

# The Collaboration with Jhajhrola

By Arvaan Kumar



# Day 1

We were off to a slightly shaky start on the 29th in the morning, although we did make very good time, and in fact made up for the delay. Upon arriving, we were greeted by an overwhelming heatwave which we slowly got used to. Most of us were asleep on our journey, when we were awoken to the open doors and the smell of fresh aloo parathas, which we quickly devoured.

With warm aloo parathas in our bellies, we proceeded to spend a few hours in the Rajkiya Madhyamik Vidyalaya, which is the government middle school. Most of us, tired with the physical activity of playing volleyball and cricket, were starving, so we all sat down for a lovely lunch of *mattar-paneer* with the children, prepared by ISKCON.

With the heat bearing down on us, we retired back to Mrs. Chauhan's house where we enjoyed a rather lovely afternoon nap. As 4pm rolled around, many sleepy eyes were rubbed and we were treated to some snacks and tang as all got ready to head out into the village for some activities and games. The boys went on to play kabaddi and badminton, while the girls played *kho-kho* before we regrouped and headed into the fields, chasing and trying to catch a good look at some *neelgai*. Unsuccessful, we began the walk back to the house when we stumbled upon an unexpected bounty, the sandy cliffs created by excavation that provided the perfect playground for us to roll around in.

Tired and hungry, we reached the house where we spent the evening talking, and discussing the events that transpired through the day. At first, the evening seemed pretty bleak, though it was soon spiced up as we all tried to escape rogue bats that happened to wander into the room.

Piping hot *rajma chawal* and *rotis* were amazing as we spent the night under stars.

# Day 2

Most of us enjoyed a good night's sleep, but for a few of us too proud to put on odomos, we were once rudely awakened around sunrise. As the sun rolled up, the other sleepy heads were welcomed to chai and Bourn-vita and biscuits. After that, we dressed into uniform and headed to the school for our second day of interaction. Upon reaching the school, we took part in their prayer, and assembly where we sang the national anthem, national song, and the *Gayatri Mantra*. Then we took part in their morning physical training session and surya namaskar, which is a daily exercise for them. Then we were instructed by them in some yoga after which we were promptly informed of a kabaddi match to take place between us and them.

We quickly returned to the house, had some lovely idli and sambhar, changed into something more inclined to physical activity and played our matches. The girls matches got over pretty quickly, however, for the boys, to even things out they were seven, to our four. The matches were pretty close and we managed to tie with them and returned with a few minor injuries.

With another afternoon to sleep, we made full use to rest ourselves. 4pm and the familiar smell of maggi filled the houses as all of us awoke to a lovely afternoon snack, and some roohafza. The sun began to set, and we all left to visit the different houses in the villages where we were invited in and we saw some things we had never seen before. They were extremely fascinated by the different earthen *chulahs*, and the fact that they had infact no heard about Amitabh Bachchan or Shah Rukh Khan.

We again moved into the fields to try and get as close as we could to the *nilgai*, and returned to the natural obstacle course that we had stumbled upon. The evening came to an end with a story telling session by one of the village elders and then we proceede to celebrate Abhay's birthday. A beautiful meal was prepared, and this time we were more aware to remember to put on the coils for the mosquitos as we spent our last night under the stars

# Day 3

Sunday morning started off lazy, as we slowly awoke from a lovely night of sleep. As we changed into our kurtas, we were soon invited to breakfast in one of the houses of the children for some lovely parathas with some desi white butter and *amla ka aachaar*. Then we went on a lovely tractor ride into the fields and then we returned to the house, packed up our things and we left for home, with happy faces and a sense of accomplishment of first contact.

# Overall Report

The first contact was a great success, the students blended and interacted very well with the children of the village, and there were no complaints from the students side, except for the heat, which got to everyone in my opinion. But overall, it was a brilliant trip, the children adapted to all the adversities, and there were only smiles to be seen all around. The students made some very good friends in the village and the arrangements made by ma'am were perfect, and I am sure that the experiences of the further groups will improve

