



GRA | Group for Rural Activities

Report

Subject: Jhabua Camp

24th Nov-26th Nov, 2018



Group for Rural Activities
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About Jhabua

Jhabua is a town and a municipality in the Jhabua district of Madhya Pradesh in India. Jhabua city is famous for its black cotton soil commonly known as "White Gold". The people of Jhabua have extreme reverence for mother nature. Their festivals and rituals are woven around worshipping 'Matavan' (mother forest from where they derive their livelihood), 'Jalhan Devi' (natural water resources) and Jamimata (land where they cultivate crops). Bhils are also known as the Bowmen of India.



Demographics

As of official census 2011 detail of Jhabua, released by Directorate of Census Operations in Madhya Pradesh, it had a population of 1,025,048 of which 50.24% is male and 49.76% is female. Jhabua District population constituted of 1.41% of total Maharashtra population.

Description	According to 2011 Census
Population	1,025,048
Male	515,023
Female	510,025
Population Growth	30.70%
Area Sq. Km	3,600
Density/km2	285
Sex Ratio (Per 1000)	990
Average Literacy	43.30
Total Child Population (0-6 Age)	211,869

Objectives of the Camp

- To understand how the culture of Halma works.
- To understand the works of Shivganga (our host NGO) and how it is affecting the lives of the people of Jhabua. And,
- To talk to the local villagers and knowing about their lives, how the government and Shivganga affects their livelihood.

ShivGanga

Their work and causes they stand for

Shivganga Samagra Gram Vikas Parishad, based in Jhabua, has been working on the holistic development of the tribal villages since last 17 years. The organization is an excellent example of development through community participation. Their development model for the village is “panchkoshiye vikaas”. The six main causes they work for are Jan(जन), Forest(जंगल), Water(जल), Land(जमीन), Animals(जानवर), Science(नवविज्ञान). They believe that we can lead to sustainable development by conserving and increasing all these components of nature. Their most of the interventions are inspired or based on the traditions and nature of the tribal community and witness large participation from the tribal people.



The Leadership and the people behind



Shivganga is run by Shri Harsh Chauhan, IIT Delhi, Batch 1983-84 and Shri Mahesh Sharma along with 14 other leaders from the tribal community itself. Apart from this, there is a team of volunteers from tribal communities with a reach in 800 tribal villages.

Halma

Halma is a Bhili tradition of coming together and helping a community member fighting his troubles. Whenever an individual from the community faces difficulty and calls for Halma, they all gather and solve it. In one such Halma, people created various water harvesting structures like trenches, Check Dams to stop water in rainy seasons. In one other Halma, people assembled to plant trees on mass scale.

Halma Yatra for this year(2018) was held on 16-19th February at Hathipawa Hills in Jhabua. More than 15,000 tribals and over 350 villages participated.



Gram Engineers

Two volunteers from each of the villages are selected as “Gram Engineers” and are given technical training by faculty of civil engineering, Shri G.S. Institute of Technology and Science, Indore. Gram engineers in consultation with the villagers, make a plan for rainwater conservation and harvesting in their village. Villagers take oath to work voluntary for water conservation in their villages.

Energy Solutions

Being a remote district, electricity is one of the major problems in JHABUA. ShivGanga with the help of IIT Delhi and NITIE is working on the installation of affordable solar panels for the purpose of illuminations and mobile charging.

Farming

Agriculture being the profession of 90% of people in JHABUA needs special attention for improvements. ShivGanga has installed a laboratory on 3 acre land to experiment Organic farming as well as for the experiments of improved agriculture tools.

Jhabua Naturals

It is a Social Entrepreneurial Venture supported by Shivganga Samagra Gram Vikas Parishad, Jhabua.



Jhabua Naturals is engaged in Cottage Industry Development in Jhabua. They are helping the youth by training them in various crafts, and bringing them together to develop new and innovative products, such as Bamboom (It is a natural passive sound amplifier).

A Brief note on the series of Events

24th November, 2018

The first place we visited was the village Chagola. There we talked to the Sarpanch about the culture and the customs of the village. We then roamed around in the village and talked to the villagers about their daily lives. We then visited a rechargeable pond dug during the big Halma in Chagola.

Chagola

Chagola is a Village in Ranapur Tehsil in Jhabua District of Madhya Pradesh State, India. It belongs to Indore Division . It is located 21 KM towards South from District head quarters Jhabua. 358 KM from State capital Bhopal.

We talked to the Mukhiya and the villagers there. Mukhiya is the person who came earliest on the land and is given to the eldest within the hereditary line of the family. Recently the government has started giving twenty-four hour lightning electricity and three hour irrigation electricity.



Marriages are done within their own caste. Three major castes in Chagola as informed by the Mukhiya are Bhil, Pateliya and Bhilad. People are classified into Nagad and Sant based on if the person eats meat, drinks or not respectively.

Government schemes were also discussed such as providing modern chulha to every home and building houses for villagers. It was put up in the discussion that villagers prefer mitti ka chulha vs modern chulha. The reasons being that they feel more comfortable with it the other one feels too alienated to them as there wasn't any information provided by the government on how to use them.

While talking to the villagers, they also explained that they prefer their own houses built with mud than that provided by the government because of durability and accessibility they had with the one built with mud. They store grains and seed in a cavity built in the walls, they keep things above the shed for dehydration. They also use a storage unit plastered with cow-dung on the walls and on the top. They call it Pohri and it used to store for extremely long duration of time.

25th November, 2018

We visited another rechargeable pond which the government has estimated to cost Rs 1 crore but was completed by the efforts of Shivganga and the villagers in Rs 20 lakhs. We then travelled to an arid land near Kheda where thousands of seeds were planted in hopes to bring back the forest and its fauna to Jhabua. We then visited Kheda, where organic farming was extensively practiced, and interacted to the local villagers about the problems they faced and how productive it was. We spent the evening on Hathipava, a beautiful and everlasting product of people's effort.

Kheda

Kheda is a village where we see acres of land just dedicated to organic farming. The tribals of this village have experimented with different ways of organic farming. They were inspired by Mahesh ji to start and continue with organic farming. The thing remarkable about this is Jhabua is place with little rainfall and water shortage and taking organic farming requires a lot of efforts from the farmers as the danger of bad harvest is always there, and using readymade urea is far much easier than the organic methods.

Organic Method for Compost:

Cow dung from cattle is mixed with soil teeming with earthworms to make vermi-compost. The leftover leaves and stems after harvest is crushed and mixed back into the soil at regular intervals to replenish it. And it has helped in improving soil nutrition quality.



Some families have also taken a big step in educating their children. People from this village are understanding the importance of education. Some are doing engineering in universities and colleges of Indore in hopes to improve their family consumptions and to make the process of organic farming better as practiced by them.

26th November, 2018

We all decided to do a small Halma before leaving Jhabua. We built several “Water Baandhs” in fields just outside the Dharampuri Aashram. We got to understand the intricacies and the labour put in for a small harvest.



We then had a discussion with Maheshji and Harshji together and discussed the problems faced by Shivganga and the people of Jhabua, the solutions that are already implemented and some concepts that may be helpful in future.

Before departing we visited a workhouse for Jhabua Naturals. The place stood with children with amazing craftsmen skills. This initiative is to develop a sense of hardwork and teamwork in the children. There were some amazing bamboo models. One being produced on a massive scale “Bamboon”, a passive amplifier solely cut from bamboo.



Our Experiences

Chetan Pawar

I certainly experienced the difference between rural and urban people. Unlike “city people”, these were so united and mobilized by the thought of “Parmarth”. We can clearly feel their unity, humbleness, and quality of being there for others in any situation. They are satisfied with what they have. I learnt that development is not just about roads, electricity, etc. (i.e. economical) It’s about social, mental, spiritual and off-course economical i.e. “overall development”. Also, I experienced how mass mobilization towards common good can affect society itself in such a great way. It is quite interesting to observe the way local people get charged by the word “Halma”. We see many NGO’s working for something which we perceive as “not decent” in real life, which is, in turn, is quite good. But, there are small number of NGOs' working as medium or just a force for intervention. And also by realizing social capital and value of “Parmarth”. Shivganga is itself a “thought”. People are understanding it and following it for their common good. This whole thing is quite amazing. After interacting with locals, one can surely point out that grassroots problems should be taken into account while framing a centralized policy. We can also consult with local grassroots workers or leaders for their valuable suggestions. After all, community involvement in governance and not too much dependence on government is much

needed for robust democracy. Government will eventually help people after community involvement or intervention.

Also, I think, one sees better implementation of such models or thoughts in rural part. City people get influenced by posts, and here people usually get connected to people. If someone is telling us about particular models or thoughts, then let's have faith in him as he aims common good of society. Eventually, we all will positively get affected by this. This kind of thinking may be one of the reasons for better implementations in the rural part.

Overall, I had a great learning experience in Jhabua.

Rohan Shah

I always thought tribals were people who didn't have a permanent home, lived in jungles and survived on hunting. So this trip was an eye opener for me, clearing that and a lot of other misconceptions I had. This was my first real experience of village life, and it really helped me understand and be a part of the lifestyle of people there. Especially I was amazed by the concept of halma and I realized how much of an impact a united group of people can have. I learnt the meaning of 'social capital'. I learnt that a simple life is enough, and judging people by their wealth or clothing is meaningless. Finally this trip was a great opportunity to interact with so many people and make new friends. I really had an amazing time.

Sandesh

Unlike the general image, the people of Jhabua were quite welcoming and received us pretty warmly.

We get to know the real ground level problems not by observation but by interacting with the people and understanding the cultures of the people in there, which Maheshji has been doing patiently for almost past 20 years.

Shivganga was successful in bringing community feeling in the villages which is rare now a days.

All the problems and the inefficient policies can be solved by proper local self governance with effective decentralisation of power. Local governance will help in knowing the exact ground details of the problems and will help in effective policies. All the policies that are being made are effective in very less places because of the weak local governance structure which keep the harsh reality buried inside.

When we interacted with few people in a village the parents want their kids to go to school but the children themselves are not willing. This clearly implies the lack of awareness among them

about the importance of education. This awareness is the need of the hour for the villages in that region.

The amount of deforestation that has been done in this area can be clearly seen by looking at the dry hills spread all over the region which have lost the complete layer of fine topsoil thus making it unfit for growth of the general trees.

Overall I feel that the crippled local governance institution and the false image created by few people about the jhabua region are the reason for its present backward state.

Akhilesh

This visit to Jhabua has been a very unique experience which has improved my understanding of villages and their problems. What I liked the most of this community is their spirit to selflessly work for the community. This was largely possible as an unfair social isolation protected their tradition of Halma from oblivion. For the first time have I got to experience life in a village through this trip. Interacting with the villagers I got to know some of the villagers' problems directly through them in detail.

Piyushi Hinge

Learnings from Jhabua camp:

Day1) I learnt how instead of always relying on government, the people took responsibility for their own needs and built ponds for their use. Hence I realised the selfless work that the people had done, only thing to be done was to awaken them.

Day2) I learnt that the lifestyle in some villages is still backward, especially for girls. They are married in a very little age. We think it must be because of the parents, but the girls are themselves out of control. Maybe due to lack of proper education..or something else, not sure. Then there are problems regarding the girls' hygiene during menstrual cycles. I also learnt a lot about organic farming.

Aniket Tale

The main learning outcome of camp came after I meet the children in the village. They were content with all minimal amount of resources they had ,as opposed to us, who cry for all small things not available. Their lively spirit motivated me to focus and enjoy present rather than worrying about future. Besides this the power of unity and presence of humanity by doing work selflessly for other people. Also I got know that each village in India is unique and all its problem can only be solved by considering them all differently.

Aashay Biyani

Really nice and important educational camp, and that too in a very low budget. Had a first hand experience of life in rural India. This camp changed a lot of my perceptions, I got to know the kind of problems Rural India faces and the solutions they use. I realised how a village festival can convert a 1 cr project to merely 10 lakh project with collective community effort and why government policies fail in many situations. Truly a good experience and am keen to go on such camps again.