I – What’s your age?

S – I am 19 years old.

I – And how much have you studied?

S – I’m in the 2nd year of college.

I – So is there a day off today?

S – Yes I have a day off since the exams are going on.

I – So when is your paper?

S – on the 19th.

I – When did you join Sneha?

S – I joined Sneha a year ago. This is my second year.

I – This is your second year? So you joined last year. Can you tell me something about your family? Your parents? How educated they are? What do they do?

S – My dad’s name is Ramadhi Male. My mom is Shivkumari Male. My mom is a housewife. She takes care of household stuff. My father is an auto rickshaw driver. I father has studied till the 10th standard and my mother till the 5th.

I – Does your mother so any small part time job from home?

S – Yes she makes rakhis.

I – How many siblings do you have?

S – I have 2 brothers and 3 sisters.

I – Are they all younger than you?

S – No. All 3 of my sisters and one of my brothers are elder to me and one of my brothers is younger. One of my elder sisters is married as well my elder brother. Now there are us three sisters and one younger brother still left who is studying.

I – The brother who is married, does he live separately?

S- Yes, he lives separately. He has a son.

I – And where are you from originally? UP?

S – Yes, UP.

I – Did your parents migrate to Kalwa or did your grandparents?

S – My grandfather came.

I – So your parents were born here?

S – No, they were born in UP. It has been 15 years since they came here

I – Why did you join Sneha and how did you join it? How did you come to know about it?

S – I didn’t know anything about Sneha. There is one Neeta didi who came to our chawl. She told us about Sneha which is an organization for children. She organized a meeting where she told us about getting rid of our fears and our rights as children. How many people do somethings because they are afraid and say things because of fear. How they don’t tell their parents about important things because they are afraid. She told us how to get rid of such fear. She encouraged us so slowly we all joined Sneha and gathered a lot of knowledge there. Like how we have the right to education, how we should openly talk to our parents without fear, if there is a problem we should immediately tell our parents. These support things we learned in Sneha. We learned a few processes as well. I learned parlor work and sewing. I profited a lot from my experiences in Sneha. I learned a lot and overcame my fears.

I – So in the beginning when ma’am told you about such an organization, Why did you feel that you should come here? You had no idea what was going to happen here?

S – Before I joined, I had no idea about this place. But at the meeting we felt nice, we felt that we also should have some knowledge, knowledge about our bodies which they told us about at the meeting.

I – So what did they tell you in the first meeting? They spoke about your bodies?

S – No not about that.

I – So what did they tell you in that first meeting that you felt like joining here?

S – So they talked about education. I don’t know much since I didn’t attend a lot of the meetings.

I – I’m just talking about the first meeting. At the beginning, why did you join Sneha? What made you feel that you should come here?

S – It was about our bodies.

I – No. If I ask you to come to Mumbai with me right now, would you do it?

S – No.

I – No. So when Neeta ma’am asked you to come to Sneha, why did you go?

S – I took my parent’s permission.

I – So your parents permitted, that’s why you came?

S - No! I learned something about my body and I wanted to learn more.

I – But at that time you didn’t know that you would be taught about your body here.

S – We didn’t know anything.

I – You didn’t know anything. So at that time when you came to Sneha, What did you feel? Why should you join Sneha?

S – We felt that we should have knowledge about our bodies and other things. We felt nice after gaining a little knowledge.

I – So you knew then that you’ll acquire knowledge.

S – We acquire knowledge and gather some information. What we don’t know we should try to learn. That is why I joined. There are many upsides to it.

I – After you joined, what happened? What all activities did you do and what all sessions did you attend?

S – ‘My Rights’ was an activity in which I took part. We performed a show on it. There was a function in Thane where we went and performed a skit.

I – So you were taught how to perform in skits?

S – Yes. They taught us. The play talked about what our rights are. We did that in a function in Thane. I think we came is first or second in that competition.

I – Very good! How did you feel doing the play?

S – I felt great. I met many big people. They told us that they learned a few things from our play. We felt nice meeting these big people. We felt that we should do something that pushes us to move forward.

I – You felt like this after you joined Sneha, like you should learn new things, meet new people.

S – We never felt these things before. We stayed at home and did nothing. But when we ventured outside, we felt like doing something for our parents, for others.

I – So that is why you continued coming to Sneha?

S – Yes.

I – Was there any other reason you remained attached to Sneha? Your friends came as well so you got an opportunity to talk to them? What were the other reasons? Why for so many years did you continue to regularly attend this program? What other things are you able to get over here?

S – Coming here I used to get to learn new things every time. We got new information. From different friends we learned different things. I learned something from one person and something else from another. If we had any problem, we would share it by talking to one another. Somebody used to share her problems with me and I used to share my problems with her. If there are any new activities, if there was some decision that needed to be taken or an action needs to be performed. So even about such things we talked.

I – So you’re parents had already given you their permission.

S – Yes. Ma’am had met them as well.

I – Yes, ma’am had talked with them as well.

S – Yes. Even they felt nice that I was getting to learn new things. Kids today don’t know these things and they should be aware of them.

I – Your community, your neighbors and your other friends, what was their reaction when you joined Sneha?

S – First they didn’t have any reaction because they didn’t know anything about it but when they came here and realized what all things were here and what all things they would get to learn about themselves here, they felt nice. They joined themselves. A lot of people joined. One person contacted another person.

I – Did you tell anyone to join?

S – Yes. Those who were there in my chawl, I told them to join.

I – And did they join?

S – Yes. Neeta didi was there as well. So she took them and they all joined together.

I – Do you remember what was going on here when you first joined? What session and which activities were there? Your first day in Sneha?

S – On the first day there was a program in our society itself, in our chawl. First time they called us, they asked us things like what we wanted to do, what we wanted to be and how much we had studied. They took our interview. We wrote all these things down on a page and gave it to them. This was the first thing we did in Sneha.

I – So what you wanted to do back then and what you want to do now, Is there any difference in these two things?

S – No.

I – So what did you want to be back then?

S – I wanted to study and become a doctor or a teacher. I wanted to study and make my and my parents dreams come true.

I – So the goal you had back then is the same today?

S – Yes.

I – What all did you learn here?

S – After coming to Sneha I overcame my fears. Fear of studying, fear of talking to others. If I fear something, I shouldn’t keep it inside, I should be open at tell it to the person in front of me.

I – So were you very afraid before?

S – Yes.

I – Why? What were you afraid of?

S – Talking to other people outside. Even in my studies, asking a question, there was a fear that people would make fun of me. Now I have no such fear. If somebody doesn’t know something, I’ll tell it to them not once but twice. There is nothing to laugh about. So fear of studies. Fear of confrontation, if there is a fight or if someone is rude, we should stand our ground and face them. If someone even asks a question, the fear of answering.

I – What activities did you part in? Do you remember? You mentioned the theatre workshop.

S – I took part in drawing as well.

I – Ok. All these wall paintings that have been done. Anything else?

S – My sister was in theatre as well. In Thane, I took part in the drawing activity. I learned parlor here as well.

I – So in vocational training, you did a parlor course?

S – Yes.

I – So now the sessions aren’t being conducted. The sessions are over. So why do you still come to Sneha? Do you come to begin with?

S – No.

I – So you don’t come anymore.

S – No. My studies are going on now because of the exams. So we haven’t been called by Sneha.

I – So today you were called just to meet me?

S – Yes.

I – So your friends who came along with you? Do they still come to Sneha or even they don’t come anymore.

S - They do come.

I – So why do they come?

S – They come for the same things, there are a few plays and other activities in which they take part in. Those who have left their studies and are at home, they still come.

I – Are they your age?

S – Yes.

I – But they are at home?

S – Yes.

I – So they still come?

S – Yes.

I – So you don’t get any time off from college so that is why you don’t go?

S – I take classes at home as well.

I – For small kids.

S – Yes, for small kids. I study as well and have to do household chores so there is no time.

I – So if there is a Sneha rally or there is a health camp where kids need to be taken somewhere, so you have been called for help. Has something like this happened?

S – Yes, it has happened?

I – So when did it happen?

S – That happened last year. We took out a rally. It was in Mahatma Phule Nagar.

I – But back then you were a regular participant. I am asking about now. Now that your sessions are over and you are not being called regularly once or twice a month. So for any work now are you being called to Sneha?

S – Yes.

I – For what work have you been called?

S – For volunteer work. For interviews where they’ll ask me questions.

I – That is today. So you’ve been called before to answer a few question?

S – Yeah.

I – But you’ve not come for any work. You’ve not been called to help?

S – No.

I – For those who have finished their regular session, There is an effort to teach them something new. Like for example blog writing, film making, puppet making, citizenship workshops have taken place. Were you involved in any of them?

S – I was present for citizenship.

I – So had you come to kharghar?

S – It hadn’t taken place in Kharghar.

I – If not Kharghar then where?

S – There was one in Thane. There was a meeting there with Anjali madam. There were many activities there. I participated in them.

I – What did you do there? What did you learn about over there?

S – There was a madam who had come from outside. She asked us question on our anatomy and talked about our rights.

I – Did they talk about how kids are born or did they talk about something else?

S – We talked about the changes that occur in our body when we grow up.

I – So whatever you learnt over here, how do you think it has impacted your life?

S – There have been many changes.

I – What were these changes and in what domains these changes occurred? For example food habits. Do you think after coming here and learning, have your food habits changed?

S – I’m not sure about food habits.

I – Ok but in which way have these changes occurred?

S – I can tell you one thing that I used to feel very afraid before.

I – You’ve already talked about that. That you overcame your fear and were able to talk openly. You already told me that.

S – I gather a lot of knowledge. I learned about parlors. I came to know about my body as a kid.

I – But with all this, what changes happened in your life. The education and knowledge you attained here, what difference has that made to your life? Did you share this knowledge with others? You parents your sisters?

S – Yes I did with my parents, sisters and a few neighbors.

I – Can you tell me something more specific like a misconception you had before which was cleared up after coming here?

S – I think so.

I – What is that think which you had some wrong information about or didn’t know about which after coming here made you realize that what you were doing earlier was wrong?

S – I don’t think so.

I – The things they told you here about clean living, did that make any difference?

S – They told us about periods. We use a cloth. Sometimes we use pads. We use the same pad the entire day which can be harmful. They told us not to use it for more than six hours. It can cause cancer and irritation. How and when the periods come. How to mark and remember our monthly date. If we go out then how should we be cautious since the beginning and to change it within six hours.

I – Did you know about these things before or not?

S – I didn’t know. I didn’t know about any of it but I learnt it here.

I – Did they tell you about how to dispose of pads? Did you know about it before or not?

S – No, I didn’t know about it before.

I – How do you dispose of them now? Do you throw them just like that?

S – No. You I put them in the dustbin.

I – If the toilet in your community doesn’t have a toilet, then what will you do?

S – If there isn’t one there, then I’ll fold it in a paper.

I – And where will you put it?

S – In the bin. If there isn’t a bin in the toilet then I’ll put it in a paper bag and throw it in our home dustbin. We shouldn’t just dispose it off anywhere.

I – But if there isn’t a dustbin in your locality you should write a letter to the municipality. Did you make any such effort?

S – …

I – No. So you didn’t think about that.

S – No.

I – Ok.

S – So you write a letter to the municipal official and tell them about what is required in your locality.

I – Do did you do it or not?

S – No I didn’t.

I – But you were told that these all things had to be done?

S – Yes.

I – What did you learn about discrimination between men and women? Did they talk about this thing? How women are discriminated against and the violence they face?

S – We were told about different kinds of violence that women face.

I – So after learning that, do you think it made any difference to your life?

S – Yes.

I – How?

S – We learnt how to exert our rights. So if anyone is being forceful with us, we can call the police and take action against them. Nobody can do anything to us and just walk away. We have to be assertive. If there is any problem we shouldn’t be afraid and go to the police.

I – Has a something like this ever happened?

S – No. Nothing like that has happened.

I – Or have you ever witnessed an atrocity being committed against a woman around you? And did you speak up against it or help the woman in any way>

S – Yes that has happened. There was a lady in our society whole husband used to drink a lot. He used to drink and beat her. She had even left him in the middle. So she came to my sister who is also in Sneha and told her about all the problems she was facing. They were making up lies regarding dowry and harassing her. She was my friend and was married. So she came to us and told us about her husband. She knew nothing about Sneha so we told her to talk to us. She didn’t know how to write. So we wrote a letter and came to ma’am over here. She helped us out and now both of them are together.

I – So do the people in your community look at you this way, like if they have any problem then you are the one they can come to solve it?

S – Yes.

I – So since when has this happened? Were you a leader in the beginning?

S – No I wasn’t. Since I joined Sneha, people cone to me in the hope that I can help them solve their problems.

I – Do your friends look at you the same way? Has something like this ever happen to one of your friends when they has to come to you for help?

S – Something like this hasn’t happened till now. If there is a problem, I can solve them. If I can’t I ask madam for help.