

Running head: Working with Tribal Villagers on a Subsurface Dam in Northern India

Internationalizing the Curriculum Professional Development Report;  
Working with Tribal Villagers on a Subsurface Dam in Northern India

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### Abstract

This professional development report describes a project sponsored by VIU's "Internationalizing the Curriculum" program, through which I traveled to Northwest India to join a two week volunteer work project. I assisted tribal villagers in constructing a subsurface dam and participated in cultural and social events with a rural community. The project organization was shared between a Canadian organization called Developing World Connections and an Indian Social Work agency called Sahyog, and provided first hand experience of the kind of International volunteer work available to students in BC Post Secondary system.

## Working with Tribal Villagers on a Subsurface Dam in Northern India

As a part of my work as an Education Counselor at a regional campus of Vancouver Island University, this report describes my 2009 professional development project. I have a research interest in the field of leadership and heuristic research methodologies. Heuristic research involves the study of how we do things or experience life, and involves selecting a relevant human subject, engaging in the experience, and then reflecting on one's interpretation. The heuristic aspect of this report involves developing my awareness as a global citizen and experiencing the impact of global warming by working on a water collection project with tribal villagers in Northern India. One of my goals in this project was to become familiar with the growing field of Study Abroad experiences available to University students. A second goal was to learn about International Development efforts in response to global warming. In retrospect, a third goal I was able to meet, involved witnessing the leadership skills that helped motivate a community respond to drought.

### Introduction

The story of this project began with a dynamic youthful gathering called the Go Abroad Fair. This student travel fair occurred in Vancouver and Toronto in the Fall of 2008 (Canadian Education Centre Network, 2009). After advertising a student activity event to the general student body, I took a group of 4 students to the Pan Pacific Trade and Convention Centre in Vancouver. We listened to speakers describe opportunities for international student travel and browsed over a hundred tables in a large trade conference atmosphere. We spoke with representatives of overseas Universities seeking potential students, companies offering work to potential English teachers, and a range of travel support groups like Hostelling International. After the event, I

wrote a short article in the student newspaper describing the offer to take a semester in Europe, to teach English in Asia, or to serve on a development project.

One of the tables at the conference was of particular interest to me because it emphasized personal transformation as a benefit of travel and service work. An organization called Developing World Connections (DWC) offered volunteer work experiences in developing countries. According to their website (Developing World Connections, 2009), they invite the reader to “Join a group of other volunteers and get your hands dirty working on one of our projects in Guatemala, Sri Lanka, Kenya, Rwanda, Swaziland, Cambodia, India and Peru.” After signing up for an email newsletter, I learned about these two week volunteer work experiences in developing countries. Work experiences included building homes for orphans of families lost to AIDS, adding rooms to rural schools, and rebuilding infrastructure after the Tsunami in South Asia. I was most interested in the India project, which involved working on a water project with tribal villagers in the arid Rajasthan state of North West India.

Within two months, I had signed up for a trip to India. DWC scored high marks in providing planning assistance. The flight was arranged by a travel agency, allowing me to set my own return flight date, after a short vacation following the two week engagement. The team leader used email to communicate with participants as a group, and invited us to share with each other. The team leader provided lists of requirements like travel health insurance, visa procedures and vaccinations. We were given general guidelines for ‘taking care’ of ourselves, like bringing a book to read and preparing for a hot dry climate. It was to be 30 Centigrade on most days. We received a report referencing “Hofstede’s Intercultural Dimension” which compared Indian and Canadian culture in terms of power, individualism, gender, and uncertainty avoidance. This was meant to assist us in cross cultural communication, and included an analysis

of Indian cultural norms and how these were likely to be perceived from a typical Canadian perspective.

Leading up to the departure, the team leader organized a teleconference. Using an 800 number for voice and an internet video chat room for those who had webcams, our group met about two weeks prior to departure. I could see the team leader in an office with two other women, one of whom had been a team leader on previous trips to Peru and Thailand. There were three other participants, and our discussion was focused on preparation details. We learned that details of the project were emerging, that this was the first trip DWC had hosted in India, and that our group was going to work with a Social Work agency called Sahyog Sansthan (meaning mutual aid in Hindi) on the construction of a dam that served a village near the town of Bhindar.

I began some research for the trip by studying the Hindi language and alphabet. I discovered a UNESCO report that described discussions among Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) with respect to water distribution and sanitation in rural India (Srivastava, Sharma & Kulshristha, 2005). I noted conflict between perspectives promoting the commercial distribution of water (as most conducive to infrastructure construction) and the concept that water is a social service at the same level as a human right (asserting the scale of infrastructure development made it most appropriate as a government responsibility). Campaigns to introduce toilets in homes were being promoted along with hygiene standards for the use of sewers. Success was measured in the provision of pumps within one kilometer of village homes. A problem on the horizon was the lowering water table and the resulting increase in natural fluoride in the ground water to levels that exceed health recommendations. I read of straining relations between publically sponsored access to water through subsidized gas or electricity to run water pumps, and the problematic side effect of a dramatically lowered water table. The

current correction involved an annual decrease in the subsidy rate that would see it removed over a number of years.

I hoped to deepen my experience by sharing some of my learning with the other participants, and wrote about the water issues in an email to the group members. Unfortunately there was little response and no discussion of the social conditions we were about to enter. Participant interactions on email never led to a sharing of our personal reasons for going to India, although they did share some travel plans for after the event. The tone of the exchanges was purely functional, mainly concerning health and travel arrangements. As a counselor, I felt this was a missed opportunity for the group, and one that should properly be introduced and facilitated by the team leader. I mentioned my hope to the team leader, that the group would be encouraged to share their personal goals and process, and offered my support if the team leader were to request it. However, this was not to become a part of the experience.

Final preparations for the trip involved arranging a series of vaccinations, applying for an Indian visa, and supplying travel insurance details to DWC. The fees for the trip were paid in advance and involved a \$400 program fee, a \$2023 flight, a \$900 room and board fee for the two weeks, and a \$500 contribution to the Social Work agency.

My trip began on a curious note - while waiting for the first flight from Vancouver to Hong Kong. During a 3 hour waiting period in the Vancouver Airport, I chanced to meet a fellow traveler, Dip Kapoor, who was also headed to India for development related work. Dip is a professor with the University of Alberta, teaching International Education in the Department of Educational Policy Studies. He had led several student groups himself, and I mentioned that one of my goals was to learn about how students might experience this kind of development volunteer experience. Dip described a general dissatisfaction that was typical in students that

were attracted to the idealism of such projects, but who subsequently came away feeling that such projects are subject to commercial exploitation and remnants of colonial patronage. He described how local groups serve development oriented visitors by learning their political leanings and then organizing local villagers to represent that quality – revealing what might appear to be authentic as a staged event. He described the futile efforts of a European group to introduce toilets to a rural village. After an initial flurry of activity, involving an inflated installation fee and grand ceremony at the village site, three years later the toilet was covered in spider webs because it was not needed nor genuinely wanted by the local users. He felt that students begin with a willingness to help, but the great majority of students return disillusioned and cynical after their visit, discouraged about their ability to help. I came to understand how this might happen, but felt my experience was qualitatively different.

#### The project

Soon after our arrival at the Udaipur airport, we were introduced to Heera, the secretary of the board for Sahyog, and its chief executive officer. Heera trained as a social worker and has been successful in seeking project funding from the United Nations, Swiss, US, Canadian, and Indian development agencies. Sahyog's approach is to work with small groups of families within a village to organize self help groups. These groups identify ways to improve their situation and Sahyog provides assistance. Sahyog differentiates their work from other development groups by the principles upon which they work. They demand that those receiving development assistance make a commitment to the project through labor, materials and planning. Sahyog has facilitated a range of projects designed to increase literacy, self sustaining employment and ecological resources.

### Micro credit

Villagers organize into gender separate groups of about 12 and contribute a small amount (10 Rupees) per month. As the fund grows over time, the group sets an interest rate and begins to lend to its members. The member agrees to pay it back, and can use the money for a purpose the group agrees to. By applying for funding as a group they also become eligible for Bank of India credit, which is available at a reduced rate (from the current 12% annual interest rate). This has resulted in less dependence on local money lenders, who charge a much higher interest rate (30 to 60 %). The money lenders have spoken out against micro credit and this remains a challenge for the self help groups. The groups work with transparency, keeping hand written records of the contributions and transactions of each member.

### Bio diversity

Over the last several decades, the environment has deteriorated as a result of deforestation and desertification. Water shortages have increased because of global warming. Where 1200 mm of annual rainfall was common, since the year 2000 about 300 mm has become the annual average and at most 600 mm can be expected. Many of the wild trees that used to forest the land have died or been utilized for cooking fuel. The loss of ground cover results in more soil erosion during the monsoon, and so the villagers have taken up the challenge to rehabilitate their farms. When they approached Sahyog, the organization agreed to work with them to help build water harvesting barriers, dams and well improvements. Sahyog helped to introduce crops more suited to the climate, livestock which has been bred for hardy and healthy growth, and methods for linking dairy suppliers with cooperatives that provide a steady price to farmers.



Figure 1 The typical landscape of the area

#### Global warming monitoring

Sahyog showed a project that involves scientifically measuring the rainfall, wind speed and direction, and daily temperatures. The weather station employs a local man to keep measurements, and they have found that in addition to the fact that a quarter of pre 2000 rainfall is falling, the period of time for the monsoon rain is about half the usual length of time. Along with the loss of ground cover vegetation, this short and intense rainfall results in surface runoff that carries away topsoil.



Figure 2 Farmers visiting the weather station near Bhindar

### Cultural Impacts

Heera notes that when new approaches are introduced, villagers usually say “why should we do this?” and he commented that villagers have an independent style that can make them unwilling to adopt new practices. Heera’s approach is therefore motivational; seeking to understand the villager’s needs and requiring a commitment on their part in determining solutions which they are able to maintain. Nevertheless, he notes some enduring cultural changes, particularly with respect to the gender gap. Initially women were not invited to the planning meetings. Later they were invited, but not allowed to sit on the central carpet on which the male group was seated. At the time of our visit, we saw that both men and women were

present, although the two groups sat separately and men spoke more. Heera made no requirement for more gender integration, but on the worksite we saw both groups working together.

#### The worksite

About 10 km outside Bhindar, about 300 meters from the road, we came upon a group of about 15 men and 20 women, with about 15 children. Sometimes about 10 youth would also join us when they were out of school. There was a deep well and a motor would pump the water about 20 meters to the surface, where a hose directed it into a small holding pond. The area was along a dry riverbed, which probably flowed during the monsoon.



Figure 3 Digging a trench for a subsurface river dam

Our visit was several months before the start of the monsoon, so the land was very dry. We saw a ditch being excavated and the earth taken to a nearby pile. Generally the men were digging, using a pick axe, and then women were using a hoe to scrape the loose earth into pans. A line of women brought empty pans, which were filled with earth. Each woman placed the pan of earth on a small round cushion on her head and carried the earth to a pile. The men were wearing a white wrap of cotton cloth to form a turban on the head, and also a wrap of light cotton material around the loins called a dhoti. Many men wore undershirts and sandals. They worked without gloves or other protection. The women were wearing long skirts in brightly colored floral patterns, over which they had a second wrap with its own colorful pattern. This second wrap would often cover the head, and as we were first meeting the women, they would also cover the face. For shoes they wore thongs or sometimes slippers. Women would usually have silver ornaments (like bangles, but with lobes of silver) on their ankles, and some bangles on the wrists. None wore eyeglasses or sun protection. The men were lean and strong, between the age of 20 and 40, but there were two men who appeared to be in their late 50s or 60's. There was a similar age distribution among the women, although less older women. Sometimes I noticed visitors who seemed to be young men under 25, dressed in Western pants and shirts. They listened to music from a cell phone, but did not join the work. They were allowed to watch. I never saw anyone bossing others to work, and there was a voluntary quality that seemed to govern when people would start and stop work.



Figure 4 A tribal leader and co-worker

When we arrived a trench was being excavated. The earth was hard, and with each pick axe blow, a chunk of earth about 10 to 20 cm came free. In places there were large rocks and a man used a pry bar to free it. When the trench was about 2 meters deep, we pried loose large rocks from an old wall and carried these into the trench (see figure 7). Concrete bags were mixed with sand, and the mixture was used to set the rocks. The result was an underground dam. As subsurface water would flow down the riverbed, it would meet the underground dam, and be diverted toward the well. During the monsoon the wall would slow the water, allowing the water table to rise, and refilling the well. After the monsoon, when the river had run dry, subsurface draining would continue, and the subsurface dam would direct the flow toward the well.

### Working together

When we were first introduced to the villagers, Heera had us give our names and we listened to the names of each villager (see Figure 3). There was a ritual of placing a daub of red paste on the forehead between the eyes, and wearing a ceremonial string around the wrist. Then the work started up again and we were left to our own devices. There were no instructions about how we might work, so typically I just watched and then did what another person was doing. I tried swinging the pick axe, and made some progress with this until blisters formed. Then I used the hoe to load earth into the pans for the women. I enjoyed this because it allowed a functional interaction with the women that was simple and brief. Eventually this became quite tiring, so I picked up a pan, and joined in the line of women carrying earth to the pile. One of my more traditional coworkers from Canada reminded me that this was work for the women. Initially the women had expressed mild surprise, but I could see I was receiving support from the women, and it soon became completely accepted.



Figure 5 Village Men at a planning meeting



Figure 6 Women at the work site

Other jobs I tried over the course of the project included carrying rocks, mixing cement, and carrying water. We took most of the rocks for the well from an old wall, which I imagine was built over a hundred years ago, and was now being reused. One of the older men was prying the rocks apart, and the women and I would collect rocks and move them to a pile closer to the trench. I was aware this might be a moment to find insects on the undersides of rocks, but I never saw any. In mixing the cement I was able to work with the one woman among the villagers who was at all interested in giving direction to us. She would point to water when she needed some pails brought over, and then point at the pile of sand and cement to have me join her in mixing it. I felt happy to receive direction because if I had started my own work, it would have been easy to

work in a way that interfered with their needs. After mixing the dry cement and sand, it was formed into a pile, and a depression was made in the center of the heap, so it could be filled with water. After half an hour, the water had seeped into the concrete and was beginning to cohere with the sand. Then we would scrape it into the pans that the women took to the rock wall dam. As an example of how my inexperience could be problematic, I pulled away too much sand in one place, so the wall of sand that was still holding back water became too thin. The water began seeping through, then pouring through, and the elegant process they had been using was wrecked. There were a few moans to acknowledge the fact, but after a quick repair to the process we carried on and all was forgiven. The other members on our team were involved in carrying rocks (see figure 7), and one also began to use the trowel to shape the rock wall. After he had fit a new rock into the wall, I saw a villager come along to lift out the rock and reset it, as though to correct his work. This was done without emotion or criticism, just as a matter of fact.



Figure 7 Joining in to move rocks into the dam

### Breaks

We were working in hot weather (about 30 degrees Celsius) so people would rest on a ground cover made of used concrete bags. The villagers would not sit on this, but squatted on earth in groups nearby. From an overhanging bough a rope was tied to hold a wicker basket (shaped like a circle about a meter in diameter and about 40 cm deep). A baby about 6 months old was left in the cradle. Sometimes he cried and then suckled, but generally he watched the action or slept.

During breaks the men would sometimes smoke bedees, which are rolled tobacco with an aromatic smoke. Water would be passed around, from a common cup, using a hygienic drinking

technique where one pours the water into one's mouth without touching lips to the cup. We would hear people chatting and laughing, calling to children, and rarely someone would play a radio.

### Home Visits

The villagers took great pride in their homes, so every day around noon we were invited to go for chai in a home. We would hike over farmland and trails to come upon an earthen house. We removed our shoes at the outside, and would come into a central room where a mat was laid out to sit on. We would be introduced to the family in the home, and neighbors would come by to join in. We would smell the smoke from a small fire, and then the chai mixture of tea, water, sugar and milk was brought to boil for a while. Then we were served in little cups, sometimes made of a metal like aluminum or tin, and other times in earthenware or glass. Usually a woman would prepare the chai, and then a child or young person would take a tray of chai around to the guests. During the first week I accepted all the chai offerings, but on one day we had chai in a more public building rather than a home, and I saw the chai cup being cleaned by a wipe of the finger. The following day I fell ill, so I became more cautious about the chai I drank after that. Nevertheless, the invitations increased, and on the next to last day, our Sahyog representative, Prabah, had us attend three homes for chai in one go. We protested, but he insisted that he could not say no to the villagers. In any case, it was a good opportunity to see the homes, so we fulfilled this expectation.

In general the common home was about 3 rooms: one each for sleeping, cooking and social activity. There would be a transitional area leading to the outside, where there might be a cow feeding on hay. There would be a perimeter around the whole home with a gate to secure the area. Sometimes there was a peaked roof, built with rock slabs, or sometimes with corrugated

tin. In the rafters there might be some stored grain or hay. There were sometimes cabinets built into the earthen wall, where personal things were kept. Often there was an overhead fan, and a bare light bulb. Usually there were several single beds, made with wood posts and rope cross hatching, but without a mattress. I saw very few clothes being stored.

In one home I saw a granary, made with earthen material. It was hard, smooth and clean. In other homes I saw oil drums being reused to hold grain. In the home of a dairy person, there was a refrigeration unit for storing the milk. These were not common, but the home owner needed them for their work. I never saw glass or metal used in the home, nor were there any air conditioners or appliances, although electricity was common.

### School Visits

Although the village was small, with less than a hundred people over about 25 square kilometers, the government supplied a small school for children from about 5 to 15 years. It was a great honor when we were invited to visit the school. The school was a long series of class rooms made in concrete. For the elementary children (see figure 10) we saw a chalk board that was below a meter high, at eye level for young children. There were posters and paintings above this that demonstrated simple relationships. One story was about a bird that came upon a pot of water with a narrow mouth (see figure 9). Because the bird could not reach the water, it dropped in stones. This raised the water level allowing the bird to drink. Another story reflected the Aesop's fable of the tortoise and the hare, showing the hare speeding ahead, but then falling asleep as it waits, during which the tortoise passes him by (see figure 8).

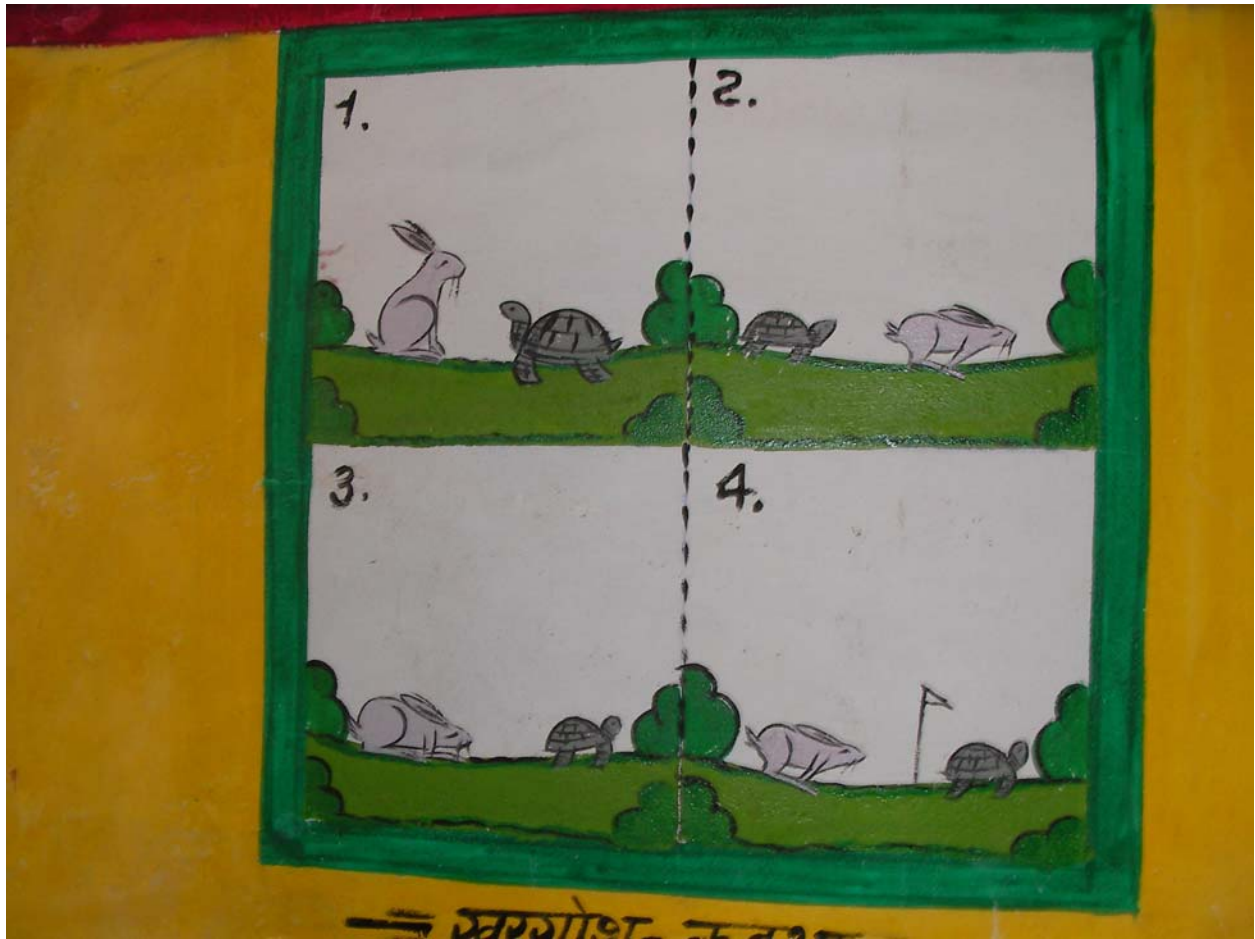


Figure 8 The story of the tortoise and the hare



Figure 9 The story of a smart bird

In another room, I saw young students in the secondary grades (see figures 11 & 12). When we entered there were math equations written on the chalk board, involving decimal points, division and multiplication. A student erased this, and asked me to teach. I wrote a simple English sentence that had my name and where I am from, which I illustrated with a map of the world. Then the students showed me their work book. It was a soft cover book, protected with plastic, and well used. It was written in Hindi and English, and seemed to teach grammar and vocabulary. It had short passages, exercises to fill in the blanks, and composition subjects. The level of English in the workbook was much higher than they appeared to be able to speak.



Figure 10 Elementary School children



Figure 11 Young men in Secondary school



Figure 12 Young women in Secondary school

### Accommodations

During our stay in Bhindar, we had rooms in the Rajmahal (king's palace), an extraordinary building at the center of the town (see figure 13). It was the ancestral home of Randhir Singh, whose ancestor had taken the throne for the Mewar region in 1878. The compound was surrounded by a high rock wall, and we entered through a large gate that faced onto the central market of Bhindar. Although called a hotel now, it was in truth, a palace with two large compounds, for the family and their guests. Our group was given rooms in the guest compound and I had a single room. It had a bed with a futon style mattress, an overhead light

and fan, and a window that opened onto a hall. It was painted white, with a concrete floor.

Although austere by Western standards, it was adequate, private and relatively cool. Our group would meet for breakfast and dinner in the family compound where meals were served. As the palace was in daily use by Randhir's large extended family and the many servant families, we were given some insight into the daily routines of a well off family. Hindu religious observances were held in the on site temple, and our food was typical of the area, with rice, a curry sauce, and local vegetables. Throughout the two weeks, DWC had arranged for bottled drinking water to ensure we did not get sick from local water. Internet access was generally available, however, during our stay there had been an accident which had cut the internet connection, so we were never able to use it.



Figure 13 The view of Bhindar from the palace

Our host, Randhir, took an interest in our group, and often joined us at dinner to talk. We learned that he was the former elected representative of the area. He was a leader in the Bharatiya Janata Party, commonly known as the BJP. This party promotes traditional Hindu values, and judging from the many political posters throughout the town of Bhindar, Randhir was the popular favorite in the area. However, there had been a recent upset to the political power system, and Randhir had recently lost his seat. As I watched Randhir interacting with local villagers I could see he was treated with great respect and deference. Deference was a custom that revealed a distinct difference between Canadian and Indian culture. It soon became noted that our Canadian group was considered far too polite in our dealings with the servants, as we

were forever saying “Thank you” in response to services that Randhir’s family seemed to accept as a birthright - with an appropriately subdued level of gratitude.

### Culture

As a part of the DWC package, we had the opportunity to visit several cultural sites and activities. We visited Chittorgarh, an ancient walled city perched on the top of a mountain. It had many stone temples, palaces, lakes, and towers and provided a first hand experience of the great wealth that had been amassed by the rulers in that area about 2 centuries ago. We visited Jaisamand lake, which evidenced a high level of engineering in the construction of a massive stone dam, built several centuries ago. We spent a weekend in Udaipur, a nearby city which has built a thriving tourist industry around the floating palace at its center. This palace is built in the middle of a lake, but because of the drought over the last few years, it now appears surrounded by a much smaller extent of water. Each of these visits exposed us to the tourist industry in India, and with it comes those whose livelihood depends on the tourist’s wealth. I was sometimes hounded by beggars, and frequently approached by very determined people intent on involving me in exploitative scams. Politely declining had little effect, directly asking them to leave had no effect, and even obstinately refusing interaction was useless. It seems one must simply endure this as a side effect of past tourist groups that have instilled a certainty that all Westerners will provide money for the asking.

I was very pleased to have been part of two cultural events that the local villagers shared with our group. On one evening, a group of about 15 men and 4 boys came from the village to share music and songs. There were two drums, a stringed instrument, and several sets of finger bells (like on a tambourine) which formed the musical base for the chants. The men sat around in a circle, and one led a call and response style song. I was invited to join in, and was happy to

keep the beat with clapping. The songs or chants were beautifully melodic and trance inducing. From time to time some of the men would come into the circle to dance in a free style. When I was invited to dance, I entered the circle and was quickly transported by the chanting and rhythm around me. I could imagine myself out under the stars, in the middle of the desert, as part of a travelling caravan. This was a personal high point of the trip.

The day after the chanting circle, several members of our DWC group were discussing the event. Although we had all been invited to join the dancing and singing, it became clear that the women on our team had not felt comfortable to join in. They were aware that no women were part of the performance, and might have felt their involvement would contravene some implied social convention. We asked why no women had performed as part of the event, and were told no woman would have wanted to leave the village after dark. Then a plan was hatched for our group to go to the village for another singing party. A few days later our group was invited to a village party at the house of one of the more prominent and wealthy members. There we saw a similar group of men chanting, while a group of local women sat quietly in the audience. Three of the Canadian women in our group began to instigate the local women to participate, and after some cajoling the local women did rise to the occasion. A subset of the local women (mostly young adult) went outside the central compound, where they could still hear the music and had more space to move. After a few minutes I saw they were doing a circle dance with the Canadian women. The music and entertainment continued, and the majority of the audience remained in place, but I began to notice the male host of the household was suddenly moving very quickly and with agitation. After about five minutes of increasing discomfort, the host finally stepped out into the courtyard to put an end to the upset. We heard some stern reprimands and then the women returned quietly, while the Canadian women looked bewildered at the problem they had

innocently created. Later that evening, as our group returned from the village to Bhindar, we shared our individual perspectives on what had happened. My own guess was that women's dancing was perceived as a challenge to tradition, although we also heard that one of the village men had been watching the circle dance, and this was thought to be inappropriate. This served as another example of how our inexperience with the local culture created unintended problems.

### Overview

Over the course of two weeks I had a wide range of experiences, but I'm able to choose one that was representative of the value of the trip as a whole. Heera (the head of the Social Work Agency that was coordinating our work) took us to a village about 10 km from the paved road. There we climbed up the most prominent hill in the area. From the top we could see a path of green trees and crops that passed through the valley below. Heera let us know that the greenery was the result of the subsurface dams that had been built over the last decade. Before this, the unimproved areas of land had become dry and dusty. But in the villages where Sahyog had been working, the farmers were relatively healthy and able to make a living on the produce of their land (see figure 14). Heera spoke with great pride about the fact that the villagers had been the primary force in rehabilitating their land, allowing the villagers to claim the benefit and the responsibility to maintain it in the future. The climate change in this area of India had resulted in such drought that without this intervention one could not imagine the land would sustain the many villagers throughout the area.



Figure 14 Fruits of the water development project

### Feedback

At the conclusion of our two week experience, the team leader invited us to complete individual feedback forms. In my own feedback reported that I felt that the trip was well organized, and that the information we were given prior to the trip was helpful. I expressed my feeling that the level of discussion within the group was lower than I had hoped, and that we had missed the opportunity to share our experiences with each other as a group.

### Final Thoughts

I learned firsthand about the effects of global warming and the resulting drought in this area of Asia. I had the opportunity to work with an experienced leader who was able to motivate

villagers to reclaim their farming lifestyle, in the face of what must have seemed like a hopeless situation. By leveraging international aid with local investments of labor and material, I saw this powerful combination had resulted in a green and flourishing community. I experienced the great generosity of tribal villagers and their abundant friendliness and willingness to work together. I witnessed an ancient culture with its captivating music and its brilliantly colored clothing. I learned about the cities and geography of Northern India, an area that is home for the families of several students on my campus.

As a part of the Developing World Connections group, I saw a good example of trip organization, and became familiar with the many intricacies of international travel. Although I felt critical of the level of discussion within the group, I used my own experience to imagine the kinds of discussion that might be facilitated. This experience was a good preparation for understanding the logistics of international travel and for describing the potential benefit with students who might be considering a similar experience.

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