



IEARN INDIA
Education and Resource Network - India

NATIONAL SECURITY LANGUAGE INITIATIVE FOR YOUTH



NSLI-Y PUNE, INDIA SUMMER 2014 NEWSLETTER

WITH BEST COMPLIMENTS FROM



 **iEARN INDIA**

INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION & RESOURCE NETWORK
www.earn-india.org

CONNECTING YOUTH
MAKING A DIFFERENCE

About iEARN India:

iEARN-India is a registered NGO having schools and partners spread in 18 states all over India. One of our objectives is to make Indian youth active in using the technology for improving communication and building bridges between Indian schools and schools from other countries to have global perspective and understanding. IEARN-India team is successful in taking various iEARN projects to the schools all over India especially in cities and small towns in and around Delhi, Bangalore, Hyderabad, Chennai, Mumbai and Pune.

iEARN-India has a status as “iEARN Center” in iEARN assembly iEARN (www.iearn.org) encourages and support schools to participate in online collaborative projects. iEARN-India follows the foot prints of the parent organization internationally registered as International Education And Resource Network.

Our Objectives:

1. It enables the effective use of Information technology in the classrooms.
2. It provides an exclusive experience of Working with schools all over the world.
3. Connects teachers and students to understand the cultures through various programs.
4. It provides a unique platform for schools to showcase their work to the schools in other countries.
5. Make Indian youth active in using the technology for improving communication and building bridges between Indian schools and schools from other countries.

Our Mission

1. Giving teachers and students the chance to experience and apply new learning methods through collaborative projects (Project Based Learning) nationally and internationally within as well as outside the school system (formal and non formal).
2. Providing platform in local languages to Indian schools to facilitate collaborative projects for expansion.
3. Creating access to libraries and the technology to under-privileged schools in the vicinity of the iEARN schools.
4. Initiating new projects that communicate the Indian perspectives.
5. Showcasing the exclusive contribution of Indian culture for the world stage.
6. Publishing Project Description Book, Teachers Handbook and Children's Project Book.

Our members:

iEARN-India has about 200 schools in its network with average 5 teachers and 10 students from each school actively participate in iEARN activities.

Our Projects:

iEARN-India has successfully administered projects on Belaf of iEARN-USA (funded by ECA) . Projects for example are Four Rivers One world, Our Family our Neighborhood , NSLI-Y, FLAP, Global Connections etc.

More about NSLI-Y program

NSLI-Y . National security Language initiative program is for the American High school students to participate in the cultural life of India, giving them invaluable formal and informal language practice and sparking a lifetime interest in Hindi language and culture. While in Pune, students have the opportunity to live with a host family, attend intensive language classes and participate in cultural and community service programs.

The National Security Language Initiative for Youth (NSLI-Y) is offering more than 600 full scholarships to U.S. high school students to study abroad and learn Arabic, Chinese, Farsi, Hindi, Korean, Russian, and Turkish. Programs begin in summer 2010.

The Department of State, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, in cooperation with American Councils for International Education, AFS-USA, iEARN-USA, and Concordia Language Villages, is awarding U.S. government funding to high school and just-graduated students (ages 15 – 18) to participate in summer, one-semester and full-year language programs in countries where these languages are widely spoken.

Programs immerse participants in the cultural and political life of their host country, giving them invaluable formal and informal language practice and sparking a lifetime interest in foreign languages and cultures. While abroad, students will have the opportunity to possibly live with a host family, attend intensive language classes or enroll in a local high school, and participate in cultural and community service programs

As program partner, iEARN is administering programs in India. In addition, iEARN will be providing students with access to the Language Lounges -- an online interactive space where students can practice reading and writing their language of study before, during, and after their physical exchange. Through the Language Lounges, NSLI-Y students have access to thousands of native speakers of each of the seven NSLI-Y languages, who are part of the iEARN network around the world.

For last 13 years, iEARN-India is headed by Dr. Sunita Bhagwat. iEARN-India team is has a vast experience in international exchange programs particularly for the projects and activities initiated by US state department.

For more information visit www.iearn-india.org

A Word from iEARN-India



Dr. Sunita Bhagwat, Country Coordinator, iEARN-India.

On behalf of iEARN-India I am happy to share the NSLI-Y 2014 students' experiences of this program in form of this newsletter. The glimpses of their six week's stay of these students is an incredible gift for all of us. The credit of success of the program goes to not only iEARN-India staff but mainly the host families, who devoted their full time and attention to the students. The extraordinary exposures and experiences they offered to their "US child", to give the best possible cultural experiences are beyond words.

In this the fifth year of the program, the students learnt about the Indian culture, yoga and several other invaluable experiences only because of the Gurukul school. The school provided the all the infra structural facilities and supported the program as Hindi native speakers to all the NSLI Students by taking a role of the best team players.

Our other associates with Nutan Balshikhsan Sangh (Lodha School) teachers and students gave NSLI students the opportunity to interact with their school students as part of community activity for every week.

I am very grateful to US state Department, American Council, US Consulate, Mumbai and iEARN-USA for giving us opportunity to implement this program, which has enriched our learning about international exchange programs in tons.

It gives us great satisfaction that students enjoyed their learning and the stay with all of us.

From Gurukul school

By Mrs. Mrunmayee Bhave and Prarthana Puranik

REPORT ON NSLI-Y PROGRAMME

National Security Language Initiative for Youth programme commenced with excitement and a few apprehensions.

There was excitement, as it was to be a new experience to provide a conducive environment to the fourteen (14) High school students from America and help them learn Hindi.

Apprehension because, Gurukul Learning Community – GLC (which comprises of students, teachers, support staff and parents) was doing this for the first time and did not want to leave any stone unturned.

'Peer learning' which is a part of this programme, had some of the Hindi speaking students of Grade VIII work together with our visitors.

This helped Gurukul children realise that, they had a long way to go before they could consider themselves well versed with the language and also brought to the forefront, the efforts their own teachers were taking in helping them learn various subjects.

Our guests appreciated the 'cool' traditions and culture of India.

Deepa, our Art & Craft teacher's pleasure was boundless when the NSLI-Y group learnt Warli and Madhubani paintings, rangoli and mehendi with passion..

'Ana-pana' a form of meditation followed in Gurukul was also practiced by our friends diligently.

Learning 'yogasanaas' as per our school tradition was an added activity for them.

They learnt our National Anthem, a Hindi Prayer and a Hindi song from Mayuri our Music teacher.

With so many activities, how could we leave Sports behind?

Apart from showing interest in cricket and kabbadi, they tried their 'leg' at langdi too..

NSLI-Y and Gurukul teams were so enthusiastic that even the heavy downpour before a basket-ball game, did not deter them playing basket-ball on the mucky ground.

During discussions with the peers, our new friends voiced their opinion strongly against poaching. They showed a natural inclination to be protective towards those being bullied.

The visiting students displayed an ability to learn and adapt quickly to various situations in a foreign environment.

This was acknowledged and appreciated immensely by Gurukul children.

Not to be left behind, our VIII graders made up for their lost academics, leaving no room for their teachers to complain.

All in all, it was a thought provoking, educative and a memorable interaction of six (6) weeks.



NATIONAL SECURITY LANGUAGE INITIATIVE FOR YOUTH

Science and Religion

by Erik Fliegau

I've noticed that in much of western world, adhering to science while taking religious doctrine at its word is viewed as contradictory. Although plenty of Americans are convinced of their own faith along with geology, biology, and the unchanging laws of physics, I had always considered the two sides as being at odds. My host family has taught me about the ways in which science and faith can harmoniously live side by side, a revelation that I could only comprehend by living in India.

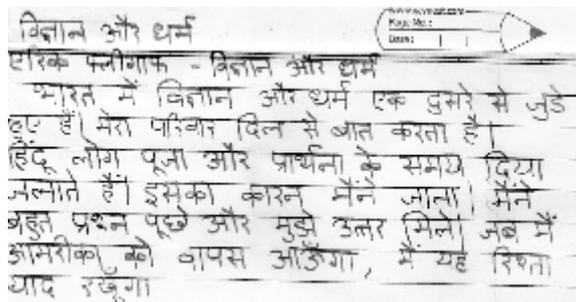
On the rooftop of my concrete apartment building one evening, I had a view of the Parvati temple on one side and the most respected school in Pune on the other. My host father, brother, and I had a fascinating conversation about Hinduism and India's ancient history that explained to me paradoxical connections between the two forces.

At the center of the small garden on the terrace was a single, shadowed stalk of corn that my host dad pointed out to me. "Maharashtra's major food staple is corn, and so we worship it. We worship what makes us strong." He then asked us why Hindus worship fire. I didn't know, but I imagined it had some mythological significance. Instead, "because what was there before the Big Bang? Fire." I hadn't known that Hinduism and the Big Bang could coexist in the same sentence!

The bridges between faith and logic continued to materialize throughout the conversations I've had. NASA has ancient Sanskrit prayers written on its walls, according to my host dad. A passage in the Mahabharata, one of India's two national epics, includes the exact distance from the earth to sun, proving that Hanuman, the Hindu god, was able to jump from the planet to the star as according to traditional legend. The Veda we sing every morning at school has the highest energy level of all prayers. Water should not be drunk cold because it extinguishes the fire in one's stomach as acids and alkalines dissolve food. Instead of just passing these customs up as cultural differences, I reminded myself that this was supposed to be an exchange, not a tourist visit, and so I learned to ask questions. And the memories made while receiving those answers are so much deeper than if I had skimmed them off the pages of a book. Although I'm not in the position to say what is and is not true, since as a non-Hindu and a foreigner I'm unknowledgeable about many of these concepts, my point is that Indians seem to feel more comfortable describing religious and cultural customs in scientific terms and vice versa.

Most of the world used to enjoy that link, the mutual reinforcement of religion and science. Ancient Mayan priests developed incredibly accurate calendars to foresee future dates. Egyptians built the pyramids to prepare for their afterlife, and in doing so accomplished ingenious feats of engineering. But in the more recent western world, science began to challenge religion, rather than contribute to it. Of course there are many who take pieces of both, merging them into a personal and balanced belief system. But it still seems to me the divide is wider in the United States.

If America could incorporate both spirituality and science as effortlessly and peacefully as in India, surely they might benefit. Otherwise we have little chance of facing today's moral and scientific challenges- climate change, for example. Through conversations with my host family, coming to India has shown me a new approach with which to address issues in my own nation.



विज्ञान और धर्म
एरिक फ्लिगाफ - विज्ञान और धर्म
भारत में विज्ञान और धर्म एक दूसरे से जुड़े हुए हैं। मेरा परिवार दिल से जात करता है।
हिंदू लोग पूजा और प्रार्थना के समय दिया जलाते हैं। इसका कारण मैंने जाना। मैंने बहुत प्रश्न पूछे और मुझे उत्तर मिले। जब मैं अमेरिका को वापस आऊंगा, मैं यह रिश्ता याद रखूंगा।



Dazzling Dance

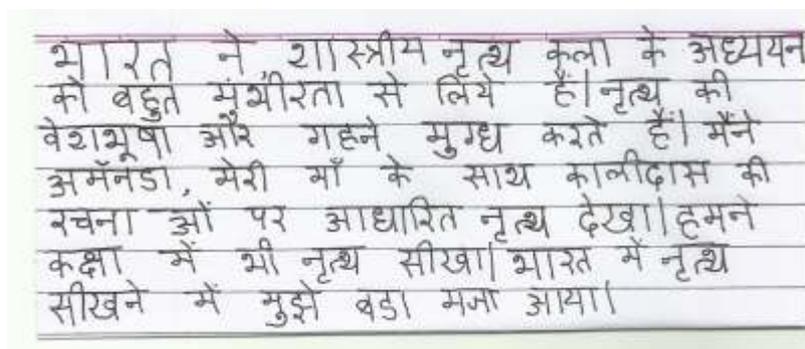
by Nina Kumar

While many are bedazzled by the intricate costumes and glittering jewelry, in India, study of the classical arts are taken very seriously, the commitment in the biggest dance companies and schools is similar to the rigor one would find in a contemporary or ballet dance company in the United States. Despite this, dance teachers are common both in rural and urban India, and because of this, the dance shows that result are stunning, heart-warming, and magical.

Watching a true traditional Bharatanatyam show in India for the first time was like watching a Broadway spectacle after only seeing high school plays. My host mother Rama, a dancer herself, was generous enough to take myself and "host cousin" Amanda to an incredible performance. It took place in a gorgeous and massive dance hall a bit far from our home. The first half was wonderful, but the second act really blew my mind

d. It was a fascinating Kalidasa dance. Kalidasa was a famous Sanskrit poet and dramatist who lived in the 5th century AD and his stories are intricate, complex and beautiful. The piece was about the changing seasons, but also unconditional, human love. I was moved as the figures moved, and the multi-layered story peeled itself before me, revealing all of it's parts.

In the United States, I have been a part of Indian dance classes for years and have become knowledgeable of the craft. I love Indian dance in all of it's forms, from Bollywood razzmatazz to the perfect foot placement of Bharatanatyam. I realized after this show, that the dance versions I have seen in my United States classes are somewhat sterilized, as if when they left India they lost some of their true meaning and form. I want to try and bring some of the magic of dance in India back with me as I progress as an artist and a consumer of this art.



The View From Here

by Samantha Freimuth

After the morning activities with my host family, I was completely exhausted and ready for nothing more than a nap. 4:00 pm was the intended departure time, and I had a feeling that a 30 minute nap would be insufficient for the evening's adventure. We loaded up the car and were off. Smooshed in the backseat between my little sister and one of her friends, my mood began to improve drastically. Even without understanding everything that is discussed, it's hard not to smile and laugh along with the little ones. Before reaching our destination, we stopped and feasted on biscuits, Indian burgers, and of course, chai. Bellies satisfied, we drove on, now followed by other friends eager for a getaway. As we continued to wind up the mountain, with the windows cracked, I began to feel really great. Every trace of exhaustion had disappeared, and I enjoyed the view from above. The fresh, crisp air was rejuvenating, and the smell of rain was wonderfully prominent. I could do nothing but smile as the story of the fort was explained to me.

After navigat

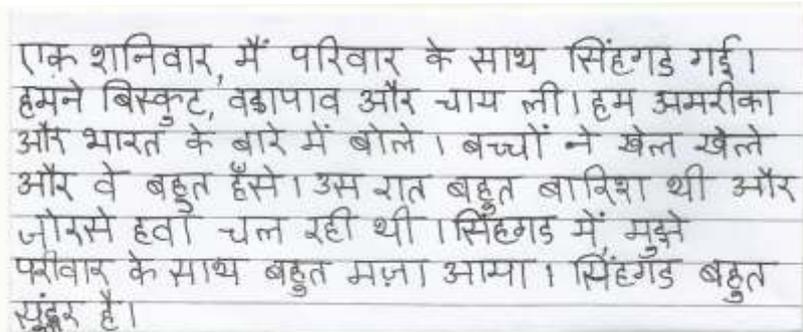
ing our way to the top on curving, narrow roads, we arrived at the top where we were greeted by a light mist and cool climate. We had arrived at the top of Sinhagad Fort. We retrieved our backpacks from the trunk, removed our rain gear, and began our trek to

the secluded bungalow found further up the mountain. The bungalow was to be our home for the weekend, a place to escape the city and spend time with friends and family. the rest of the night was filled with laughter and conversation. We gathered in a circle on the floor and

ate fried onions, fried potatoes, and of course, drank more chai. We talked about India and America, and everything in between. People told jokes and stories as we crunched on delicious snacks, and sipped on chai. The children were filled with the typical energy of nine year

olds, and spent most of the night running around, screaming, and jumping off of the bunk beds. Everyone was having a wonderful time, and I felt completely at home here in this totally unfamiliar bungalow. There are many sides to India, all beautiful in their own

way, but this is the side I like most of all.



एक शनिवार, मैं परिवार के साथ सिंहगड गई।
हमने बिस्कुट, वडापाव और चाय ली। हम अमरिका
और भारत के बारे में बोले। बच्चों ने खेल खेले
और वे बहुत हँसे। उस रात बहुत बारिश थी और
जोरसे हवा चल रही थी। सिंहगड में मुझे
परिवार के साथ बहुत मज़ा आया। सिंहगड बहुत
सुंदर है।



Poetry of a Rickshaw Ride

by Sami Bierman

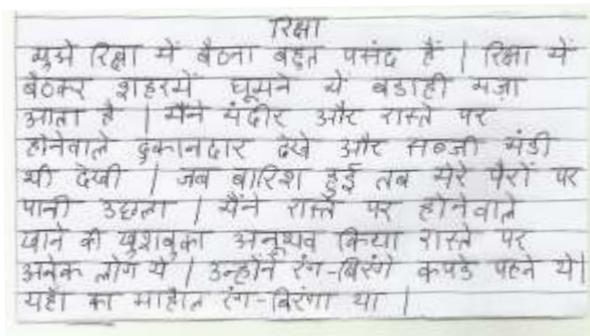
I have come to the conclusion that riding rickshaws is among one of my favorite things to do in India. It is the absolute best way to experience the city and all it has to offer.

You stand on the side of the road, trying to flag one down and often have to argue with the drivers to get them to take you to certain parts of town. Once you've taken your seat, crammed in with three other people, they step on the gas and try to maneuver their way into the ever-so chaotic traffic. Your legs are wet because of the drizzling rain and the slight, but infrequent dripping from the roof above. The rain, however, doesn't keep you from sticking your head out of the side and letting your hair blow wildly in the wind, the cool drops landing on your cheeks.

As the driver manually moves the windshield wipers, more of the city in front of you is revealed. You drive over the bridge, over the river that yearns for water, and as you look down, you see the cattle scavenging the ground for food and small patches of grass. You pass by the slums and the children sitting on the streets, next to their mothers who are selling anything they could possibly make a living off of, and everything you could possibly imagine. Next, the tens upon hundreds of motorcycles parked on the streets blur into one as your impatient driver quickly squeezes past the slow car in front. You then see the corner where all the rickshaws and their drivers congregate; some asleep in the cabs and many of them chatting amongst themselves.

Tightly clutching the metal bar, you duck your head out of the vehicle to get a full view of your surroundings. With luck, you catch a glimpse of a temple or ancient fort, many of which are randomly scattered throughout the tall apartment buildings and hundred year-old houses. You are bombarded with a new aroma every block. The vast range of these smells circulates through your nostrils as you see the street foods from which they are coming on every sidewalk, in front of every store. The men chopping the fresh coconuts, the little girls who sell the beautiful necklaces of jasmine flowers, those boys who roast and sell the corn, the women who carry the racks of necklaces and earrings and the countless vendors with their carts of pani puri. The colors are incredible, so bright and vivid, all so different yet somehow they come together to paint a more harmonious picture. And then of course, you get out of the rickshaw, splashing onto the soaked road, and pay and thank your driver.

At that point, the only thing that could possibly be better than a rickshaw, is where you are at the end of the ride.



Community Service Experience

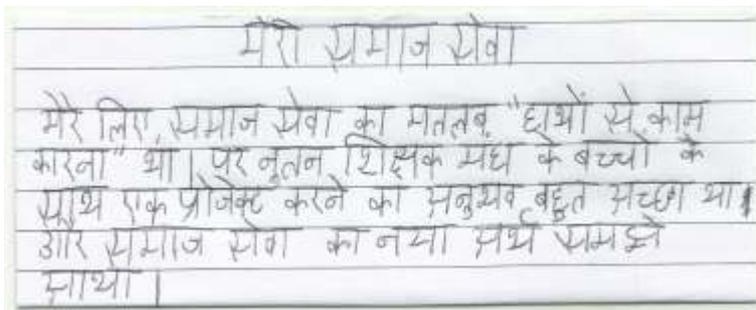
Sam Ryckaert

Upon the Lodha Government School for the first time, I had a narrow definition of the term “community service”. In my head, community service involved physical labor, picking trash up off a beach or hand-mixing cement; something that could be measured by the droplets of sweat on one's brow or the ache in one's back. As a result, when we were assigned partners from the school's older standards and given the details of a project we'd be working on for the next five weeks, I was somewhat confused. Though learning about a famous figure in India, and teaching two schoolchildren about a famous American, would provide an interesting cultural exchange, I wasn't convinced that it qualified as “community service.”

However, after my time spent at Lodha School, this misguided definition has all but left my mind for good. Working with my partners has been fun, of course, but it's also been incredibly meaningful. Though every session started with a bit of small talk and discussion of our famous figures, they rarely ended the same way. Discussions of cultural similarities and differences, sharing information about our families and impromptu language lessons were all par for the course in each hour-and-a-half block of time I spent with my

partners. The project we worked on provided a platform for important cultural education, which gave me more insight into the lives of Indian students close to my age. We researched Bill Gates and Indira Gandhi together, but we also talked, laughed, stumbled over new languages and danced. The time we spent together always felt too short and I always felt that I learned so much.

As I'm typing this line, it has not been six hours since I saw these students in person for the last time on the NSLI-Y program. It may have very well been the last time I ever see them in person, on the program or otherwise. But earlier today, as I watched one of my partners introduce the assembly in which we were all presenting in excellent English, and reminisced about the events at Lodha School during the past five weeks, my definition of “community service” was forever changed. Not only do I believe that I served my partners at Lodha School, but they served me; by teaching me about their language and culture, by dutifully learning whatever English grammar I taught them, and simply by being eager, intelligent, wonderful friends that were a joy to see every Friday afternoon. They did not serve me with shovels and pickaxes, but with smiles and a willingness to learn; I truly hope that I repaid them in the same way.



Baramati

by Sophia Seidenberg

Our first group excursion and taste of rural India was at Baramati farm, a popular agritourism destination about three hours from Pune. We departed by bus early in the morning and watched the entertaining Bollywood movie, "Om Shanti Om" to pass the time en route. Upon arrival, we were greeted with a farm fresh breakfast and tour of the grounds. We learned how at Baramati, they engineer super-crops, by splitting the stems of saplings and binding them to stronger, faster growing stalks so that they grow together to make a stronger plant. They use this process to increase the farmers' profits and specialize the trees I still don't quite understand how they can create mango trees with a different kind of mango on each branch, but this was something they are able to do.

We saw fields and orchards of sugar cane and mango, pomegranate, jackfruit, and custard apple trees. We also saw animals on the farm, including cows, goats, chickens, and silk worms. Erik even caught a frog! We visited the flower nurseries and learned about the farm's irrigation system. It took all of our will power to resist the urge to jump into the well on such a hot, humid day. We were all relieved to go into the air conditioned visitor center to watch a short film on Baramati's history and impact on the surrounding community. Later, we took a tractor ride, which doubled as a game of limbo because we frequently had to suck under low hanging branches. We also took a bumpy ride in the beautiful bullock cart.

After lunch, we visited a women's self-help group, or co-op, in a nearby village. The women told us about how their business works. They each made a down payment to join the group, which takes out a very low-interest loan to get business on its feet. The women sell crafts and spices and save the profits. Any member can borrow from the group in their time of need, like to fund a child's wedding or education, or a medical procedure. At the end of five years, the women split the remaining profits. They explained how the co-op has empowered them and made them less financially dependent on their husbands. The group enabled one woman to get her college degree, and now she hopes to pursue a PhD in Hindi. It was incredible to interact with these women. Our discussion left me very uplifted and inspired.

The best part of our Baramati trip was not what we saw or did, but the quality time that we spent together, teachers, coordinators, and students. Baramati was the first day since orientation that we got to spend together outside of school. From singing "Bis (20) Pitchers of Chai on the Wall" (it was only the second week, so counting down from 99 was a bit too difficult a task, Hindi me) to Bollywood dancing in the aisles of our moving bus, Baramati brought us together. This fourteen hour togetherness, baking in the sun was the final step in the recipe for our NSLI-Y Pune family and created lifelong memories.

हम बस से बारामती गए थे। वहाँ हमने बहुत घेड, फूल, फल, और प्राणी देखे। हमने ट्रैक्टर और बैलगाडी में सवारी की। महिला बचत गट की औरतों के साथ हमने बातचीत की। मुझे बारामती की यात्रा बहुत अच्छी लगी।



Chai Times

By Sydney Kamen

If there was one constant during my six week Indian sojourn, it was chai. The heat, though intense at times, stole away on cloudy nights and eventually dissolved in the monsoon showers. The bugs made themselves known only when screen-less windows were left open, or the lights illuminated. The cows liked to hang out on provincial roads, and were rarely seen in the city, much like the road-roaming elephants that existed in my dreams. The chai, however, was everywhere. I fell in love with chai at first try.

After arriving in Pune, I had the wonderful privilege to get a glimpse of the city I would be calling home for six weeks. We were exploring the busy streets when I spotted a small cafe with a rather large audience. When we came to slowing stop to observe, I couldn't quite believe that the crowd of people were drinking this steamy treat. It was a hot and thick afternoon and these people were lined up to get hot chai. I could barely see the man behind the rickety wooden counter through all the steam escaping the teapot that whistled mockingly at the stove. All I could think about at that point was an ice-cold water, not a steaming cup of tea.

Part of me wanted to decline the offer of the steaming brownish liquid for three reasons: 1) it was hot 2) The paranoid traveler within me didn't want to disobey my father's instructions not to try anything from the street "no matter how good it looks;" and 3) I didn't even like tea. But a bigger part of me argued to shrug off the concerns, because why else was I traveling if not to try and learn new things?

I weighed my options, and decided it wasn't worth the risk just yet. However, as I savored and sipped on the image in my mind, I was greeted with the same liquid in a small china receptacle upon reaching home. After a few seconds of staring at the chai rippling inside the cup, I took a sip. It was a pleasure and a surprise to find that even in the thick heat of the afternoon, the hot chai was inexplicably comforting.

It was certainly not something you would get handed in exchange for \$4.75 at your local Starbucks. Yes, it had the taste of all the familiar flavors-milk, black tea, sugar. But it also carried the taste of spices, and colored powder, and Bollywood, and saris, and raga rock, yoga and that same indefinite something that drew me to India in the first place. I finished my Chai in two sips and a gulp, an action that I have noticed brings joy to those who serve it to you. From that moment on I have been hooked. And thanks to my host family, chai wasn't hard to find.

There was Chai in sidewalk stalls, in bookstore cafes, in malls, in airports, at our school and an in every home I visited.

Some places served better chai than others, though I was always pleased to obtain any chai at all. My favorite chai, however, was the homemade kind, mostly because they always came with something more. Sometimes crackers, a good day butter cookie or a meaningful conversation.

Whenever I entered a home, I was immediately, with consistency, offered piping hot chai. I often felt I was a burden on my generous host, but a neighbor explained to me that it is normal for Indians to go extra lengths to please their guests because in their culture, all guests are Vishnu in disguise.

I saw this belief manifested in every other way I was treated by the people I met, but not in the way I was served Chai. The tea never once made me feel like a deity. It always made me feel like family.

पुणे में एक चीज मुझे बहुत पसंद आ रही वही चाय! यहाँ चाय हर जगह मिलती है, घर में भी और रास्ते में भी। हम रेस्तराँ में गए तो वहाँ भी मुझे चाय मिली। मैं हररोज परिवार के साथ चाय का मजा लेती हूँ।



Learning Hindi

by Amanda Madigan

I came into the NSLI-Y program with a very limited understanding of the Hindi language. I was familiar with the script, called Devanagari, and I could execute grammatically simple sentences. My initial goals involved memorizing and understanding grammar rules, but my hopes for the program eventually grew to be more tangible and exciting. This is because I initially expected the program to involve grammar drills and vocabulary memorization. However, I soon found that NSLI-Y's ability to dramatically improve our language skills can be attributed to its conversation-based, engaging program.

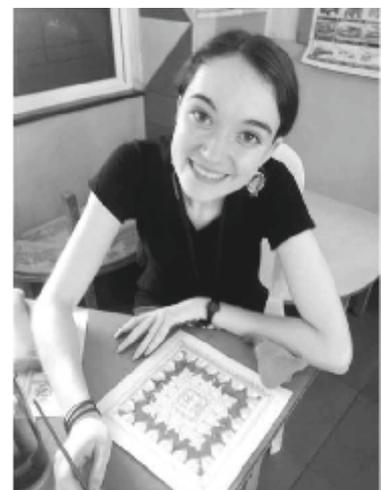
I have found that I am able to absorb vocabulary, not because I memorized it, but because I heard and used it frequently. At this point, I feel myself speaking with ease and oftentimes, putting colloquial phrases to use. I find that speaking Hindi is exciting, and every word a sweet.

There is only one other student in my class, Jacob, who is a dear friend of mine and another Bollywood enthusiast. He also shares my love of Hindi. In fact, we really enjoy chatting away in Hindi together. We have found that we are able to learn a lot for each other. In class, we read stories, watch videos, and have conversations on various topics. For example, we watched a video on Warli culture (The Warli people are a tribe from Maharashtra.) and we presented our findings and new vocabulary words to the rest of the students.

In addition to being incredible teachers, our teachers really open up opportunities for us. Jacob and I had the chance to sit in on several Hindi classes at Gurukul school, the school where we studied. It was truly a delight. Not only was it fantastic listening practice, but also it was an incredible experience. We loved seeing that each class burst with energy, exuberance and eagerness to learn. The students and teachers were all incredibly enthusiastic. Usually, the classes involved dictation, a reading, and grammar instruction. We were wrapped up in the atmosphere of such fun and desire to learn. The first time we answered a question was admittedly terrifying, but the brief moment of panic subsided and our love of Hindi was restored.

I have many fond memories--successful and hilariously unsuccessful--of applying what I learned in the classroom to everyday life. The first time I spoke Hindi outside Gurukul was when I ordered gelato at the movie theatre. It was terrifying! But it also inspired me to continue speaking. I spoke strictly in Hindi with my youngest brother and grandmother. This kind of immersion really allowed me to grow and feel the excitement of engaging in authentic, everyday conversation in Hindi. I found that the jumbled words of Bollywood songs began to form concrete meanings and I sang them gleefully (and loudly) along with the radio. We all spoke with many of the Gurukul students in Hindi. We were always greeting with smiling faces and adorable questions. "Aapki favorite Bollywood ki git kya hai?" (What is your favorite Bollywood song?) Speaking strictly in Hindi allowed me not only to practice, but, even if momentarily, adopt it as a primary means of communication.

I have found that there are some things that just can't be translated. Learning Hindi had helped us to learn about and further understand Indian culture. For instance, much of Hindi's vocabulary had come from Sanskrit, the language of ancient India, and thus carries with it a very specific meaning. We learned that the definition of 'guru' goes far beyond 'teacher.' Guru literally means someone that brings another out of darkness and into light. This kind of learning and access to real language has really allowed us to gain a deeper, richer understanding of Indian history, life and culture. We have been able to truly engage with this language and this become closer with the culture.



नमस्ती - वाम् के पहले, मुझे सिर्फ थोड़ी हिन्दी आती थी। मुझे देवनागरी और कुछ सरल वाक्य मालुम थे - वस! यह प्रोग्राम बढ़िया है क्योंकि हम बातें करते हैं। इस प्रोग्राम के कारण हम जल्दी से सीख रहे हैं। अब मैं बहुत उत्पुक हूँ क्योंकि हम आसानी से बोल सकते हैं।

मेरी क्लास में एक दूसरा विद्यार्थी है। वह मेरा प्यारा दोस्त है। हम दोनों की हिन्दी में चर्चा करना पसंद है। मेरे लिए हिन्दी का हर शब्द मिठाई जैसा है। क्लास में हमने कहानियाँ पढ़ी, छोटी फिल्में देखी और बातचीत की। और हमारे अध्यापक बहुत अच्छे हैं। अब वे हमारा परिवार हैं। हम उनसे बहुत प्यार करते हैं।

मैं और जैकब (दूसरा विद्यार्थी) दोनों ने गुरुकुल के हिन्दी क्लास में भी हिन्दी पढ़ी। उन विद्यार्थियों में बहुत ऊर्जा थी। हमें लगता था कि हर विद्यार्थी पढ़ना चाहता था और हर अध्यापक पढ़ना चाहता था।

मुझे दूसरे लोगों के साथ हिन्दी में बोलना पसंद है। मैं अपने सब से छोटे भाई के साथ और अपनी दादी - जी के साथ हिन्दी ही बोलती थी। इसके अलावा मैं गुरुकुल के विद्यार्थियों के साथ हिन्दी में बोलती थी। और मैं शौक से और ज़ोर से बॉलीवुड के गीत गाती थी! अब हम दुनिया में (और बॉलीवुड के गीतों के साथ) हिन्दी भाषा का इस्तेमाल कर सकते हैं!

क्लास में हमने सीखा कि 'गुरू' शब्द का एक खास अर्थ है। जो हम प्रीशनी देते हैं - वे गुरू हैं। तो हिन्दी सीखने के अलावा हमने भारतीय परंपराओं के बारे में भी सीखा। मैं बहुत खुश हूँ कि हमने हिन्दी सीखने का यह सफर महसूस की। हमेशा याद रहेगा!

School Ties

by Anna Cannon

On July 25th, we went to the fourth school of our trip, City Pride School. The school actually used to be the one that hosted NSLI-Y students in Pune. This year we have been at Gurukul School, which have been incredible hosts.

When we arrived, I think I had one of the most amazing welcomes of my life. We stood around in the parking lot for a little while, admiring everyone's salwars and kurtas as we admired the tall school buildings. Then we started noticing City Pride students lining up in rows down the road in front of us, all wearing white shirts and red sashes. Two girls passed out sticks with bells on them to all the students, and then suddenly they all started marching and swinging the bells in rhythm. We were told to join them, so I got in the back of the middle row, trying to copy the footwork of the girl in front of me. We followed the students, marching all the way, to a room where we all waited for a little while. We were led upstairs by some teachers, and on the way up the stairs we had bindis drawn on our foreheads and were given colorful paper necklaces and welcome cards. I was overwhelmed and excited. I really felt like a special guest.

Once we were all settled down we introduced ourselves in Hindi, then watched several performances that their students had put together. I was amazed that they put so much work into these performances just for us! The first performance was a beautiful traditional dance. Then we watched an incredibly acted street play about education in India, an adorable performance of the Star-Spangled Banner, which we followed with our own performance of the Indian national anthem.

Afterward we got to have a discussion with one class of 10-standard students about education in America and India. It was so interesting to hear the similarities and differences between our Indian and American schools and to hear their perspectives on how education should be.

During lunch we got into smaller groups and got to talk to some of the 11-standard students. This actually ended up being my favorite part of the day. We had so much fun talking about things like driving in India and America, hugging, schools in India and the US, and of course Texas, since one of the NSLI-Y students is from Texas and has a lot of state pride. It was so great to be able to have an informal conversation in this way about the differences between life

in our two countries. I think that this was a great learning experience for all of us.



NATIONAL SECURITY LANGUAGE INITIATIVE FOR YOUTH

Conversations with My Driver

by Jacob Berexa

Often the most fulfilling parts of a language immersion experience are the simple, everyday exchanges one has in the target language. This language training ground can come anywhere; at school, at home, on the streets, in shops, or even, as we found out, in one's car rides. In order to go to and from school, each of us rode with a few other NSLI-Y students in a car or small van. When we met our drivers on the first day, we immediately realized how large of a communication barrier existed between us. In addition to speaking very little English, our driver had a limited knowledge of Hindi. (Marathi, Maharashtra's principal language, is spoken by the majority of the state. A Maharashtrian's command of English and Hindi is very much dependent on his or her education and class background.)

For the first two days, our interaction with our driver was limited to an awkward chorus of "Namaste," "Shukriya," and "Bye". On the third day, however, one of the other students in my car decided she couldn't bear the silence anymore. Slowly we began to converse in an uncomfortable but productive mixture of Hindi and English (Hinglish, colloquially).

And what a rewarding decision this turned out to be. Since we started talking to our driver, our car turned into an excellent "real life classroom" to test out new Hindi phrases and grammatical structures. Often our driver had to repeat something an inordinate amount of times--his rusty Hindi grammar made it especially difficult for us beginners to understand--but we began comprehending more every day. Our driver also turned out to be quite talkative. He asked us many questions about the US and even attempted to tell us jokes in Hindi.

We also had several interesting cultural exchanges. One day our driver asked us if we eat beef in the US. When we said yes, his face lit up with surprise and a touch of anger. Cows hold a special place in Hinduism, and most Indians do not eat beef. Just as we experience culture shock being in India, many Indians experience a similar shock when they learn about some of our cultural practices. After that conversation, every day we would receive a reminder from him--"Cow mat khaana!" ("Don't eat cow!")

On the last few days of the trip, our driver asked if he could come back with us to the US and teach Marathi. While he said such things jokingly, I think I speak for all of us in my car when I say that we appreciated his willingness to converse with us in a language of which we knew so little. This relationship is just one of many formed in India that we will always cherish.



जब मैं भारत में था, तब मैं बहुत सारी जगहों में हिंदी अभ्यास का कर सका - स्कूल में, घर पे, पणे की सड़कों पे, वगैरह। इन जगहों के अलावा, हमारी गाड़ी भी उत्तम "language training ground" हो गई थी।

शुरु में, हम अपने चालक से सिर्फ "नमस्ते" और "धन्यवाद" बोलते थे। उससे हिंदी बोलने से हम डरते थे। लेकिन 2-3 दिनों के बाद, हम धीरे-धीरे उससे बोलने की कोशिश करने लगे।

गाड़ी में, क्योंकि हमारे चालक की हिंदी भाषा इतनी अच्छी नहीं थी, हम उससे बातें करने से हिचकते नहीं थे। हम सब "विद्यार्थी" थे। गाड़ी की सवारियों के समय जो शबु कुलास में सीखे थे, मैं और बाकी NSLI-P विद्यार्थी उनका अभ्यास करते थे।

हम और हमारे चालक के बीच हर रोज़ डिलचस्प सांस्कृतिक आदान-प्रदान होता था। हमारे चालक ने हमसे अमेरिका के बारे में प्रश्न पूछे और हमने भी उससे भारत के बारे में प्रश्न पूछे। वह हमें jokes भी बताता था! हम सब को इन सवारियों में बहुत मजा आया।

- जेकब बरेक्या

Basketball Game

by Kaelin Smith

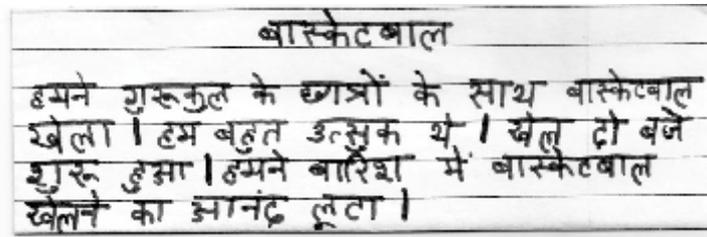
A few students at the school at which we are learning challenged the NSLI-Y students to a friendly game of basketball. We eagerly accepted. We were more than excited to play them. We wore our NSLI-Y t-shirts in order to look more like a team and hopefully look more intimidating. We were all older than the kids who we were playing so we were pretty confident that we'd win. We decided that we should probably take it easy on them and allow them to score a few points. At last, 2:30pm came and we were so ready for the game to begin. Maybe it was because of all the chai but we were all super pumped. To our surprise, as soon as we got to the playing grounds, it began to pour down raining out of nowhere. That's the monsoon weather for you. However, the rain seemed to only pump us up more.

We saw our opponents and both teams jokingly made intense and intimidating eye contact. We all began to practice making shots on our separate sides of the court. Then, it was game time. Five people from each team took their position and the referee threw up the basketball and it was

on! The monsoon rain was coming down hard, the mud squishing under our already dirty shoes and the cheers of the audience all made this game all the more exciting. After only a few seconds into the game, our opponents easily made a shot, and another, and so on and so forth. Although basketball is an American game, we were getting schooled by Gurukul!

The NSLI-Y team probably scored maybe three times total (and had to work really hard for those goals) but the game was seriously the most fun I had in a long time.

I will always remember playing basketball in the rain in India with such amazing people. Both teams took several pictures together after the game and laughed about the whole thing. Over the last few weeks of being around these talented kids, we have learned so much from them and have developed great friendships. It is very obvious that we and the students share such an interest in each other. I personally will remember not only this basketball game but this entire journey. For the rest of my life I will always look back on this exciting experience and once in a life time opportunity and hold it close to my heart.



Reflections of My First Day

by Leah Mohammed

When I arrived at my host family's house, I didn't know what to expect. I had been told not to have any expectations, which was a good rule of thumb going in. There were many interesting rules in the house that I was not used to in Harlem, NYC. First rule, shoes off. This polite command was followed by a quick, warm welcome from my host brother and Grandma...and the cook. I couldn't believe they had a cook!

I went into my large, beautiful room. I was surprised that there as so much space. (Maybe I did come in with some expectations). I had three big windows and more than enough storage space to store my families' clothes back home in. "Challo" my grandmother said. That meant, "Come on." She showed me the bathroom. I have to be honest when I say I was confused about the shower, as there was nothing separating it from the rest of the bathroom. I wondered what there surprises the house would have in store for me.

The cook gave me warm chai. This was the second rule. Drink your tea. Many times a day. We headed to the terrace, where I was pleasantly greeted by a beautiful open space on the roof of the building. It had coconut trees that were an arm's length away and a swing set. We sat there an talked for hours about what I like to do. Dadi (this is what I had learned to call grandma) even taught me a Hindi lullaby. We watched the sun set and then it was dinner time.

As I ate with my family, I learned a few more rules. Computer or TV for no more than an hour. Turn the boiler on (to heat the shower) for no more than ten minutes. Study and interact with the family. Help set the table for dinner. Use your right hand for eating, as the left hand is for taking seconds. You are never done eating unless you've had seconds, and wait until everyone is done until you clear the table. Through these rules, I could see that the family had a structure in place that was full of love and respect for one another. I was nervous and excited about finding my place in it.

Laying in bed at night, I reflected on the day, what I was missing, what I was learning. All of the rules that make up a culture and a life. I knew that this was going to be a difficult and also incredible experience, which it has definitely been.



मेरे छोटे से परिवार ने मुझे बहुत
अपनापन दिया। अपनी माँ के साथ
खाना बनाना - यह ज्ञान मेरे होने
घरों में लगाना है। यह छः हफ्ते मेरे
लिए अच्छे और आरामदायी रहे हैं।
मैंने बहुत कुछ सीखा।

Meri Parivar (My Family)

by Megan Sipes

I expected my host family to be helpful and generous and I could go on and on about how great they really all are. However, they were more than that to me. They have been the missing puzzle piece to my experience in India.

One late school and work night, after our usual routine of eating dinner together and then watching Master Chef and House, my host mother asked me what I believe in. After that one simple question we were up later than normal talking about everything from religion to our childhoods. This was the first that I had ever really talked deeply with her. I became aware of who she is and how she grew to be that way. "Energy can not be created nor destroyed." This was something she kept saying. I never thought this simple saying could have such a huge impact on the way one could live their life. My mom taught me that everything is about the energy you give off, and the energy you use, whether positive or negative. We both like the positive side better. She has truly inspired me and changed my point of view on many topics. These late night, philosophical conversations are things I will cherish for the rest of my life.

On the other hand, my host dad has been the one to teach me many things about India. Every morning, my host dad would go down with me and wait for the van to go to school. These are the times I really got to talk with him. Without him I would have never discovered what a simple thumb tap can do. He has taught me things I never knew existed in the world. He had helped my journey to be measured in family connection rather than miles.

Where do I even begin when talking about my host brother? He always put a smile on my face. From the very first day of school until the last my brother would ask as soon as I walked in the door from school what homework I had. He was always so eager to know what I did at school and help with Hindi, even though he was much younger than me. When we were around people speaking Marathi he would always translate or make sure I didn't feel left out. He had an abundant amount of energy and could be funny and responsible at the same time. He loved to take me cycling and tell me all about the neighborhood. I will always remember those early morning rides.

Finally, one of the people I will consider a best friend for the rest of my life has been my host sister. She was friendly off the bat, and someone I warmed up to right away. My host sister and I would always talk after school. I'm not sure if that was to avoid homework or not but either way I loved and needed it. She listened to me after a bad day or if I was confused. She seemed to always have a way of making me feel better. I have loved the time we could compare things about India and the US. She always had many questions about my life in America and took interest in many things I brought up. We have had many laughs and great memories. I'm sure there is going to be more to come.

I have learned that family isn't always blood. It's the people in your life who want you there. The ones who accept you for you are. The ones who encourage and inspire you. The ones that would do anything to see you smile. Always remember you will forever have a sister and daughter on the other side of the world and even though we may be worlds apart you will always be in my heart.

मेरे परिवार के बारे में जितना भी बोलू कम ही हूँ। मेरे माता-पिता मुझसे दुनिया भर की बातें करते थे जो मुझे अर्थोत्सुक मानस नहीं थीं। मेरे माई, बहन मेरे अच्छे दोस्त बन गये थे जिनके साथ मैं अपना दुःख भी बँट लेती। परिवार के साथ मैंने जितनी-कितनी अमेरिका के बारे में अनेक विषयों पर बहुत चर्चा की। यहाँ से जाने के बाद भी मुझे मेरा परिवार याद रहेगा।



Not As Easy As You Think.

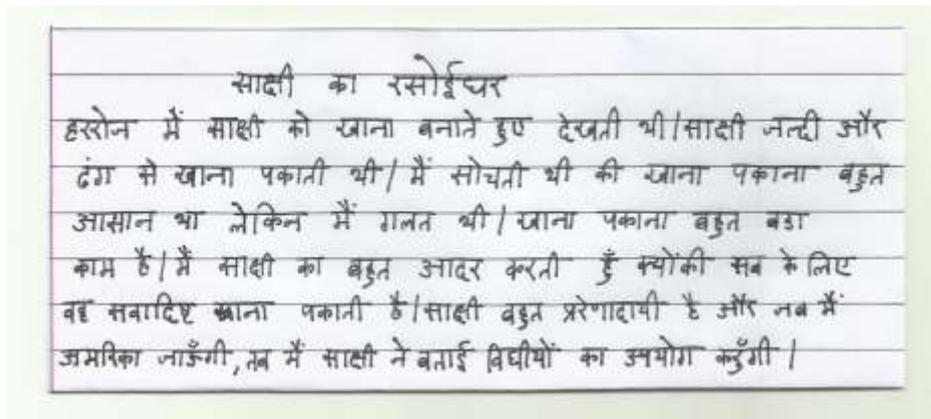
by Nina Josephson

When you watch the figure skaters in the Olympics, they glide across the ice with such grace and ease. You can't help but think to yourself, "I could do that. How hard could it be?" The skaters make spinning and flipping on ice look so effortless that until you actually get on the ice yourself, you don't realize how difficult just skating in a straight line really is.

Sometimes it felt the same way to watch my host mother Sakshi while she was cooking. After school, I would stand in the kitchen while she prepared dinner, writing down recipes and noting techniques. Sakshi did everything so quickly and neatly that it appeared to be very easy. Yet as soon as she asked me to help her with seemingly simple tasks, I r

ealized how mistaken I had been. Doing something like chopping onions or tomatoes were laborious tasks that took me twice as long as Sakshi. I was only capable of rolling chapatis into triangles. Until I actually attempted to cook like Sakshi did, I didn't realize how much work goes into feeding a family every evening. Although from a distance it looked quite simple, cooking such elaborate meals takes not only a lot of work but practice to be fluent.

Some of my fondest memories in India are in the kitchen with Sakshi, trying to understand directions in Hindi while learning new recipes. Cooking with Sakshi helped me to familiarize myself with both the language and culture. I greatly appreciated her patience and kindness in the weeks she has taught me to cook.







हिंदी भाषा सीखने के इशारे से भारत आए NSLI-Y 2014 के बच्चों को हिंदी पढ़ाना एक सुखद और आनंददायक अनुभव था। पूरी तरह मिनस सामाजिक, सांस्कृतिक माहौल में नई भाषा सीखना और वह भी छह हफ्तों की सीमित अवधि में, आसान नहीं था। हिंदी की अपनी अलग लिपि है, अपना व्याकरण है। इसे समझना इतना ही नहीं, व्यवहार में इसका प्रयोग करना, संयमच उन बच्चों के लिए एक चुनौती थी। लेकिन अभिन्नद्वैतीय बात है, कि अपनी लगन, निष्ठा एवं परिश्रम के बलापर ये बच्चे हिंदी पढ़ने, लिखने और बोलने लगे। इनके द्वारा कक्षा में पूछे गए सवाल, बाजारों उनकी सनकनों एवं कुतूहल के प्रमाण थे। यही कारण था कि कक्षा में अध्यापन - अध्यापन कभी भी नीरस ठकानेवाला नहीं हुआ। कक्षा में हमेशा जिंददिली बरकरार रही। इतने पढ़ाने में न केवल मजा आया, बल्कि बहुत कुछ नया सीखने को भी मिला।

— DR. REWA KULKARNI
NSLI-Y Hindi Teacher



04.07.2014