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Pune's good in art of giving

Neha Madaan, TNN Feb 22, 2012, 03.21AM IST

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PUNE: Respect for values runs deep in Pune as respondents rated the city highest- 3.2 on a scale of 1 to 5 in The Times Of India-IMRB Quality Of Life survey. The city outclassed Mumbai, Delhi, Ahmedabad, Kolkata, Chennai, Bangalore and Hyderabad, and yet, there is much more Pune needs to work on.

Neela Onawale, founder and director of Deep Griha Society, that works in the slums of Pune, feels there are many in this city who care. "We get local volunteers who give their time and talent for the empowerment of the marginalised. There are some families who celebrate birthdays, weddings, death anniversaries, festivals by sharing what they have with the less fortunate. Over the past few years, there have been many youngsters- high school as well as college students- who offered us their assistance during vacations," said Onawale.

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Others would like to see an upgrade. Anita Narayan Iyer, founder and managing trustee, Ekansh Trust, said, "There is a surprising lack of professionalism and respect for time and commitment, because it was originally a place for genteel folk and those from the armed forces and not white-collared workers racing past deadlines towards professional aspirations."

She said that the city is growing at an alarming rate and the pangs are showing. "People who have moved from cities like Mumbai or other work capitals of the world take some time to adjust to the relaxed and seemingly disinterested pace here. Pune is culturally rich and different genres of theatre and music are well appreciated. Also, noteworthy is the respect

that is accorded to women in Pune. Interestingly, Pune has a large number of NGOs, which could either mean that there is a lot that needs to change or that there are a lot of people willing to make the effort," said Iyer.

Social activist Rakesh Ganguli from Open Space, a creative platform for students and citizens to explore, understand and initiate social change, feels that it is indeed heartening to know that Pune ranks high on respect for values among other metros.

"However, I would like to draw attention to the hit and run case that resulted in a young man bleeding to death in Pune not too long ago. Then there are incidents like the Bhandarkar Institute being vandalized, statues and historic monuments raising a storm, to mention a few. In the course of my outreach work with young adults from various colleges in Pune, I have heard many stories--from students both from Pune and other parts of Maharashtra, and even other states--of exclusion on the basis of caste, language, religion, region, gender, fashion, food and brand preferences," said Ganguli.

"We must not indulge in self-adulation and be complacent about our 'respect for values'. While it is perfectly fine to take pride in the findings of the survey, there is much this city needs to work at," he added.

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