

Scope of Implementation

'She-carnival' started as an initiative to remove the fear of going out at night among women. The initiative began with the help of members of New Market Vyapari Sangh who were keen on setting an example before the people that it is not wrong on the part of women to go out at night and it was the goons who needed to be controlled.

After the inception which turned out to be a success, the fair became a weekly event. The prime location and the presence of members of the vyaparisangh and policemen make the area safe for ladies.

The concept can be implemented at any location where members of the market association come out to support the idea along with help from local people, municipal corporation and police.

Locations like 10 Number Market, Bittan Market, Chowk Bazar in old city are some other places where the idea can be implemented. The locations of all these bazars are in main market areas and near police stations.

The areas are well lit with many bright street-lights and the facilities for shopping and eating out are already provided. These areas can easily implement the idea of night-bazar and she-carnival with a little help from the respective vyaparimandals as well as BMC. The provision of CCTV camera and deploying policewomen of Shakti squad can be addressed once the business associations show their willingness to open up more such 'she-carnivals' in the city.

10 Number market and Bittan Market are quite close to Narmada Hospital, a trauma centre of the city, making it a safer haven to provide medical aid to the patients, if needed.

Context of implementation

While many people opine that girls should not go out after 9 PM, in order to keep them safe from rapists and molesters, Bhopal BMC and the general public thinks otherwise. Though comparatively a quiet and laid back city with a history of female rulers, the city witnessed some incidences of crime against women including rapes in the last few months. Despite many people saying that all coaching classes and offices should allow women to leave by 7 PM, Madhya Pradesh CM Shivraj Shingh Chauhan dismissed all such ideas and said that the city should be made safer for women instead of asking the fairer-sex to compromise on their freedom.

The idea behind establishing the night bazaar is to encourage more and more women to come out at night so that the stigma is removed from the society. Many sociologists opine that incidents of rape and molestation take place with women at night because only a handful of ladies dare to step out after dark. If women start going out after 9 PM in huge numbers, their majority will increase and molesters and rapists will think twice before harassing a woman at night. The idea is to instill fear in the minds of molesters instead of locking up daughters of the house.

As a result, many women came out in support of his approach and the BMC decided to open up a weekly market that allowed women to shop till 2 AM. The 'She-carnival' lifted the stigma from the minds of people that women should not go out to enjoy after-hours and lock themselves up inside their homes to stay safe.

The 'She-carnival' started in December on a Saturday and received an overwhelming response. Though it started out as an experiment, Collector Bhopal Sudam Khade and Mayor Alok Sharma collectively decided to make the night-bazaar into a weekly event every Saturday.

Since then, women have been relishing delicious food, performing songs and dances before a cheering audience and shopping till midnight without any fear of harassment or molestation. Women constables deployed at the 'she-carnival' ensure the safety of women even further. Women visiting the market are allowed to enter with their family members and if something untoward seems likely, the police constables and dial 100 parked nearest to the night-bazaar are ready to tackle the situation.

It has been four months since the inception of the midnight market but no such incident has so far been reported and the experiences of women have been positive.

Pinki Kushwaha who visited the market with her family told a newspaper that her experience has been memorable and she has made it a regular event to visit the market. "When I went to see the atmosphere of the 'She-carnival' located in the New Market, despite the lateness of the hour, I felt absolutely safe. More such markets will encourage women to go out and remove the fear from their hearts."

Since the past 4 months, the market has been a hit among Bhopali women who come out to enjoy their lives and have fun without fear.