

RED RICKSHAW REVOLUTION



MARCH 9-18: ALONG WITH RED RICKSHAW REVOLUTION JOURNEY, A 14-YEAR OLD BOY TRAVELS FIVE DIFFERENT STATES TO MEET ELEVEN EXTRAORDINARY WOMEN, TWEETED AND FACEBOOKED ABOUT THEM, AND FINALLY PUT TOGETHER THIS REPORT IN THE FORM OF A BOOKLET.

ABNER MANZAR





Report by: Abner Manzar

Published by:

Digital Empowerment Foundation

House 44, Third Floor, Kalu Sarai, New Delhi – 110016, India

Tel: 91-11-26532786 / 26532787; Fax: 91-11-26532787

Web: www.defindia.net

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CONTENTS

Introduction	5
My Feelings	6
My Learnings	8
My Observations	
Bimla Devi	10
Vijaylaxmi Sharma	11
Norti Bai	13
Kalbeliya Dancers	15
Rakhi Paliwal	17
Fehmida Malik	19
Priyanshi Somani	21
Dr. Capt. Ritu Biyani	23
Mittal Patel	25
Vijaya Pastala	27
Sister Mariola	28
Journey	30
Photo heighlights of the journey	34



INTRODUCTION

Experience a 10 days' journey through eyes of a 14 yrs. old boy, Abner Manzar. Abner is part of a crew 'DEF' & 'Red Rickshaw Revolution' whose mission is to meet ordinary women doing extraordinary things. The team travels from New Delhi to Mumbai passing through 5 different states (New Delhi, Haryana, Rajasthan, Gujarat and Maharashtra). Each day he is exposed to a different social and culture environment. In this report you will read about his observation and understanding with the interactions of the eleven wonder women he met. Above all this experience has given him a new interpretation about women empowerment.

Abner Manzar has been learning at Mirambika, Research Center for Integral Education and Human Values, for the last 10 years. Mirambika is located in the campus of Aurobindo Ashram, New Delhi. Mirambika school is known for pursuing the educational philosophy of Sri Aurobindo where every child is considered as an unique individual and develop each child on the five pillars of development: physical, mental, spiritual, vital and psychic.

- PUBLISHER



FEELINGS



WHAT I FEEL ABOUT THIS TRIP

There are many things I like about this trip, the first is that I love traveling, especially road trips. But this is something beyond driving, meeting these women has been an amazing experience for me. When I really connect with these people I visualise myself in their place and I think that this is how india can change, not just by big politicians who are selfish. I have never met more selfless people before.

WHAT I FEEL ABOUT EACH WOMAN

Bimla Devi - She destroyed the most deep rooted problem in India, cast and gender discrimination. I feel she made a huge difference in her village even when she was not the Sarpanch of her village, which is a great feat because people do not listen to just any person, and she made them listen to her...

Vijaylaxmi Sharma - She is the bravest woman I have met, she is not scared of threats. She just does her work without worrying about herself which is a very good value. Another that I really liked was her firmness when she said at the age of thirteen that she will not get married.

Norti Bai - I love her always young spirit, she learnt how to run a computer at the age of 60! She became the Sarpanch of her village at such an old age!



Sister Mariola - I love how she looks at everyone with a different or good eye. She even saw love in criminals. I love her affection for everyone.

Kalbeliya Dancers - She is a part of a nomadic tribe which is on the move at all times. She has grown from the worst of times into visiting more than 50 times and going abroad 85 times. But this has not made her show off, her humility still exists.

Rakhi Paliwal - She is the role model for all women who think that men and women are equal. She does everything a man does and maybe even more than that.

Fehmida Malik - Being a psychologist, she was not a professional in what she did, but she still did it for the people.

Mittal Patel - Her subject was journalism for which she studied nomadic tribes, when she went and saw how these people live, she was very touched and she then took the decision to help them in any way. And she did. This shows a good heart and a strong decision making power.

Priyanshi Somani – I think she is a gifted person. She is utilizing her gift very well by practicing what she does again and again. People say “practice makes perfect”. She is an example of that.

Dr. Capt. Ritu Biyani – She is a fighter who did not give up until the end. When she successfully survived cancer, she started to help others which is an even bigger part of success. She did not want others to go through what she went through. Traveling more than 96000 km on road is not an easy job!



LEARNINGS

WHAT I LEARNT FROM THIS TRIP

I got to know what great work women are doing in their villages. These women have not thought about themselves while doing all this work, they have been very selfless in doing all this which is a value I want to have. Their work proves that women aren't less than men but are actually equivalent to 60,000 people in Mittal Patels case as she has given identity to 60,000 people!

I noticed that out of these women whichever are literate have changed their stream or interest or work for the people they want to help. This is another example of selflessness. The ones that are illiterate show that being educated is not important to do good work.

There is potential to do work in every person, they just need to work on the base and that is what these women have done. They have been motivated by some incident or story. These incidents have touched their hearts and they have gone out there to help the injured. They have not thought about themselves, they have just gone to do what they think is right.

I think two virtues that these women have will be useful for me, these are selflessness and not stopping themselves from doing what they think is correct.







BIMLA DEVI

BIMLA DEVI ABOLISHED CAST AND GENDER INEQUALITY FROM HER VILLAGE.

When Bimla Devi was a child, she faced a lot of discrimination because she was Delit which is considered to be a lower cast. She was not allowed to use public transport, the main water tap and many such privileges the upper cast citizens enjoyed. If she tried to utilise public property which was used by the upper cast as well, they would harrass her. Bimla Devi imagined a world without any discrimination. When Bimla Devi grew up, she educated girls about reproduction and sexual health issues. She soon started to protest against the upper cast people to get equality. She took help from her brother in law.

Her parents were abducted and were told to tell her daughter to stop all this business. Nothing could stop Bimla Devi. She was beaten up with her Brother in law but that too did not stop her and today men and women, upper cast and lower cast enjoy the same privileges. They all live together.





VIJAYLAXMI SHARMA

VIJAYLAXMI SHARMA ABOLISHED CHILD MARRIADGE FROM HER VILLAGE.

Vijaylaxmi Sharma, 24, B.Ed from village Jhorinda bhojpura in Phagi district of Rajasthan was born when her mother was only 14 years old. Kamla Sharma had all her 3 children by the age of 19 which is when she had an operation after which she couldn't give birth. The other two children are vijay Sharma, 22 B.Ed and Ma-hesh Sharma, 20 pursuing polytechnic in civil. When Vijaylaxmi got to the age of 13, she saw her friend (same age) getting married. Her friend gave birth next year and died. Raju (vijaylaxmi's nickname) saw this coming her way as well. She used to listen to her parents talking to one of her uncles about marriage. She used to hide and listen to all this. One day she shouted out, "I am not getting married at this age!" Her parents were shocked. They had never seen her daughter like this before. Her mother admits that she cursed her. But she saw the silent support of her fathers. One day she said to her father, "please give me your support, I will not dishonour our family". He agreed, that is when her fit against child marriage started. Slowly she got the support of her whole family and now the family together has stopped 15 child marriages in their village and the surrounding villages.



Her brother is a tarot card reader so he uses his social identity to convince the brides family. The mother talks to the mother of the bride. The father talks to the father and Vijaylaxmi herself goes straight to the bride.

When Raju started this cause, her mother got threatening phone calls saying tell your daughter to stop this or we won't leave her alone, at a few instances Raju would pick up the phone and tell them "come, what can you do to me?, come". Her mother used to be very scared but she also supported her daughter in this great cause.

Vijaylaxmi Sharma says what motivates me to do this is that she pictures herself in the bride's position.





NORTI BAI

SHE LEARNT HOW TO RUN A COMPUTER AT THE AGE OF 60 AND BECAME THE SARPANCH OF HER PANCHAYAT AT THE AGE OF 65!

Norti Bai, age is unknown as she has been saying she is 65 since ten years! She is the sarpanch of her panchayat Harmada, which has two villages Harmara and Naya Gaon. She learnt how to use a computer ten years ago. She did not know how to read and write in English but for the computer, she memorised all the letters and she uses Hindi font. She knows which letter is Hindi in the English letters on the computer. When asked what her favourite website is she said, "I look at the different Panchayats that are progressing so that she can learn from them", when we asked her if she is on Facebook she said "no work comes first, I don't have the time to go to Facebook, and time is money".

She was talking to us very calmly, sometimes she would get excited and start talking loudly and happily, everybody loved it!

Her actual story started in 1981. She used to be a daily wage laborer. The daily wage for men was 7 rupees per day and for women was just 3 rupees per day. She was very angry at this. She approached barefoot college on this matter and they filed a court



case. They won it. But Norti Bai's agitation did not go. To try and make Norti Bai do something new, they told her to learn the computer. She said it was very very tough in the starting but she somehow managed it, "ro pit ke" as she said it. For the next 6 and a half years she was the manager or quadrant or of all computer related work in the Barefoot College. She became very popular in her village and surroundings. She took permission from the barefoot college to ask if she could be a candidate in the elections. The Tilonia based Organization said if you do not use government money for campaign and do not bribe to win you may contest the elections.





KALBELIYA DANCERS

SUA, A KALBELIYA DANCER SAYS I INVENT DANCE STEPS BUT THE BOLLYWOOD STARS COPY IT SO NOW I HAVE TO CREATE STEPS MORE OFTEN.

We met Sua, a Kalbeliya dancer. She is 32 years old. She has 5 children, the eldest is 18 years old and the youngest is 4 years. Sua has gone outside India 85 times! Mostly she goes to France. She has also gone to several other countries, that is how great a dancer she is.

Kalbeliya is a tribal group which is on the move at all times. They go around with many animals like donkeys, dogs, chickens etc. When the Kalbeliya people go to any village, they are soon kicked out. This is because their animals sometimes go to other peoples farms and eat all the fruits and eatable things. This is why Sua and her family moved to Jodhpur city in Rajasthan. Their family is one of the few who are not on the move at all times. This tribal group concentrates only on one day. How they survive for that day, they do not worry about the next day. Sua says, "kal ka kal dekhenge" it means let today pass we will see how tomorrow goes later.

Till 30 years ago the earning for the Kalbeliyan group used to be daily wage labourer or similar works. As many people today know Kalbeliya dance is a great form of art. This tribal group did this dance only in their




celebrations like a marriage. Sua said during any festival or celebration time, they would celebrate for the whole month. The mothers of these dancers teach them and that is how this ance is still present through so many generations. Sua also said that she creates new dance steps often but the Bollywood stars rob them from me, so I have to make new dance steps more often. 30 years ago Komal Kothari held a meeting of these great dancers and told them to spread this great art work, it would earn them a lot of fame. That is when Kalbeliya dancers performed on stage and were acknowledged.

The name Kalbeliya (meaning).

These people had a great relationship with snakes, they would first take out the poison of the snake and after that they would keep the snake with them for sometime, controlling it. They knew when the venom would be back in the snakes body and they would release it then, Sua also said they release it because they get old and it is not said to be good if the snake dies in your house. You believe it or not, the dancers say they also learn their dance from the snake, you will see similarity in Kalbeliya dance steps and how the snake moves. If the snake has bit someone, the Kalbeliya people know how to cure them. So coming back to the name, Sua said snakes are black and the Hindi for black is kala so kal comes from that. Kal also means time and Beliya means friend or helper. So Kalbeliya is the helper of someone in their bad times. After the interaction they showed us a beautiful dance. The moves looked impossible!



A portrait of Rakhi Paliwal, a young woman with dark hair pulled back, wearing a red shawl and a green top. She is smiling and looking towards the camera. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

RAKHI PALIWAL

SHE WORKS ON SANITATION IN HER VIL-
LAGE. TALKS ABOUT THE DOS AND DONT'S
TO PEOPLE.

Rakhi Paliwal is 23 years old, she has been the Vice President of her Panchayat since last 3 years. She manages the sanitation of her village by taking a round of her village on her bike at 4 AM to see that no one is going towards the farm with a mug in their hand. If they are she tries to stop them. She has been telling people that it is unhygienic to poop in the farm as many diseases spread. She has been putting up public toilets but no wants to go to the toilet, they say we don't want to go to a closed room. She tells those people to at least pour some mud on their poop as it stops it to spread diseases.

She has been into politics since she was in class 5th when she became the Vice President of her class. In class 9th she told her father I want to contest elections, he said you are too young right now. Se finally came of age and asked her father then. Her father said "No, you will not be able to concentrate as you have to get married." After that she held a meeting with her Panchayat members and told them " I will not get married until my term ends, please vote for your daughter". People did give her votes. She saw in college that a man was troubling a girl, she reported it and that person was sent to jail. Since then all men in her village have been



away from women, especially Rakhi. She has been studying government schemes to help the villagers.

Her daily routine is, she wakes up at 4 and goes for a ride on her bike around the village to see to the sanitation. Then she comes back and leaves for her college which is 50 km away at 6 AM. She rides her bike till her college. She comes back from college at 2 PM and talks to people to see their problems. She then studies for her exams in law.

Rakhi Paliwal is the first female Vice President of her panchayat. She is also the first female bike rider of her village. She is the first woman from her village to go to learn law and that too 50 km away!

When she was asked what gave you the motivation to become a politician, she said her father was also the Vice President of her panchayat but he was not eligible any more after he had two children. She said she was fulfilling her father's dream. When she was asked what she wants to do ahead in her life, she said politics. She also added in India politics is not supposed to be a good word but I want to help people's problems that is why I want to get into politics, not to earn money.



A portrait of Fahmida Malik, a woman with dark hair pulled back, wearing a pink top and a star-shaped earring. She is looking off to the side with a thoughtful expression. The background is a dark, textured wall.

FEHMIDA MALIK

FEHMIDA MALIK CHANGED HER PROFESSION TO HELP PEOPLE WHO WERE MORE IN NEED. SHE DID NOT GET MARRIED DUE TO THIS CAUSE.

Fahmida Malik is 40 years old; she is a qualified psychologist. She is unmarried because of the cause she is working for. She has 3 sisters and one brother, all of them are married. She was working with mentally challenged children from the slums of Ahmedabad. In 2002, she took a break because she thought she is not learning anything and exactly a month later the Gujarat riots took place. Thousands of people from the slums were homeless. Vatva is one of the slum area in Ahmedabad. She went there to see what damage had been done. She went there for the first time. When she saw the state of the slums she felt some work needed to be done there. For 6 months after the riots, no one went out of their house there was so much terror. The children were told the stories. They were never so scared before. Fahmida said if you were not there you can't imagine what would have happened. She then started to raise funds so that the children can go to school.

She even opened bank accounts for the people. But there was one condition for that, a woman from the family will open an account and only after that will a man open an account. She gave instant



loans to the people between 2000 and 4000 INR. She said at first, the men functioned from the ladies accounts but now men also have opened their own accounts and even come to deposit money in woman's bank accounts.

She got her inspiration from her father who never gave up on anything. Se said he met with an accident two years ago and had a complete memory loss, so much so that she had to even teach him how to peel a banana. But now he has fully recovered and she even went on Haj (pilgrimage) with him last year. This shows his power.

She said 3 people supported her financially: Sameer a friend from Delhi, Aman Trust which is based in Delhi, and Father Paul from a church nearby. When she was asked if her family helps her in this cause, she said yes they support me in any way possible.





PRIYANSHI SOMANI

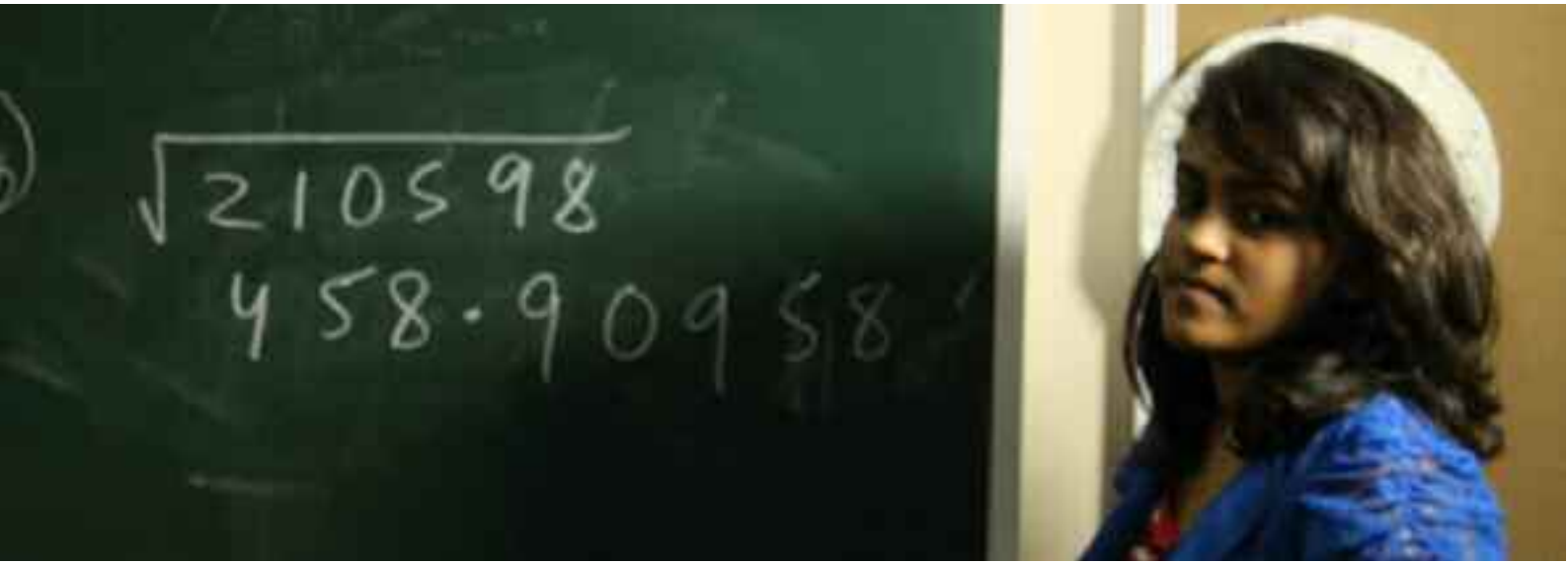
PRIYANSHI SOMANI SAYS PRACTISE MAKES PERFECT. I HAVE NEVER HEARD THAT FROM A TEENAGER. AND THE BEST PART IS THAT SHE DOES WHAT SHE SAYS!


Priyanshi Somani, 14 is a quick calculator of squares, square roots, multiplication, division, finding out what the day of birth is. She is basically a good calculator who likes to do maths. She says it removes stress. She believes that even though she may be gifted, she still has to practice to be perfect, practice makes perfect.

Her teacher and mother recognised her talent when she was around 6 or 7 years old. When the teacher used to do abacus with everyone, she would be the first to answer and she thought, this is so obvious, I don't need to practice. She went for a level two exam, state level and lost that exam. When she came back, her teacher told her, you do need to practice to get good marks. That is when she started to practice, she said, once there was a flood in Surat and all schools were closed, we couldn't get out of our houses, I used to stay in my room and keep practicing maths. She said "I have the potential to do maths, I will get good marks even if I don't study but if I work hard, I will get more satisfaction".



When asked what she wants to pursue in future, she said she wants to do science because in higher studies of science, the maths ability should be good and I have got that ability so I can take that advantage. She added, "I want to do physics and chemistry". And in the future she wants to be an engineer. Her favourite scientist is Albert Einstein.





DR. CAPT.
RITU BIYANI

AFTER OVERCOMING BREAST CANCER, SHE WENT ON A ROAD TRIP TO THE 4 TIPS OF INDIA, 30200 KILOMETERS WITH HER 14 YEAR OLD DAUGHTER TO HOLD CANCER WORKSHOPS.

Dr. captain Ritu Biyani joined the army as a dentist in 1981. She retired as captain in 1992, the years in the middle saw her do all the things men do, probably more than some men. She did sky diving, paragliding and mountaineering. She said when you are in the army you forget that you are woman or a man, she felt like a man in the army.

She was diagnosed with breast cancer in September, 2000. Her daughter was 8 years old then. When she was trying to tell her daughter about it. She started with saying she needs to be admitted in the hospital because she is ill. The daughter asked her, "Are you going to die of cancer?". She was shocked, she did not know from where she had picked up this information, she probably picked it up from school when she heard the word "cancer" from home.

Ritu Biyani pointed out how people think cancer is in curable. She gave another instance. When she was in her clinic as a dentist, bald



because of chemotherapy, a woman came into the clinic to get some treatment done. She asked her why she was bald, she answered because I am going through cancer treatment. The woman ran away from the clinic at that moment. She later got to know that the woman ran away because she thought that she would also get cancer.

She said this is the misunderstanding between people, they think cancer is contagious, some assume that once you get cancer, you cannot be cured. But Ritu Biyani did get cured. She believes that breast cancer is more easy to prevent than cure. Since then she is holding cancer workshops. She holds workshops on awareness of three cancers, breast cancer, mouth cancer and cervical cancer. She is no doctor of cancer, she just tell people the symptoms of cancer and if there are any, she refers the cases to her known doctors who are very good at what they do.

In 2006, she drove to all the four tips of our country, Arunachal Pradesh in the east, Kuchh, Gujarat in the West, Siachen, Jand K in the north and Kanyakumari, Tamil Nadu down south. She held 140 workshops in the 177 day trip. Out of the 140, only 20 % were planned, the rest were just people stopping them and asking what they are doing because people are curious how a lady and her daughter is travelling without a male person. When these people were told what they were trying to do, they would tell them to wait and they would call many people around and the workshop would be help. In six months trip, her daughter accompanied her for 4 and a half months when she was 14 years old and in 9th class. Tista Joseph missed 2 and a half months of school and the remaining 2 months were summer holidays. Despite missing so much school, her daughter got 96% in her exam. This trip was more than 30000 kilometres long. There were more than 26000 people who attended these workshops. 23 states and 4 union territories were covered during this trip. This cause of hers is called High ways.

That is the best she has done for other people but for herself, she participated in India's toughest road challenge, Raid De Himalaya. She even won it! Raid De Himalaya is a distance time challenge with the toughest terrains.





MITTAL PATEL

MITTAL PATEL HAS GIVEN IDENTITY TO 60 THOUSAND NOMADIC TRIBAL PEOPLE AND STILL COUNTING.

She has started an organization called VSSM. She has been working on giving an identity to all nomadic tribes like the meer group where she has started a school. The physical state of the school is not too great as there are thatches in which studies go on. But they do learn. This school was started just about 2-3 months ago, there is a school that has been going on for 3 years. The aim of these schools is to try and build the mentality of the children to go to the mainstream school. Their aim is to send these children itching the time span of 6 months and 1 year. The students in the meer group school seemed very motivated to learn, there was a lot of participation.

There are 40 nomadic tribes in Gujarat, 4 million people are part of these tribes. 28 of these tribes are notified criminal tribes by the Britishers which still stays in India. But the other 12 are denotified by India. VSSM has given identity to 60 thousand people out of the 4 million. They have worked in 9 districts out of the 28 in Gujarat. When asked by when will they be done with all 28, she answered first let us be perfect with these 9 at least.



A tribal woman, Jyotsna, less than 30, with which Mittal Patel is working said "she gave my son education, gave us ration cards, voter ID card". She describes the problem of her house saying "When I put a utensil under water when the water falls from the ceiling, water starts falling from somewhere else! This tribe specialises in making bamboos and so he hits were mad of bamboo. And do her tribe is called Baspoda, Bas means Bamboo. "Mittal patel made my girl go to school. She is a great woman". She said "you people think what to cook, we have to think how to get water to cook!". When asked how the government has helped her, she says government only eats money, it does not give money. Mittal Patel has been working here since 3 years.

The biggest problem for this community is water, food and shelter. There is shelter but it can even get burnt in peak heat in a place like Ahmedabad.





VIJAYA PASTALA

SHE GAVE LIVELIHOOD TO 15000 FARMERS.

Vijaya Pastala, founder and CEO of UTMT (under the mango tree) NGO. The NGO worked on bridging the gap between farmers and buyers. When she started UTMT, she failed to raise funds and that is when she took help from her friends and family and put in her own savings to make 9 lakh rupees. She then started training small and tribal farmers about UTMT's innovative Bees-for-Poverty-Reduction programme to add beekeeping to their livelihoods. This helped the farmers a lot. Until now, UTMT has provided market access to over 3,000 people from 6 states across the country and positively impacted almost 15,000 rural lives. Vijaya's innovative technique has inspired more women to get involved in farming and increased confidence of the small tribal farmers immensely. Vijaya Pastala has a masters degree from Massachusetts Institute of Technology. She has also associated with a number of non-profits like DFID & Aga Khan Foundation on natural resource management and livelihoods enhancement programs. Vijaya had a long career in Agriculture so she like to help people through agricultural practises. The name of her organization Under The Mango Tree is because she realised that farmers and buyers have many of their deals just under a mango tree!





SISTER MARIOLA

I HAVE NEVER SEEN A HEART AS GOOD AS HERS. SHE EVEN SAW THE GOODNESS OF PRISONERS!

Sister Mariola has been working with the jail inmates of Ajmer central jail since 1997. She is also a teacher in Sophia college in Ajmer which is right beside the central jail. She goes to the jail once a week. While interacting with us, she got very emotional saying some of the prisoners have very good hearts. When asked what is the best thing of the job she replied, "I love to help the wrongly convicted prisoners". She said she has been making handicrafts for them. A student of hers from the Sophia College has been providing all materials. She sells these handicrafts in the market. On the first occasion when she sold and came back to the jail with the money, the prisoners said please give this money to a poorer and more needy prisoner.

I wish there were more people like Sister Mariola who has a different thought even for prisoners.





JOURNEY

It was the morning of March 9th 2013, I woke up more excited than ever. We were going to leave from Delhi and were going to Mumbai that too on road and that too by an Auto Rickshaw. When we left Vodafone office after their grand party, the time was already 11 AM. In Delhi we went as slow as snails at the speed of 20 kmph. But as we crossed Gurgaon, Sunita came up to our car and told us to go faster, soon we increased the speed and were going at 50-60 kmph. Before we knew it, on the left side, we saw boards of red Rickshaw revolution and people wearing red calling us inside a narrow road, I soon realised it was McDonalds and we had stopped for lunch. As we moved on after lunch, the heat started to grow.

We turned off the highway onto a narrow road after a few hours. Soon we were in Bimla Devis village. After interacting with her we left her village and head towards Behror. We crossed the step well of Neemrana and stopped and took a lot of photos. As we left from there, the sun went down and we reached our hotel in Behror and 7 30 PM. We rested for the night there and in the morning we left for Jaipur at 8:30, our first stop was necessary because the petrol in the Rickshaw got finished. We rushed to a nearby petrol pump, got petrol in a jericin and went back to the Rickshaw. Our journey continued. We stopped at a restaurant for tea. We were on the road again in half an hour. We reached Jaipur at 3 O'clock. We interacted with Vijay Laxmi Sharma. After interacting with her, we rested for a while.

Next morning we set off for Ajmer at 8. We reached Harmada Village in a few hours where we met Norti Bai.

After interacting with Norti Bai we went to Tilonia to eat lunch. We were off from there at 2 30 and in Ajmer by 4. After entering Ajmer, we went straight to the jail to meet Sister Mariola.



मोदासा MODASA	130	वाडोदरा VADODARA	340
गांधीनगर GANDHINAGAR	212	सुरत SURAT	480
अहमदाबाद AHMEDABAD	224	मुम्बई MUMBAI	770





When we left the jail we went to our guest house. The guest house was called mayo home stay, it felt very homely there. At night we went to the Ajmer Dargah

We came back from the Dargah, exhausted and quickly ate our dinner and went to sleep.

Next morning the plan was to leave Ajmer by 7 in the morning and we were out by 7:30. For me the first event for the day was a truck facing the other side while the trailer was straight. It was like a small child facing the other side and saying "I'm not gonna talk to you now!" We kept going, stopped a couple of times for tea and reached Kumbalgarh by 5. We rested in our camp like rooms for a while until the Kalbeliya dancers came along and we had an interaction with them.

After the dance we had dinner with the dancers. The hotel Management had arranged pure Rajasthani food for us. The food turned out to be very good. After dinner we all went to our rooms and rested for the night.

Next morning we left for Shamlaji. On the way came Upli Oden Panchayat where we met Rakhi Paliwal.

Moving on from Rakhi Paliwal, we drove for a few hours and went to meet a professional midwife called Kanku Bai who works with Seva Mandir. We were soon out of there and just before sunrise we entered Gujarat. The first thing I saw in Gujarat was a police man taking a bribe from a truck driver. So the first impression of Gujarat was not too good. We soon had to make a stoppage because the taxis had to pay tax, our car and the Rickshaw were personal vehicles so we did not have to pay tax. Shamlaji was less than 15 mins from there and we reached Shamlaji soon enough. We put our luggage in our rooms and were back for dinner. All the plans for the few days left were discussed and after that we lazily ate our food. As soon as we were done, we went back to our rooms and were switched off till the morning.

After setting off from the Vatva slums we went to McDonald's to eat lunch. We were out of there in one hour now I got to know that 20 more autos are going to ac-



company us till the Vodafone office. Now the whole convoy had 33 cars w. There was a grand party at the Vodafone office. After the party we tested how strong our Rickshaw is by making women sit in it. The more the women, the stronger the Rickshaw is. The Rickshaw could fit in 15 women! That is supposed to be very strong. We then returned from the Vodafone office and came back to our hotels. We ate our dinner and then went to sleep.

Next morning we were out of our hotel by 12 noon and from there we went to meet Mittal Patel.

Next morning me and my father went to meet my mother's uncle and aunt. After having breakfast with them, we came back to the hotel and were out of there by 9:30 AM. We drove for 2.5 hours and then stopped for lunch at 12 noon.

We drove on a few more hours until we reached a school. We waited at the school for a while and then came Priyanshi Somani. We interacted with her.

After interacting with Priyanshi we were taken to the old Delhi of Surat. I realised that the hotel was right in the middle of a huge and crowded market. When we went in, I was even more disappointed, the lobby was very dirty and I am told the rooms we even more dirtier. We soon found out about a better hotel and went there.

We were quickly sent to our rooms and were told to be back in half an hour. We were back in the hotel lobby by 7 45. We left our hotel at 8 and reached the Taj hotel by 8 30 despite such a slow traffic. After many days we ate non veg! We had a great dinner at Taj and were back to our hotel by 12 midnight. Obviously after that we went to sleep.

Next morning we went to an auditorium to interact with Dr. Capt. Ritu Biyani. After we had interacted with her, we over on with our journey. After a few hours we stopped for lunch and it was then decided that a few people from the camera crew and a few other people will take one vehicle and go to see the bee hives. It is related to the interaction that will happen tomorrow. I also went to see the bee hives. The last leg of the journey was the toughest, the road was very steep, it felt like the tempo would topple



over. We reached the bee hive and got to know that there are 20 lakh bees in that area, in 50 sheds. Each shed has its own queen. The person who was showing us the bees was not all scared of them. When we asked him how, he said they do not bite, they are pets.

When we left from that place, while coming back down from the mountain, we stopped on the way to take pictures, more than a photography session, this became a picnic, we climbed on to the tempo traveller, had a few races and were taking photos of each other. Then we finally left after about half an hour. We reached our hotel in Daman by 8:30. After that we went to a restaurant nearby which had the background of the sea. The tide was low, we went there and climbed on the stones. We almost went till where the water started. After coming back from the sea we ate dinner and then went back to the hotel to sleep.

Next morning we were to leave at 6:30. We left by 7. As we were crossing Daman, we saw many people wearing warm clothes. It was a bit colder in the mornings in places like Daman. For these people, it is winter in the morning while we were sweating! After we passed Daman, the road widened into a six lane highway. We continued on a constant speed of 50 kmph. The roads here were beautiful, going through mountains, we even saw mountains that looked like fountains, very sharp from the top. There was a lot of variety only during this stretch. We stopped for breakfast at Annapoorna restaurant, the South Indian food was very good. The Rickshaw of ours had come from Tamil Nadu, and they had even sent a mechanic, driver and pick up truck in case the auto gets stuck somewhere.

The mechanic and driver were very happy finally having their own food. When we left from that restaurant, our speed increased to 60 kmph. Within no time we were at an office to pick up Andrew, the head of Vodafone Foundation in the whole world. We picked him up and went to meet Vijaya Pastala in her office.

After interacting with her, we went to the Vodafone Office of Mumbai. All the drivers were given chances to speak and all the main people helping this cause were acknowledged, all was very good until. Realised that I had to bid goodbye to all the people. But before that we still had time for a dinner party together. As the dinner party started to come to an end, I saw people leaving. One of the few, which really touched my heart, was Tim from the U K. He looked just like my friend Gustav and he also is a lot like that. And the other was Sunita, she started to cry while hugging Laura and Carina. Many people around started to cry but soon all were comforted and Sunita left. After bidding everyone goodbye, a few of us went in two cars towards the gateway of India we found it and took photos with it. That is when I realized how beautiful Mumbai looks at night. We had crossed the Marine Drive to reach the Gateway of India. The drive was beautiful. When we came back to our hotel, it was already 12 45 AM!

The next morning when I had to leave for the airport, I was very sad, I wanted this trip to continue for longer, these ten days passed like 24 hours, I have never experienced something better in my whole life. This has been my best experience. But maybe with happiness comes sadness because you have to leave the happiness behind and go back to do what you did in your daily life.

The people I met and traveled with are my best friends now. I would never forget how I had so much fun with them and these 10 days of my life.



PHOTO HIGHLIGHTS OF THE JOURNEY

















Published by:
Digital Empowerment Foundation
House 44, Third Floor, Kalu Sarai, New Delhi – 110016, India
Tel: 91-11-26532786 / 26532787; Fax: 91-11-26532787
Web: www.defindia.net

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