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## **An LIVE -in –LAB visit to Devgain Village near Ranchi by MBA Students of Amrita School of Business, Ettimadai, Coimbatore-641112**

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### **Abstract:**

Jharkhand state is famous for rich natural resources like coal mines, Iron ore mines and plenty of forest cover which houses a wide diversity in flora and fauna. In spite of that, its villagers who are about 72 % of its population, live in extreme poverty. The village population mostly, comprises of tribal people.

During the month of September, 2015, the author who lives in Hyderabad was eagerly looking forward to join his new teaching assignment in Amrita School of Business, Ettimadai in Coimbatore. One fine morning, he received a call from chairperson of the school asking his consent to lead a team of 15 MBA students both boys and girls to visit Devgain village of Jharkhand state under school's LIVE-IN-LAB (LILA) program. The author readily said yes and booked the train ticket.

LILA is a unique program of Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham, university where students stay in a particular village for a period of 6 to 10 days. During the stay, the students along with the faculty member gather first hand experience about the lives of the village people and study the village economy. They prepare village development plans, as a requirement of this project and later implement these. The hospitality and simplicity of these people endear themselves to the students. At the end of the stay a natural bond germinates between the students and their hosts.

The students appreciate, the hardships and difficulties experienced by the villagers while producing food grains for the country as a whole. When they go for their working lives, they will keep the interest of these people in the center of their hearts.

**Keywords: Cattle Rearing, Divine Thrill, Economic Viability, Karma, LIVE-in\_LAB, Primary Health Centre.**

### **The Visit Begins**

The author, travelled along with students in sleeper class of Indian Railway. They reached Ranchi station on 23<sup>rd</sup> September, 2015 in the morning. The weather was nice and the group had a quick breakfast in a nearby eatery. An Auto-Rickshaw was hired and they started the last mile

journey to the Devgain village . The connecting road was good and on both sides of the road, there was a lot of greenery.

After covering a distance of about 25 kilometers, the group finally reached the village around noon. The host ( a former village pradhan) along with his family members heartily welcomed the group. He provided them with accommodation, separate for boys and girls.

After, the members freshened themselves, they were served sumptuous lunch by the family members of the host. The group was ready to start their visit to various places under study, in the village. The visit to each place almost took major part of day to make the study, meaningful. All the places of interest were covered during six days stay. The places covered were: school, Primary health centre, fields, irrigation facilities, lanes and bye lanes of the villages, open wells , hand pumps and the Chou pal area.

Devgain village is spread within about four square kilometers and has plenty of trees. It looks ravishingly green and beautiful. It houses about 300 families with a total population of about 1500 people. Vast majority of houses are pucca and well ventilated but without toilets.

### **Agriculture**

Indian agriculture has been India's mother economy. For thousands of years, India's civilization has been built and has grown on the foundations of its agriculture economy. An even in the last years of twentieth century, the agriculture sector accounts for over two thirds of employment of Indian labour force.

The Green revolution has solved the food problem of the country. It has helped to keep the growth rate of food production ahead of demographic growth rate of the country. The result is we have a comfortable level of buffer stock of food grains in the public sector. The agriculturists of green revolution belt-extending from Punjab to west Uttar Pradesh through Haryana has experienced an unprecedented measure of prosperity. The incidence of rural poverty and unemployment in the country is lowest in Punjab and Haryana.

The revolution has ,however, remained confined to areas endowed with irrigation facilities. It has not touched rain fed and dry land agriculture. This is because the high yielding varieties (HYV)-fertilizer technology that brought the green revolution is specific ti irrigated agriculture. It is not relevant to seventy percent of Indian agriculture that is rain-fed. Nothing much has changed in these areas. The farmers are growing a single crop a year and are debt ridden and poverty stricken.

The Devgain village is one such type of rain fed area.

Village economy is based on agriculture and cattle rearing. Village does not have much of irrigation facilities and farmers grow only one crop in a year, which is during the rainy season. Major crops are rice and wheat supplemented with vegetables like brinjal, tomatoes, cucumber,

green chilly and also watermelon. Since they can grow only a single crop, the average income is very low. Although the water table is at a very low depth of 25 to 30 feet, because of absence of assured electric current for at least 8 continuous hours, the farmers have not gone for bore wells. Use of diesel, does not ensure economic viability to the produce.

### **Electric supply**

Rural electrification has been an enduring challenge for successive governments. Given India's federal structure, States provide last-mile connectivity which includes providing access to and distributing electricity, and maintaining infrastructure, while the Central government provides policy and financial support.

However, un-electrified villages present an enormous challenge as they are often located in inaccessible or left-wing extremism-affected areas. Over the last three years, there has been a rapid decline in the pace of rural electrification to only 5,189 villages. Several States, particularly in eastern India, have seen even lower levels of electrification. For instance, in these three years, Uttar Pradesh electrified just 64 villages against the 1,518 that were sanctioned while Bihar electrified only 1,248 villages against the 9,246 that were sanctioned. The slow pace meant that this task would require more than a decade. Due to such tardy performance in the States, the National Democratic Alliance government launched the Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Gram Jyoti Yojana (DDUGJY) to ensure rapid electrification, feeder separation, and strengthening of rural distribution infrastructure. It is necessary to monitor progress intensively for smooth and fast implementation of electrification.

On August 15, 2015, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced that all the remaining villages would be electrified within 1,000 days. Based on Census 2011, States had provided a list of 18,452 un-electrified villages as on April 1, 2015. To transparently monitor the process, the Central government, in November 2015, appointed 309 young and passionate Grameen Vidyut Abhiyantas (GVAs or rural electrification engineers) from the same areas. Reports by these GVAs are shared through the GARV (Grameen Vidyutikaran) app (<http://garv.gov.in>) with officials as well as the public. It puts pressure.

In Devgain village, although, each house in the village is connected with electricity, the current supply is for few hours in the day and is very erratic. The people are suffering a lot both during summer as well during winter season. The student team was there in the village almost for a week. But electric supply was not there. Such is the condition prevailing in this village.

### **Drinking water supply**

Despite decades of development assistance, over one billion people still do not have access to safe drinking water; the global community has acknowledged this problem, and one of the targets of the Millennium Development Goals was to halve the proportion of people without

access to safe drinking water. Conventional wisdom argues that community participation is important to help us secure this target; however, there is little solid evidence to support this claim. The story is the same in Devgain village. There is a drinking water system including overhead tank but this was non functional for the last six months or so. The villagers are dependent on few hand pumps and open wells for their requirement. From the open wells, water is drawn by rope and bucket.

## Sanitation

Adequate sanitation, together with good hygiene and safe water, are fundamental to good health and to social and economic development. That is why, in 2008, the Prime Minister of India quoted Mahatma Gandhi who said in 1923, “sanitation is more important than independence”. Improvements in one or more of these three components of good health can substantially reduce the rates of morbidity and the severity of various diseases and improve the quality of life of huge numbers of people, particularly children, in developing countries. Although linked, and often mutually supporting, these three components have different public health characteristics.

Lack of sanitation leads to disease, as was first noted scientifically in 1842 in Chadwick's seminal “Report on an inquiry into the sanitary condition of the labouring population of Great Britain” . A less scientifically rigorous but nonetheless professionally significant indicator of the impact on health of poor sanitation was provided in 2007, when readers of the BMJ (British Medical Journal) voted sanitation the most important *medical* milestone since 1840 .

The diseases associated with poor sanitation are particularly correlated with poverty and infancy and alone account for about 10% of the global burden of disease . At any given time close to half of the urban populations of Africa, Asia, and Latin America have a disease associated with poor sanitation, hygiene, and water .

Of human excreta, faeces are the most dangerous to health. One gram of fresh faeces from an infected person can contain around  $10^6$  viral pathogens,  $10^6$ – $10^8$  bacterial pathogens,  $10^4$  protozoan cysts or oocysts, and  $10$ – $10^4$  helminth eggs. The major faeco-oral disease transmission pathways are demonstrated in the “F Diagram” , which illustrates the importance of particular interventions, notably the safe disposal of faeces, in preventing

In Devgain village, the case is no different.

There are no toilets attached to the houses and people , men and women both go in the fields to relieve themselves. There is no village drainage system and waste water from the houses and wells gets collected in pools, nearby. So mosquitoes and flies have a field day .

## **Education**

Universal basic education has long been a goal of governments in developing countries. Despite making enormous strides in increasing school enrollments over the last 50 years, this goal remains elusive. This is troubling, given the importance of basic education as an input in economic and social development.

In India, the constitution urges states to provide free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of fourteen years. By 1990, however, one third of the children were estimated out of school. This is an undesirable situation and a big impediment in development of the country. Education is single most important factor for progress and empowerment of down trodden and women. Our governments are not sensitive to this vital requirement.

In Devgain village, situation is no different.

There is a private missionary school up to class five but the school has only two teachers including Head Master. The students are irregular in attending the school. There is no high school or college in the village.

No wonder, the adults are mostly, illiterate.

## **Health Care**

The government system of health care is not efficient in India. The quality of treatment is less than ordinary. Doctors are not interested in serving the public. They Have their private clinics and nursing homes.

They encourage the patients to come to their private clinics and better treatment on payment basis.

Proper health care in India is the hands of corporate Hospitals, where

The rates of treatment is very high. The middle class can only afford this costly treatment. It is beyond the reach of urban poor and village people. However ,when they face serious health problems, they have no option but to get the treatment from these corporate hospitals by spending their life time savings including selling of their gold property etc. They become broke after that. There is nothing much the governments are doing about this except lip service.

The situation in Devgain village is no different.

There is one small primary health centre which is namesake. One nurse visits for one hour a day. Villagers have to go to Ranchi for small or big treatment.

## **Alcoholism**

Alcoholism is rampant among Indian poor people. They spend a major portion of their meager income on alcohol. Not only that, under its influence, the women suffer the violence inflicted by men for silly reasons. They consume cheap stuff and contract all sorts of diseases like diabetes, kidney problem, heart diseases etc. early in life. It is a social evil in our society and only mass education and literacy can reduce this curse.

The students experienced similar problems in Devgain village , also.

Adults are addicted to alcoholism, women included. When the students asked the women, why they drink, their simple answer was: by working hard throughout the day we get tired. So like our men, we also drink for relaxation and relief.

## **Happiness and culture**

In spite of poor living conditions, the people lead happy lives. There is a perceptible contrast between village and city people. Decidedly, village people are more happy, more hospitable, more sharing, more honest , simpler and more straight forward. They are non complaining and smile more often.

They group attended celebration of their one important annual festival, called ‘ Karma’. All the villagers assembled in the village choupal in the late evening. They performed Prakriti pooja , ate the community dinner and then danced throughout the night. The visiting students also joined the celebration and experienced the divine thrill.

## **Conclusion**

The MBA students prepared suitable development plans for the villagers and will collaborate with them for implementation.

At the end of the six day stay, each student was full of praise for the care and hospitality extended by the villagers. The members of the group were so deeply moved that they have promised to return again and again and remain attached to the villagers , lifelong.

The author was happy for the success of the tour.

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