
Safarnama

*Sambhaavnaa and Udaan ka Safarnama,
January to March, 2019*

Pahar Aur Hum

February 16 to 23, 2019

The first workshop of 2019 at Sambhaavnaa Institute was Pahar Aur Hum. The 8-day workshop commenced on February 16. The primary idea of the workshop was to throw insightful light on the narratives of 'development' in the mountain states:



This was done through an engagement with discourses on mountain ecology, cultural forms of life in the mountains, diversity and uniqueness of mountains, similarities among the mountain societies, the sources of political, economic, and sociocultural stability in the mountains in the bygone times, encroachment of mountains in the 'modern' times, the hardships of the local people due to many practices being pursued under the rubric of development, and the different layers of the Kashmir conflict.

These discourses were then interweaved with sessions on gender and sexuality and caste, and how they have evolved as categories of practice in the mountain states. These sessions were stirred with aspects of social conditioning, identity, privilege, power, and intersectionality, with a focus on institutions of panchayats, media, family, and education. The workshop also attempted to examine our imaginative armory, to discuss the ideas of power, domination, subjugation, resistance, and the diverse notions of self-seeing, and importantly, to ponder over the directions in which our own trains are hurtling, with a broader sense of perspective, vis-à-vis the society we live in.



Buniyaad

March 9 to 18, 2019



It gives us immense pleasure to inform the readers that 2019 also saw the return of another of our flagship programs, 'Buniyaad', held from March 9 – March 18. Once again, the thread that joined most of the days was that of 'development'. However, the primary mode of communication was Hindi. One of the strengths of 'Buniyaad' has always been the diversity of the participants: this year saw the participants from the states of Bihar, Delhi, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, and Uttaranchal.

The contemporary events in the country - particularly the violence that was perpetrated throughout the country after Pulwama attacks in Jammu and Kashmir - compelled us to have a session on 'secular politics,' and we had the session on the second day itself. Himanshu Kumar launched a disquisition on communalism, politics of hate and fear and pride, brutalities of the State in India (utilizing his own anecdotes from Bastar), and Bhoodan movement. He examined these themes with a great degree of subtlety to help the participants on their journey of exploration and enquiry, instead of trying to provide any 'answers'. We had also been waiting for the company of Kamayani Swami, Ashish Ranjan, and Dr. Sheikh Gulam Rasool for a long time, and it finally came to fruition with 'Buniyaad', as they joined us as facilitators. While Kamayani and Ashish guided us in thinking through some of the ideas of capitalism and development, Dr. Gulam Rasool narrated his experiences and conversed about Kashmir with a meticulous specificity. He also talked briefly about his work on the Right to Information (RTI) in Jammu and Kashmir.

Some of the fundamental ideas behind most of the pedagogical methods were to emphasize the fluid and ambiguous nature of key issues that were raised in the workshop, to understand the importance of 'context' in an anthropological sense, to explore creative ways of self-expression, and to think more in terms of perspectives and narratives, rather than 'truths' or 'realities'.

Closing the Environmental Compliance Gap

February 26 to 28, 2019

'Closing the Environmental Compliance Gap', held between February 26–28, was divided into two parts. The first half of the workshop focused on the conceptual ideas which were then complimented with practical exercises or sharing of praxis with each other. We began with a session to understand the history of environmental compliance and regulations in India. The workshop brought some field experience of working on environmental justice using compliance through the network of grassroots paralegals, to understand the issues and certain enabling environmental laws which are used by the paralegals and affected communities to invoke the accountability of the concerned departments of the State. The workshop also highlighted the way compliance can be used by communities to monitor and regulate the execution of large-scale projects.

We then spent time on understanding the novel methodology of Ground Truthing (GT) and how it can be operationalized by affected communities to push the authorities to close the enforcement gap leading to environmental harms to the communities. There was also a practical group exercise where we undertook basic GT exercises on hypothetical situations of environmental harms arising out of industrial non-compliance. Under the astute guidance of Vidya Viswanathan and Debayan Gupta, we also focused on engaging with the paralegal programmatic methodology of CPR-Namati Environmental Justice Program to get some headway as to the nuances of adopting this methodology in our own field sites. The stories of resistance and successful victories shared by facilitators were very insightful in understanding how these legal tools actually empowered people to assert their claims and demands, and how it helped in monitoring and minimizing the environmental violations.



Upcoming Programs...



Digital Colonisation 2.0
Ways digitalization is undermining the economy, democracy and sovereignty

17th to 19th May, 2019
Sambhaavnaa Institute
Palampur, Himachal Pradesh

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Nayi Dishayein
Summer Schools on Rethinking Development
May & June, 2019

Sambhaavnaa Institute, Palampur, Himachal Pradesh



Fragmented Spaces
The Grammar and Politics of Urban Housing in India
(June 12-15, 2019)

Sambhaavnaa Institute, Palampur, Himachal Pradesh



UNDERSTANDING THE APPROACH OF RAISING GENDER EQUITABLE BOYS

Sign up for a workshop today!

*Last day for applications is 31st May, 2019

8 - 11th July, 2019
Sambhaavnaa Institute, Palampur, Himachal Pradesh

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Gup-Shup Chabootra



Didi Contractor, the chief eco-architect of the Sambhaavnaa Institute, received the Nari Shakti Puraskar on International Women's Day on March 8. The award, which is India's highest civilian honor recognizing women who have made great contributions to India, was another reminder of Didi's creative and imaginative contribution to the rich world of architecture. Her beautifully simple mud structures - which have come to approximate happiness for us here, people who spend the lion's share of their days at Sambhaavnaa - continue to amaze and stir us, and to offer valuable perspectives in our own muddled lives. We would like to sincerely congratulate Didi for another feather in her eclectic cap!

Udaan Learning Center



A. Workshops

Udaan Learning Center (ULC) took sessions in Kandbari Sr. Secondary School for about three months with students of VIIIth and IXth standard. We attempted to explore our dependence on nature, primary and secondary needs (inspired by Maslow), self-reliance and environmental pollution. This ended in December 2018, however, on 5th January, children presented their learning, on the themes of environmental degradation due to human interventions, caste and gender stereotypes, through the mediums of theatre, screening videos and sharing their experiences about the projects.

We also did a workshop with Aero Inspire at the ULC for a couple of hours with around 25 participants, including children and parents. We did a similar workshop at Kandbari Government School with 9th standard.

We also organized a workshop on “Self Awareness” for local children, conducted by a leadership coach Aditya Minocha. He spoke about the different kinds of fears one lives with since time immemorial, and opened up an opportunity for children to talk about themselves, leaving their fears and comfort zones behind.

B. Spring Eco Camp

In our Spring Camp this year, which lasted for 10 days, 15 children and 2 facilitators from Mensa project ‘dhruv’, and 3 children and 1 facilitator from Teach For India participated. A journey close to nature in the best of the season, Spring Eco Camp was an exciting experience for children, for not only did we enjoy the beauty of nature but we also experienced the biodiversity and its sublime mechanisms in serene ways. On the other hand, we also learnt how humans’ erratic interventions are destroying this without even considering the deleterious effects of their actions.



Udaan Learning Center



Key Features/Highlights of the camp were:

- Exploring biodiversity of the Dhauladhar mountains, with Vikram Singh from “Life meets the lens” <https://www.facebook.com/lifemeetsthelens/>
- Delving deeply into the concepts of self-reliance and ecology, through discussions and experiential activities.
- Understanding “Plastic Pollution”, and our direct contribution to it.
- Hands-on activities like carpentry, pottery, and birding.
- Visiting social organisations like Waste Warriors and Solid Waste management dumping site in Dharamshala, to have brief discussions with environmental activists.
- Exploring the village and landscape around through walks and treks.
- Watching movies and documentaries to strengthen our understanding and perspectives.
- Brainstorming ideas to live an eco-friendly lifestyle.
- Some need-based sessions were also organized which included sessions on gender discrimination, understanding the sociological concept of power and equality with Himanshu Kumar.

Udaan School

Udaan School - For some time now Udaan School has been documenting the experience of its journey. We regularly post updates on school activities, pedagogical methods, reports on guest lectures, and school ethos on our facebook page - <https://www.facebook.com/udaanschoolkandbari/>

People are invited to visit and leave their comments and suggestions.

Farm To Plate

Imagine harvesting more than a ton of tasty, beautiful vegetables from a small plot, 60 kg of Peas, 70 kg Cauliflower, 70 kg Greens, Mungre, Kyoon, Coriander leaves, Radish, Turnip etc. The first secret to super-productive gardening is our hardworking and skilled saathis like Munna ji, Ram Singh ji, Prem Singh ji and others.

The second secret is the technique of raised beds. Raised beds yield up to four times more than the same amount of space planted in rows.