have you completed your 12th?

Subject – No, It’s ongoing.

Interviewer – So when did you join Sneha? When did you start?

Subject – I don’t remember exactly. I think it was around the time I was in 5th or 6th standard.

Interviewer – Can you please speak a little bit louder or it won’t get recorded.

Subject – I was in the 5th or 6th  standard when I joined Sneha. The ColourBox projects were ongoing then and I was interested in drawing.

Interviewer – The ColourBox project? Weren’t there any Ehasaas projects then?

Subject – There were no Ehasaas projects back then. Back then there was PVWC when I joined. There was the ColourBox project and one of my friends told me that I was good and drawing and I should join the project where they’ll teach me different drawing techniques. So I joined there through him. Sitaram sir used to be here back then, whom I met for the first time here. He wrote my name down and made me sit for a while. They took me to play somewhere in Mahim at the hotel Hirani, I think its name was. Back then I had no idea what a street play was. So they just made me stand in the middle of the play in a group and told me “You’ll do a street play”. I followed all the things they said and then soon new skills were added like comic work shop, acting workshop, theatre group, etc.

Interviewer – But all of these were Ehasaas workshops right? The comic and acting workshops were conducted by Ehasaas.

Subject – I wasn’t aware of all of this back then. I only knew about 2 projects, one was the ColourBox and the other was the PVWC project.

Interviewer – So your comic book and drawing projects were done long back?

Subject – Yes. Back then we had Chaitanya sir. He used to take 2 or 3 workshops in a week or a month. I had joined back then. So slowly my skills increased and I got interested in dance. So slowly we started improving at dance. Sitaram sir used to teach us different activities. In colour box, we used to learn drawing, poster painting, wall painting, etc. Back then we had about 20, no 50 members in our group. Now I’ve have been here for about 8 to 9 years, since I joined.

Interviewer – Oh my god! 8 to 9 years is a really long time.

Subject – Yes.

Interviewer – Do you remember how you felt when you came to Sneha for the first time.

Subject – I felt a bit strange. I was unsure what I will get to learn here and what I wanted to learn. I was told that I would be doing drawing but they took me to do a street play on the first day. I was a bit scared and worried about what would happen if my family found out what I was doing here. My mother would shout at me, my father would shout at me, etc. But I practiced. Our first show got over and our second show was in Ambani School.

Interviewer – Ok. In Dhirubai Ambaini High School?

Subject – Yes. The one in BKC. We had our second show there and I had no idea which school this was and how big this school was. There we had a PVWC stall arranged by the students of that school. They took us for dance there. There was a dance in the play. I was told to play a goon who is a rapist and I had a friend along with me. That time the whole group used to go for the show, a team of around 20 to 30 people used to go. We had no idea who all would come there, there would be celebrities and all but we had no idea. So one of us was asked to perform on the spot. All were each asking others to dance. So I got up on the stage and performed my routine. Later I came to know that there were Sonu Nigam, Farah Khan and other celebrities were watching our show from the Ambani School building. Sonu Nigam complimented our play, my dance and the message we were trying to convey through it.

Interviewer – So the story in the show was conveyed through dance?

Subject – Yes. There was an act in the show where we talked about eve teasing and rape through a dance. He (Sonu Nigam) liked it a lot. There he also performed a song for us. There were many different shows there. The show also boosted my confidence level. I thought if I can perform in front of such esteemed people then I can do many other things. Then slowly we started joining theatre and dance workshops. There was also a singing workshop from **NSSA(5:55)** which I also joined where I learned about different musical instruments. My confidence was slowly increasing and by the end of the Colour Box program which lasted a year there were 5 to 10 people remaining in our group. There was Sangini who used to work with PVWC, we were involved with them as well. The last Colour Box project was a 15 day event in which we were asked to volunteer. Volunteering was a new experience for me which showed me there was something else for me. It exposed us to new things and new events. There was one more thing that my English wasn’t very good. I have lot of problems speaking and understanding English. I don’t know much of it. The foreigners who came from outside to see the events, I had to guide them. Take them from one place to another. They also used to ask me questions about things they saw and I had to translate and answer. So I gained another skill and realized I could speak a little bit of English. I realized I could talk to people and my fear of talking to people disappeared. I could talk to anyone on any topic. I learned that we shouldn’t have to fear anyone, that we could speak to anyone about anything. This again boosted my confidence. Then there was the yuvanath(738) event.

Interviewer – Was this a PVWC event as well?

Subject – Yes. Yuvanath(7:46) was started by PVWC. No, it was organized by Ehasaas. We had Sumit sir back then.

Interviewer – ok. So there was no major transition when moving to Ehsaas from PVWC.

Subject – No there wasn’t.

Interviewer – Everything was automatically done?

Subject – Yes it was very seamless. We didn’t even realize when we left PVWC and joined Ehasaas. Back then we had Sumit sir, Sneha ma’am, Sana ma’am and Anjali ma’am. There was new a new event which we had to do called Yuvanath. There was nothing fixed. We had just told our ma’am that we wanted to do this event and these were some of the things which we wanted to do.

Interviewer – So you yourself had asked to do this event?

Subject – Yes. We had made the plan and then Sumit sir said that we should make it a little bit bigger. Then he made a budget for the event and then moved the pushed us to add competitions like poster painting and decided a theme. Back then I must have been around 12 to 13 years old

Interviewer – What was your initial idea regarding the scale of Yuvanath and what all activities did you want it to have? What was the original plan?

Subject - Actually the original plan was to have a small competition.

Interviewer – Only a single competition?

Subject – Yes only one. It would be a stage play, where youth will come and perform but sumit sir suggested that we should make it bigger.

Interviewer – So different competitions?

Subject – yes. So he introduced different competitions. So there were around 15 competitions in the first yuvanath. It was successful event. Back then I had no idea what an event is and how it is conducted. So we got involved. We used to sit day and night at the center and along with Sumit sir used to make posters, pamphlets and schedules for the event. So we did different things along with Sumit sir and came to know this is how events are organized in colleges.

Interviewer – You were in school back then right? Which class were you in?

Subject – Back then, I think I was in the second or third standard. So I learned these things there, about events and how events are conducted in colleges by the students there. We learned one more thing there that there in a group of people in colleges who are responsible for conducting such events. So we came to know that there are many NGOs in our area which do such work. So we got the information about the NGOs, like these all NGOs do this kind of work and those all do that kind of work. World Vision works for children’s education, Magic bus works in football and other sports, **AITT(10:53)** works in education and other skills. Now there’s the **New Turf Foundation(10:57)** works with girls. They provide girls with free courses for beautician, seamstress, mehandi, etc. I gained knowledge about all of these NGOs.

Interviewer – So did you ever go to these NGOs? Did you have any communication with them?

Subject – Actually, we only used to go to these NGOs for events, to invite them. Sometimes we used to go there to get some information regarding our work or sometimes to get feedback. Slowly what happened was we weren’t just working in Dharavi, we had reached Manpur and Vashi.

Interviewer – So what did you do there?

Subject – So whatever we had learned here, we received a proposition that we go and teach that to the kids over there.

Interviewer – So different NGOs used to call you over there?

Subject – Yes. Different NGOs used to call and ask us to come over there and teach. So slowly were started a dance practice for kids over there. In their areas we used to organize contests and shows for them. We also started a theatre workshop in different areas.

Interviewers – so you used to go there to teach children how to perform a theatre?

Subject – Yes.

Interviewer – That’s very nice.

Subject – So we started teaching them. There were around 10, 12 or 15 kids. Most were college students. So we used to teach them there and then they used to take out a rally in different areas and we used to create acts and plays based on various issues faced by them in those areas. So in a rally they used to go to particular places in their area and perform.

Interviewer – You must have had a team which used to teach them?

Subject – Yes.

Interviewer – So were there only kids in the teams or were there COs as well?

Subject – No we started doing all this after leaving. We learned a lot in Sneha which we started to distribute in NGOs which were far away.

Interviewer – So on your own. So the participants here made this group which was being invited by other people.

Subject- The invited us and asked us to come and teach

Interviewer – So are you still teaching now?

Subject – Yes. We have a fixed day when we go and teach kids different things.

Interviewer – So where are you going these days, to which NGOs?

Subject – Mostly these days there is a NGO in Mankhur, Janjagruti Vidyarthi Sangh, we work with them and then there. Plus there is Bal Vikas Kendre which is in Nerul. The kids which come there are from the outskirts, these areas are near the villages so things like drugs are in a greater quantity over there. So we work with them as well.

Interviewer – So how many people are there in the group?

Subject – Around 10 to 12.

Interviewer – Are they from Dharavi as well?

Subject – Yes.

Interviewer – And all of them have been participants in Sneha?

Subject – Yes.

Interviewer – So these NGOs invite you?

Subject – Yes.

Interviewer – And how regularly do you go there?

Subject – We don’t go regularly. We give them a particular time. They make a schedule over there and based on that schedule we are called over there.

Interviewer – Ok. So suppose the event is in December, then you’ll come in November and teach.

Subject – Hmm.

Interviewer – So how many times in a year like this? Once? Twice?

Subject – Once or twice but it could be more as well.

Interviewer- Ok. So is it a paid activity? Do you get any money for this?

Subject – Yes we do get it. We don’t ask for it but they pay us whatever they feel is appropriate.

Interviewer – So it’s honorary, whatever comes to their mind, they pay.

Subject – Yes.

Interviewer – So they pay to cover travel?

Subject – Mostly what they pay is to cover travel and snacks. They say that you guys come from so far away, all the way from Dharavi so we’ll pay for the travel. We say that we have no problem, we are only here to teach the kids. Whatever talent we have, we just want to pass it to the kids. So just like this our group continued to move forward and then within Sneha we joined the Ehasaas team. We released one **evanart(15:03)**, then the second one and like this we did many **evanart(15:07)** where we did street plays and other activities with the Ehasaas team due to which our skills further increased, we could do anything anywhere, there was nothing we couldn’t do. Then we joined Pukaar NGO recently and are doing a 1 year fellowship in Tata institute. There were 12 to 13 groups there for the interview. Their requirement was that there should be at least 8 people in a group. We had 2 groups of 8 people there and every single one of us was selected. They said that our group will be combined to make a big group. Our interviews went so well that all 16of us from 2 groups were combined. We went in different groups but they joined us into a single one. So now our **Ekta(16:07)** course is ongoing.

Interviewer – Earlier you said that when you had joined in the beginning you were afraid what your parents would say if they saw you doing a street play.

Subject – Yes.

Interviewer – So didn’t your parents know that you’ve started coming to sneha?

Subject – They knew that I was going to an NGO but didn’t know which NGO I was going to. They knew that I was going to an NGO where I was learning drawing.

Interviewer – So the sir you had back then, Sumit sir, did he ever go to your place and tell them what they were going to teach?

Subject – Actually yes. Sitaram sir used to come to our house. So my parents knew that I was learning these all things here. So they started liking it. These are good things whatever he is learning here. So mom dad said nothing back then and even today they don’t say anything or ask me to not go to these places. “Do whatever you are doing” they say.

Interviewer – So they have been supportive throughout?

Subject – Yes.

Interviewer – You had a friend who brought you to Sneha. So all your friends were already in Sneha or were there any which hadn’t joined?

Subject – Actually when I joined they were already in Sneha. It had been one or two months for them since joining. There were some who had been here for 1 or 2 years. So after joining day by day I became better friends with the others in different youth groups. We all became good friends.

Interviewer – Did this ever happen that there were people who didn’t join Sneha or made fun of you saying where do you go and what do you do?

Subject – Those who didn’t come to Sneha didn’t say “What do you do there”. They knew what we did there. Their only problem with joining Sneha was that it would shackle their family income. I mean when I joined they were old enough that they had completed their education by then. So they had jobs and had to take care of their families, so they had a lot of problems. And that friend of mine works at the university, he’s an electrician there. So whenever there was a Sneha event or a competition, he used to take a cab or by any other means he used to reach there. So then people started saying that there is a lot to learn in Sneha but there isn’t much scope, so that we can do something in life. So slowly they started leaving sneha and started their own life journey which they thought they should do.

Interviewer – So in the beginning they were all associated with Sneha, but as their compultions like job compulsions or family compulsions start getting in the way they themselves separated from sneha.

Subject – Yes.

Interviewer – And those with flexible jobs like your electricion friend were able to continue for a longer time.

Subject – he managed to do it but later on there were problems in his job family and it was affecting his job. He used to wake up at 4 am and to a small job, he used to deliver milk after getting up at 4am. After that he used to directly go to his second job. So he didn’t get enough time to rest. So he wasn’t getting enough rest and wanted to rest so he said he was leaving Sneha. I said ok, it’s fine. He had to do his job plus he was the eldest amongst his siblings so he had to take care of his family aswell.

Interviewer – You’re family has been always supportive but if they hadn’t been do you think you would have been able to come to Sneha?

Subject – Nothing like this has happened till now so I can’t say for sure.

Interviewer – And what has been the community’s reaction? Your neighbors for instance?

Subject – So when they used to see me on the street before the called me names. You know people of lower casts go here and there and perform so they said he is going to a lower cast. “He does this and that and lives like them” they used to say such things. But my family didn’t say anything. My family knew that he is doing something good. Slowly a positive atmosphere was getting built in the house that our son id doing something. What happened was that one of our relatives said something to my dad about what I do. It made my mother so angry that she went to their house and screamed at them. She said “You take care of your family and we’ll take care of ours. Whatever our kids our doing, they are doing the right thing”. We our four brothers and sisters, 2 brothers and 2 sisters and we haven’t done anything that has given grief to our father. So my father believes that his kids won’t do anything wrong. So he never stopped us because of what others said. Later as my journey moved ahead in Sneha doing different activities like plays, dance and other activities, our respect among the community also increased. He is doing good things everyone thought.

Interviewer – Did they ever see your street plays?

Subject – Yes. Whenever there is a street play near our house, in our area we asked ma’am “we should do a street play in the mandal near my house”. So after making a schedule, during Ganpati or Devi we perform our street play there. So like that people watch us and think “Yes he is delivering a good message to people”.

Interviewer – You came to Sneha to learn new things like drawing. Along with drawing, you said your confidence was boosted. Do you think apart from that, you attained any other skills.

Subject – My confidence was surely boosted. Apart from that, I never used to pay attention to anything. Let’s say a potter in Kumbharwada is making a pot. I didn’t want to look at it. I thought “What does that have to do with me”. But after joining Sneha, I have to see that thing, I have to think about it. How is it being made, at what speed is he spinning it, what is he doing with his hands. Learn such things. How to learn things from others work. I learned how to be interested in other people’s work. So I learned such things. They make pots in Kumbharwada, so I learned how to make a pot there by observing the process like the speed at which the potter is spinning it, how much water is he using, how much clay is required, how he is cutting it, how is he getting it in a shape, etc. So I became interested in things. If there was something, I wanted to learn it. If there is a ladder, how is it made? I wanted to learn that. What materials were required?

Interviewer – So you started to thing. Curiosity within you increased. Questions like “why things are this way” started popping in your head. And you started looking for the answers. And this didn’t used to happen before?

Subject – On weekends, when we had holidays at school my father used to ask me to go to work with him. So I used to go to work with him. Our work involves furniture. A lot of people in our family work in the furniture industry. So my dad asked me to accompany him at work and I did. There was a kind of lethargy in me, I was lazy. I father noticed that this guy is very lazy when it comes to work. But as liked continued learning new things in Sneha, the lethargy within me left. We had to do our work and learn new things. So later on when I used to go with my father to work, my lethargy used to leave me and I would be focused at work

Interviewer – Just a minute, Sorry. The children are making a lot of noise, can we sit over there?........... So you were saying something.

Subject – So the laziness and lethargy left me. If I’ve to do something in life, I’ll have to work hard. So I learned that I have to work hard in my life and move ahead.

Interviewer – So while organizing big functions like yuvanaath or when you go outside to teach, planning must be an important part of it right?

Subject – These things I didn’t know before. How to organize it and all that. Like I gave you the example of Kumbhadwada before, Sumit sir thought us how to organize functions. He should a lot of videos of different functions in colleges having different events and how they were organized. So we had a lot of questions. So through the events we triend finding answers to the questions. So we started the struggle. We wanted our events to be a success. So we worked hard day and night for it to happen. We started going to different colleges and NGOs and also inviting.

Interviewer – No, but planning these things. There is yuvanaath. What competitions should it have? Which organizations should we go to? How many children should we invite? What all afacilities should be provided? So do think you attained all the skills to plan these things?

Subject – Yes. So if we organize any outside events, let’s say a school event, we have the skills to do that. We need to know what standard kids should we call, what should be their age, where we’ll get the permission. If it’s a government school, where will we have to go for that, who will we have to write the letter to. We learned all these things. How to talk to people, regarding any topic or subject. We got to learn all these things.

Interviewer- So you learned to talk to people during events or did you learn in general how to talk to different people?

Subject – We learned to talk to everyone. Suppose someone has a problem, we learned how to talk to them. If someone if bothered and is not willing to talk about it, we learned how to open him up and bring him within our friend circle. If I need to know what is bothering him, I learned to open him. He isn’t telling anyone and it is causing him to stress out. Someone has a problem and is lost within themselves, so how to make them share. To talk to them, that’s what we learned.

Interviewer- So you learned to talk to other people as well as how to encourage people to talk to you?

Subject – Yes.

Interviewer – So when you work on social issues, do you find success the first time itself?

Subject – As far as I know, there are some communities which do not talk about the prevailing social issues. This is not a good thing. So such communities, while giving feedback say things like “look what kind of things your kids are talking about”. Over there we aren’t able to talk much because our job is to do the show and try to spread our message. So the staff is Sneha used to go later and take feedback from the community and clarify things to them. So even within our friend circle, like college and school kids they believed girls and boys are supposed to do different things. They had no respect for women, and they used to talk in such a way. So I talked with them about the nonsense that they used to speak, about how they didn’t respect women and that each woman is someone’s mother or sister. So they should give them respect and be friendly with them.