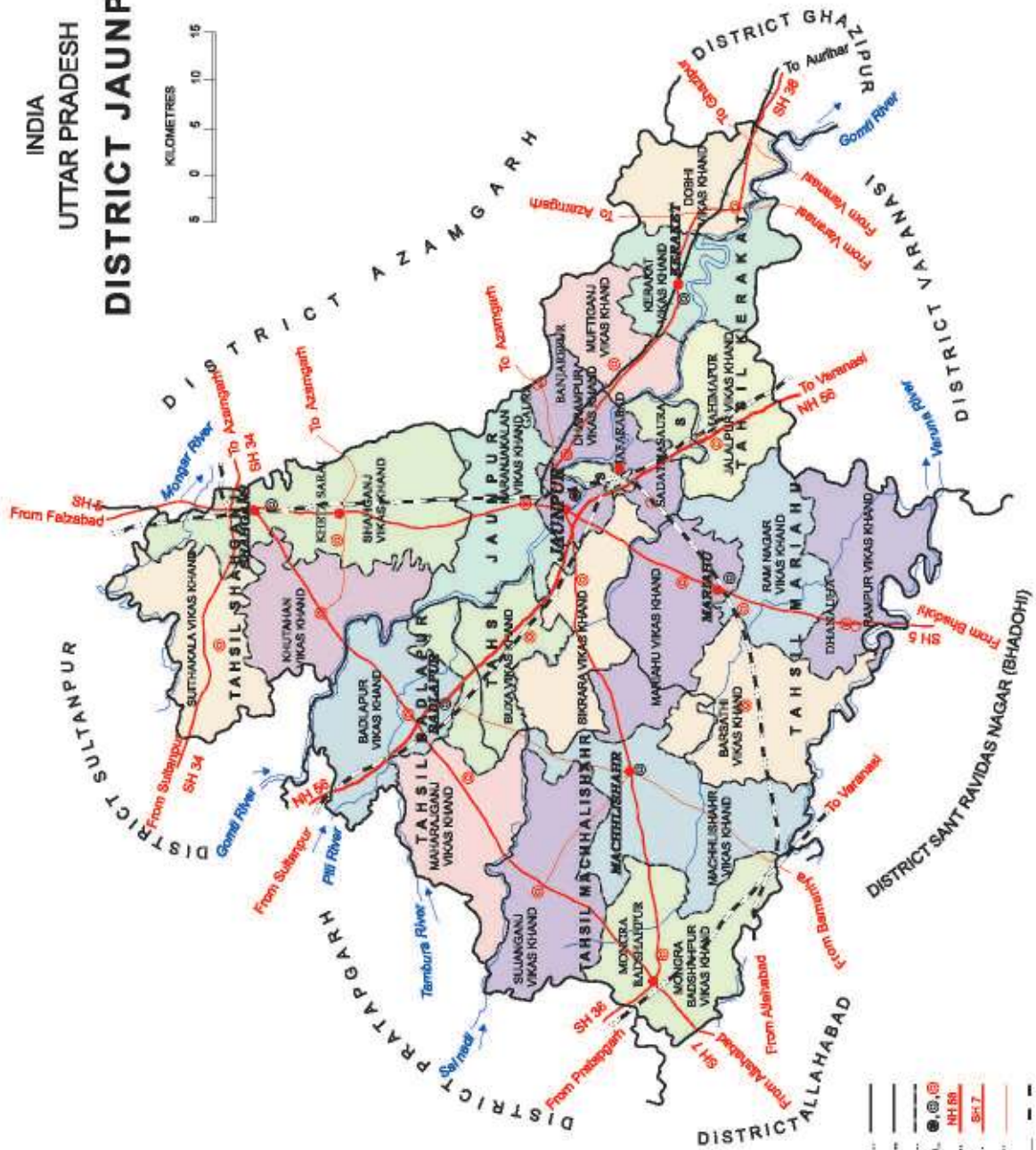


# JAUNPUR



INDIA  
UTTAR PRADESH  
**DISTRICT JAUNPUR**



- BOUNDARY: DISTRICT.....
- TAHSIL.....
- VIKAS KHAND.....
- HEADQUARTERS : DISTRICT, TAHSIL, VIKAS KHAND.....
- NATIONAL HIGHWAY.....
- STATE HIGHWAY.....
- IMPORTANT METALLED ROAD.....
- RAILWAY LINE : BROAD GAUGE.....
- RAILWAY LINE : METRE GAUGE.....
- RIVER AND STREAM.....
- TOWNS/CENSUS TOWNS WITH NAME.....

Note:- District/Tahsil Headquarters is also the Tahsil/Vikas Khand Headquarters.

8 - SIKRONI VIKAS KHAND

Source: India Administrative Atlases, Census of India

# Realising India Series (2017-2018)

## District Jaunpur

This Realising India report is a part of the series compiled by the ISDM Knowledge and Research Centre to disseminate the secondary research put together by the students of the PGP-DL programme at ISDM along with their reflections from the field as an output of their Rural Immersion.

Each part of this series contains findings from secondary research on the district in the first section and individual reflective pieces written by the students in the group while in the specific district. Some of these pieces have also been published in blogs and/or other web portals.

*\*Names have been changed to protect identities and privacy of persons students interacted with.*

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# JAUNPUR

## History

The history of Jaunpur dates back to 1388. Jaunpur was a cultural and educational hub as students from other countries would come here to learn Arabic and Persian. It is believed that Sher Shah Suri was educated here. A branch of Sufism called 'Khayal' (thought) originated here.

Feroz Shah Tughlaq, the Sultan of Delhi, founded the city to honour Muhammad Bin Tughlaq, his cousin, who was born as Jauna Khan. Feroz Shah Tughlaq appointed a eunuch in the name of Malik Sarwar as the governor of the region. Malik Sarwar and his adopted son, Mubarak Shah, founded the Sharqi dynasty. During 1400 the Sharqi dynasty reached its peak under the reign of Mubarak Shah's younger brother, Shams-Ud-Din Ibrahim Shah. His kingdom spanned from Bihar in the east to Kanauj in the west. The Sharqi dynasty built a lot of monuments in Jaunpur which are now a great tourist attraction. Shahi Bridge and Shahi Quila (the Jaunpur fort) are the two main monuments and Atala Masjid, Jama Masjid, Sheetala Chaukiyaa, Maihar Devi, Jama Masjid, Lal Darwaza Masjid and Kokari Masjid are famous religious sites in the district. These monuments and religious sites show a lot of influences of Hindu architecture. The striking similarities are very evident in the Atala Masjid, which was once the location of a temple of Atala Devi, a Hindu deity (A General Review of Jaunpur District, n.d).

## Geography

Bihar is home to the famous Madhubani paintings. Madhubani paintings have their roots in mythology. It is believed that when Sita got married to Ram, her father Raja Janak asked the villagers to paint the walls of their homes to celebrate her wedding. Hence Madhubani was originally painted on walls. When India was suffering during the great famine the women of Bihar started painting these on cloth and used it as a tool for economic welfare much against the will of the patriarchy in society. (Department of Industries, 2017)

**Location:** Jaunpur is found between co-ordinates 24.24N to 26.12N and 82.70E and 83.50E. It lies along an elevation of 79.5 – 88.4m above mean sea level. The district is found in the northwestern region of the division of Varanasi. The district covers an area of 4038 sq.km. (Geography of Jaunpur, n.d).

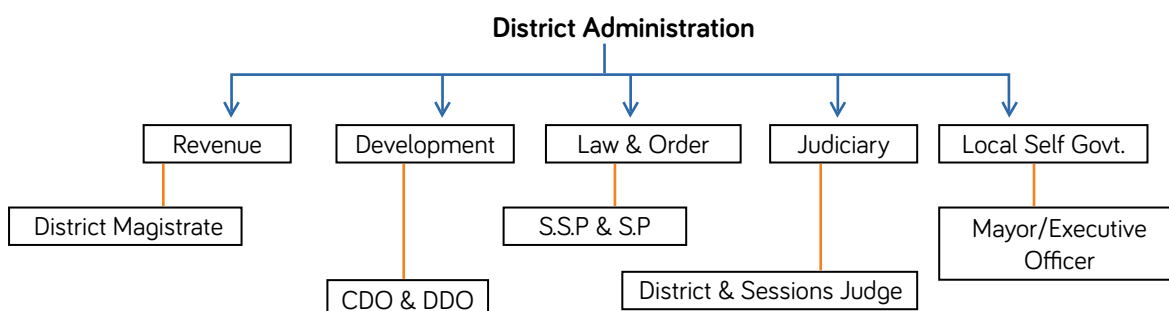
**Topography and rivers:** Jaunpur is largely flat, with several shallow river basins. The Gomti and Sai are perennially flowing in Jaunpur. The Varuna, Mamur, Gangi and Pili are smaller rivers found in the region. Due to the number of water bodies flowing through, Jaunpur often has floods, and the river basins have resulted in the region having loamy, clay-type soil (Geographical info, n.d).

**Minerals and soil:** Mining and excavation operations of the sand and gravel in the region yield ore that is used to produce lime for use in the construction industry. Overall however, Jaunpur does not produce many minerals (Geographical info, n.d).

**Temperature:** The temperatures of the district of Jaunpur ranges between a minimum of 4.30C and a maximum of 44.60C. Average annual rainfall is 987 mm (Geographical info, n.d).

## Administrative Structure

The district of Siwan is divided into two subdivisions namely Maharajganj and Siwan Sadar. It is further divided into 19 blocks. (District Administration, 2017)



District administration comprises of Revenue, Development, Police (Law and Order), Judiciary, and Local self-government.

This district has 6 tehsils (viz. Sadar, Mariyahun, Machhalishahar, Kerakat, Shahganj and Badlapur) and further into 21 Development Blocks, viz: Sondhi (Shahganj), Suithakala, Khutahan, Karanja Kala, Badlapur, Maharajganj, Sujanganj, Baksha, Mungra Badshahpur, Machhalishahar, Madiyahun, Barsathi, Rampur, Ramnagar, Jalalpur, Kerakat, Dobhi, Muftiganj, Dharmapur, Sikrara and Sirkoni.

With a view to enforce law and order, the district has been divided into 27 thanas, viz. Kotwali, Sadar, Line Bazar, Jafrabad, Khetasarai, Shahganj, Sarpatahan, Kerakat, Chandwak, Jalalpur, Sarai Khwaja, Gaurabad-shahpur, Badlapur, Khutahan, Singramau, Baksha, Sujanganj, Maharajganj, Mungrabadshahpur, Pawara, Machhalishahar, Mirganj, Sikrara, Madiyahun, Rampur, Barsathi, Nevadhiya and Sureri. Jaunpur is the district headquarters.

The district has 2 Lok Sabha and 9 Vidhan Sabha constituencies (Administrative Setup, n.d).

## Demography (District Census Handbook Jaunpur, 2011)

- District Jaunpur ranks 7th in terms of population in the state.
- Jaunpur district ranks 1st in terms of sex ratio (1,024) which is higher than the state average of 912 females for thousand males.
- Jaunpur district ranks 22nd in literacy with 71.5% which is higher than the state average 67.7%.
- 94 out of 3,381 villages in the district are uninhabited.
- The district accounts for about 2% of households (normal, institutional and houseless) in the state, with 663,513 households at an average of 6.8 people per household.

Number of villages		3,381	
Number of households	Normal	6,58,449	
	Institutional	3,592	
	Houseless	1,472	
	Total	663513	

Population	Total	44,94,204	
	Males	22,20,465	
	Females	22,73,739	
	Rural	41,47,624	
	Urban	3,46,580	
urban population %age		7.71	
Area (in sq km)		4038	
Density of population (persons per sq km.)		1113	
Sex ratio (Number of females per 1000 males)	Total	1,024	
	Rural	1,032	
	Urban	934	
Literates		Number	Percentage
	Total	27,31,677	71.55
	Males	15,65,394	83.8
	Females	11,66,283	59.81
Scheduled Castes	Total	9,90,345	22.04
	Males	4,94,226	22.26
	Females	4,96,119	21.82
Scheduled Tribes	Total	4,736	0.11
	Males	2,363	0.11
	Females	2,373	0.1
Number of Live Births (2014)*	Total	92,101	
	Males	48,267	
	Females	43,834	
Major Religions	Hindu		88.59
	Muslim		10.76
	Buddhist		0.18
	Christian		0.11
	Sikh		0.03
	Jain		0.01
Crude Birth Rate (AHS12-13)**			22.3
Crude Death Rate (AHS 12-13)**			8.3

Natural Growth Rate (AHS 12-13)**		14
Infant Mortality Rate (per 1,000 live births)**		75
Maternal Mortality Ratio (per 100,000 live births)**		281
Slum Population as %age of urban population		8.31%

Source: District Census Handbook Jaunpur, 2011, \*HMIS Data Analysis 2015, \*\* Annual Health Survey 2012-2013.

## Education

Education plays a vital role in social and economic development. The overall literacy rate in Jaunpur is 71.5%. There is a huge difference between male literacy rate in Jaunpur which is 77.3% and female literacy rate is 57.2% (District Census Handbook Jaunpur, 2011).

### Schools (District Elementary Education Report Card – Jaunpur, 2016):

- There are 260 clusters and 5585 schools spread across 2355 villages in Jaunpur.
- The number of private schools in Jaunpur is 2127 and the enrolment is 447,999 students.
- The number of government schools is 3361 and enrolment is 387,894 students.
- The number of Madrassas is 97 and enrolment number is 18,564 students.

Inference from District Elementary Education Report Card – Jaunpur, 2016:

- 99% schools have toilets for girls and boys
- Only 35% schools have electricity
- Enrolment of girls stands at 50%
- To improve school accessibility for children with disability, ramps have been constructed in 65% of schools
- School grades 1 through 5 have an enrolment ratio of 98 girls for every 100 boys.

According to the data from evaluation of National Child Labour Projects (2010), there are around 50 schools sanctioned to abolish child labour. 30 of these are operational, benefitting around 1400 children out of the 2500 children for whom funds have been sanctioned. Out of 1400 children, 603 are boys and 797 are girls (Rehabilitation of Child Labour in India, 2010).

### Colleges and universities:

The district holds an important position as a destination for international students learning Arabic and Persian. The two major educational institutions in Jaunpur are Purvanchal University, located approximately 10km outside the city, and Tilak Dhari College (TD College) on the south bank of the Gomti. In addition, there is an engineering college, Prasad Institute of Technology, Jaunpur, affiliated with UP Technical University, Lucknow. There are 50 post graduate institutes and around 200 undergraduate colleges in and around Jaunpur (Sheraj Hind – Jaunpur, 2006).



## Health

The National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) (2005-2012) was launched by the Central Government to deliver effective healthcare, adequate public health infrastructure and human resources to rural populations in states with poor health outcomes. The mission has a special focus on improving rural, women and children's access to affordable primary care.

The prime goal of NRHM is to reduce infant, child and maternal mortality through promoting newborn care, immunization, antenatal care, institutional delivery and postpartum care. In the above light, we have attempted to analyze the data on ground vis-a-vis the primary goals set out in NRHM.

 13 Community Health Centers

 2 District Hospital

 83 Primary Health Centers

 486 Sub Centers

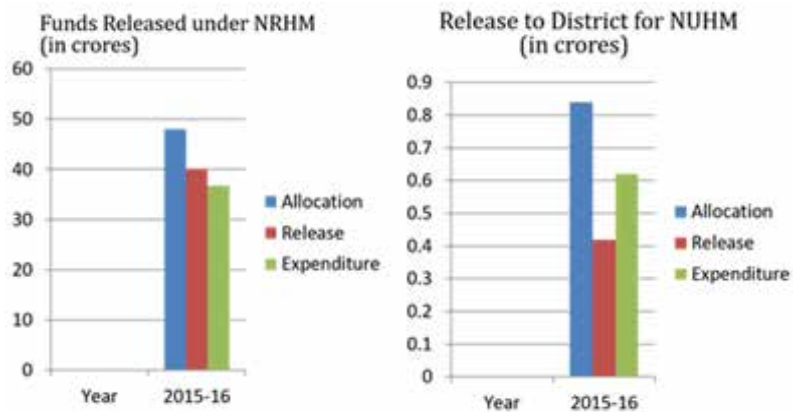
The image above shows key highlights of the primary healthcare status of Jaunpur (National Health Mission District Profile: Jaunpur 2016-17).

There is also a high prevalence of Ayurvedic hospitals (36 hospitals) in the district which could have an influence on the health seeking behavior of the people in Jaunpur (Brief Industrial Profile of Jaunpur District, 2011).

Reducing maternal mortality is one of the major goals under NRHM and various schemes have been introduced to ensure the same. 73.3% of women had institutional deliveries out of which about 50% of them were in Government institutions. A cash incentive programme, part of the Janani Suraksha Yojana is included as a central component of the NRHM to promote institutional deliveries. 53.3% women receive some ANC during their pregnancy (Government, private, community or any other) in Jaunpur district (National Family Health Survey, 2015).

• Jaunpur	Good health and well-being
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Maternal Mortality Ratio -</b> 346 in 2010-11. 281 in 2012-13. Decline- 18.79%</li> <li>• <b>Neo-Natal Mortality Rate-</b> 60 in 2010-11. 59 in 2012-13. Decline- 1.67%</li> <li>• <b>Under-five Mortality Rate-</b> 101 in 2010-11. 91 in 2012-13. Decline 9.90%</li> <li>• <b>Infant Mortality Rate -</b> 78 in 2010-11. 75 in 2012-13. Decline 3.85%</li> <li>• <b>Total Fertility Rate -</b> 2.9 in 2010-11. 2.9 in 2012-13 Decline- 0.00%</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• By 2030, reduce the global maternal mortality ratio to less than <b>70 per 100,000 live births.</b></li> <li>• By 2030, reduce neonatal mortality to at <b>least as low as 12 per 1,000 live births</b></li> <li>• By 2030, reduce under-5 mortality to at least as low as <b>25 per 1,000 live births.</b></li> </ul>

Sources: National Health Mission District Profile: Jaunpur 2016-17, UN Sustainable Development Goal 3



Source: National Health Mission District Profile: Jaunpur 2016-2017

Jaunpur, with a majority of its population living in rural areas and Uttar Pradesh being one of the focus states of NRHM receives substantial funds under the mission. One of the major activities of the National Urban Health Mission (NUHM) is to provide services to the urban slum, where 8.3% of the urban population of Jaunpur city live. Thus, the difference in the fund allocation under NUHM and NRHM (National Health Mission District Profile: Jaunpur 2016-2017).

### Livelihood

**Agriculture :** Agriculture is one of the major source of livelihood in Jaunpur district. Out of 32% total working population 68% are involved in agriculture. The district of Jaunpur lies in Eastern Plain agro-climatic region. 70% of the total area of the district is cultivable (2.79 lakh hectares.)

Of the total worker population in the district, 38% are cultivators, 30% engaged as agricultural labourers, 6% in household industry and 25% in others. Among male workers 38% are cultivators as compared to 37% in female workers. Similarly as against 26% male agricultural labourers, the proportion of female is 37% (District Census Handbook Jaunpur, 2011)

Total area	3.99lac hectares
Cultivable area	2.79 lac hectares(70% approximately)
Irrigated area	2.44 lac hectares (85% of cultivable area)
Net sown area	2.79 lac hectares
Gross cropped area	4.64 lac hectares
Cropping intensity	166%

Source: Agricultural Contingency Plan Jaunpur district, 2012

Despite a higher rate of irrigated area and high cropping intensity, productivity is less compared to national average as given below,

Productivity	Jaunpur	India
Rice	1826 kg/ha	2285 kg/ha
Wheat	2432 kg/ha	2985 kg/ha

Source: Agricultural Contingency Plan Jaunpur district, 2012

Principal Kharif crops are rice, jowar and bajra, urad, moong, mandua and sugarcane. And principal rabi crops are wheat, barley, arhar, pea and masoor (Agricultural Contingency Plan Jaunpur district, 2012).

**Industry:** Jaunpur lacks heavy industries and agriculture is the primary source of economic development in the district. There are two major Industrial areas, namely the Satharia Industrial Development Authority (SIDA-500 acres) and Sidhwan (50 acres) (Brief Industrial Profile of Jaunpur District, 2011). Some of the prominent industrial units set up are, Hawkins Pressure Cooker Ltd, Pepsi foods, Amit Oil Limited, Baidyanath Ayurvedic products, Sakshi Detergents, etc.

Other occupational options prevalent in the district are Carpet making, Wood & Furniture, Repairing & Servicing, Garments, leather-based and brick kilns. The Varanasi-Jaunpur highway is also a hotspot for industrial activity, with cotton mills, dairy units and animal husbandry operational near Karanja Kala (Geographical Info, n.d).

## Environment

The topography of Jaunpur is mainly a flat plain with multiple shallow rivers. Gomti and Sai are its main perennial rivers. These freshwater resources are being polluted and the water quality has diminished to a greater extent (Geographical Info, n.d). Rapid urbanisation and industrialisation of the region has been the primary cause of the pollution of surface and groundwater. Domestic and industrial effluents being directly lead into river basins is the primary cause for the same. A study was conducted by Sankat Mochan Foundation at five sampling sites in the city of Jaunpur along Gomti basin to assess the bacteriological pollution in rivers. The results showed that presence of fecal coliform is in the range between 3,10,000/100ml and 4,60,000/100ml when the permissible rate is 50/100 ml (Singh, 2015). Another study carried out in the Gomti river revealed that the river is heavily polluted by heavy metals discharged from tanneries, engineering units, food processing units, etc. in the region (Tiwari, 2014). The heavy usage of carbamate and pyrethroid insecticides to control insect and pests also washes into this river basin (Vengayil DT, 2011). The river Gomti in Lucknow is more polluted than the river Ganga in Varanasi, which is considered the most polluted river in the country due to heavy industrial effluents. Another study which was done on the Sai river showed that its water quality index is approximately 71, which means it is moderately polluted. An index level over 100 is unsuitable for human consumption (Kumari & Chaurasia, 2015).

Groundwater depletion has been taking place at a rapid pace in the district due to overexploitation of groundwater resources and the lack of desilting along the river irrigation canals. With respect to ground water quality, only 8 of the 21 blocks in the district are considered safe. A further 6 are categorised as Semi-Critical, 3 as Critical, and 4 blocks (namely Buxa, Karanjiakalan, Keerakat and Sikroni) as Overexploited (Pant, 2013).

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# Stories from the Field

## *🌀 The Story of Otherisation*

On the 7th day of a rural immersion, we split into smaller groups to visit various villages across blocks. Three of us went to Aara Village which was suggested by a journalist we had met on the second day. When we reached the village, we saw a few men sitting on a khatiya (a makeshift bed) outside someone's home, drinking their Sunday morning tea. We approached them and they were very welcoming and started conversing with us.

One of them, a professor at a college in the district, Hosla Prasad Sharma (name has been changed) started telling us about his home village, Aara. He spoke to us about the agricultural practices and the social dynamics in the village. Although Aara was famous for rice cultivation, due to a major drought in 2004, rice cultivation has been adversely affected. He also mentioned that the village had a lower percentage of the so-called upper castes.

While trying to understand the caste dynamics of the village deeply, we asked Hosla Prasad how people across castes interact with each other. He said that things have changed tremendously. Initially, the caste divide was based on the jobs people of a particular caste did but with changing times there have been certain breakthroughs in these dynamics. Hosla Prasad told us how two generations before him, people of the so-called lower caste used to collect cow dung and wash it off and find wheat grains in it and consume that after drying it. Not only did they not have the means and the access to food grains, but they also were in such adversity that the people of the lower castes would fight amongst themselves for the cow dung. When we asked him that do the people of the region not discriminate against the so-called lower castes even today to which he said, "Jab who karm he nahi toh bhed bhaav kahan (when they do not do those jobs anymore then why would we discriminate.)" He said that education has played a pivotal role in changing these social behaviours. He said that now they not only talk to them but they would also visit their houses. After a pause, he added, but they wouldn't eat food in their house. We have come a long way but we certainly have a long way to go.

I realised that changing the mindsets and certain social traditions will not only take years of patient and uninhibited efforts but also ways of connecting and communicating with the community where they do not feel offended but at the same time recognise the value of breaking their certain norms and practices.

— Mohd. Sameer

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## *🌀 The Story of Dignity*

Susheela, a commercial sex worker who never had formal education is working as a peer in an organisation working on AIDS control. She is 42 years old, has two children and has been in this profession since she was 18 years old. She is from a Below Poverty Line (BPL) family, where the in-laws and her family live under the same roof

and share a common kitchen. The residence where she lives belongs to her In-laws. Her husband was a truck driver and she lost him to HIV/AIDS. It was a miracle that she did not contract the disease from him. After his death she was the only earning member of her family. She tried to go back to her parental home but as she had other sisters who are of marriageable age, her parents withdrew support and she was on her own. She was responsible for providing for 5 members of the family.

Having realised that there needs to be more money for sustenance she tried doing menial jobs and tried to work as a house help, but she felt that she was being underpaid; at various work places her employers tried to take advantage of her situation and tried to sexually exploit her.

Money was the main consideration. She compromised with her dignity and joined the profession. The profession gets her more money. But now she is old and has less clientele. She made a choice to get her daughter who was barely 15, into the profession as well. She brought her daughter to the NGO to get education regarding sexually transmitted diseases and that's when she was inducted as a peer, she still continues to be a commercial sex worker, her daughter is also in the same profession and has been working with the NGO ever since.

Her story gave me an insight into how lack of safe working place for women in informal sector (housemaid), lack of dignified livelihood options (underpaid work), cultural practices and parental apathy (no place to stay) makes sex work an option for livelihood. In the name of survival, compromising with one's dignity and leveraging everything that they have (in her case she even got her daughter into the profession) is the only option available. How can one make a better choice when there aren't any options available?

Panna ji, has been working as a project manager with an NGO working with commercial sex workers. He is 54 years old and has been in the social sector for the last three decades but he joined this organisation quite recently. During our discussion to understand the sex trade, and various problems I asked his opinion .

I asked if giving legal status to prostitution will help reduce the safety, health, child rearing, mobility, stigma and marginalisation related issues and problems faced by the commercial sex workers?

He said “Madam, legal nahin toh, illegal bhi toh nahin hai (they are not legal, but they are not illegal as well)”.

In that moment, I that all people who are citizens of a country, irrespective of their work of line should lead dignified lives. Why should a commercial sex worker not receive the same benefits that others enjoy. Their choices should not create more prejudices for them. Especially when we haven't tried to provide them livelihood options that pay them at par.

Lila, is 28 years old, was born in a poor household. Her parents could not afford her education and they lived like nomads for most of their lives. The hope of finding better livelihood options, brought them to Jaunpur. Her parents did menial jobs. Both her parents do not keep well. In order to afford medical bills and for basic survival she chose to be a commercial sex worker. She has her parents living with her and she is also a peer in the NGO working on creating awareness regarding sexually transmitted diseases. During her stint at the NGO she got encouraged to get educated. She is now pursuing her bachelors in the hope that education would help

her get better livelihood options and would help her get out of this profession. She gains strength to carry on doing what she doing by imagining what it would be like once she has a better job. She aspires to break her cycle of poverty through education.

It is inspiring to see Lisa's resolve and her conviction that education would help her find her find dignity and a way out of the profession. I could see how much she disrespected herself for choosing this profession. Jaunpur is a small city with restricted livelihood options. I was saddened by the thought of what would happen to her if she didn't find a livelihood option after completing her education.

—Dr. Mahesh Singh

### *🌀 The Story of Aspirations*

It was not the first time I have been to the rural areas of India; I have roots in a rural region myself. My childhood was in a village with the privilege of enjoying all the good meals of the day, good clothes to wear, education in a good school and the freedom to dream, ability to visualise a future and resources to fulfil them. But this is not same in the thousands of villages in India.

During Realising India, we stayed at the Raghuvanshi Hotel, where a young boy named Ravi, was in charge of serving us food on our table morning and evening. He was very active and firm in his job. He always ensured that every one of us has enjoyed the food and were satisfied during our stay. Because of his bewitching personality, we became friends and my interaction with him have always been inspiring. Such a hard-working boy! He is only 20 years old. He is basically from a nearby village and living in the city to study here. His parents don't know that he works in hotel but he says in this way he is managing to stay for free and saved some money. "I don't belong to this place brother, but circumstances are such," he said.

Another young champion, I met in Kohra village named Vikram Kant. He guided us to the house of the Public Distribution System (PDS) distributor and on the way, he shared that he studied in the X standard in the city. Hearing that I asked, "then why are you here, didn't you do school today?" To my shock, he doesn't go to school regularly. It was only a matter of few hundred rupees, but his parents are unable to afford him a uniform and thus he will go to school to sit for exams only. While sharing his struggle to stay connected to education he also shared his plans for higher studies. All his dreams are to secure a good job and get his family out of their mud house.

On the last day in the Poteria village, continuing regular conversation with the villagers about the village, my attention went to children playing nearby. It was some strange game, they had a few stones, leaves, grass and a couple of pieces of plastic garbage. They were very happy and enjoying their play and I joined them. I came to know they have installed their thella (a vendor's cart) and they are trying to sell their stuff. So many thoughts were struggling in my mind and I was feeling complete helplessness. My state of mind was disturbed. I used to play very different games when I was of their age.

Returning back to Delhi was a difficult journey now. The energy I saw in the eyes of children playing 'thella' game was very bright, I hope it will not lose their brightness in poverty. Vikram Kant is very ambitious but he is struggling to pursue his educa-

tion. Ravi who is studying ends up serving food to guests most of his time.

I am optimistic but I don't know when Ravi will be able to get where he belongs. This is not the story and aspiration of Jaunpur alone. This is the case for all of India. Post 70 years of independence, we as a nation are far behind in fulfilling the aspiration of young people of our country. For me, this was not funny when Dr. Bobby John said to the class "He is a receptionist to the Republic of India". What will it take India to help thousands of children, Vikram, Ravi realising their dreams?

—*Inderpreet Singh*

### *🌀 The Story of Altruism - Meri Jaan (Jaun)pur - The Two Guavas*

The two-week Realising India journey to Jaunpur district in eastern U.P, along with my lovely team could be termed as my first official fieldwork in the development sector. That fact also gave me abundant energy and enthusiasm to interact and work along with the people in Jaunpur despite the language differences. The moment we arrived in the district for which extensive secondary research had been done, was amazing, with all the details about the district coming in front of my eyes as if I was wearing a Google glass.

After trifurcating our group left for the village visit, my sub group decided to pay a visit to the village called Gurumpur (name changed), 27kms away from the city and falls under Sayoni (name changed) block of Jaunpur district. There was no public transport system to reach that village. With the typical city-bred mindset, we believed on the Google map which later failed us in taking us to our destination. After much struggle, our sub group reached the village and decided to go to the Primary school to get know about its status and functioning. We introduced ourselves to the head master of that school, who was clad in a very simple formal attire. Later it turned into an hour-long conversation about the school, ground reality of government schemes and village. In mean the time, I took a stroll in the premises to get know about effective maintenance of the school by the staff. Unlike the picture I imagined for a school which is in deep pocket village, this school almost looked like a model school for its functioning and clean environment. This school is for the I to V standards with children having 4 classrooms with tables and benches. Each class has the strength of 40 students. Separate restrooms for boys and girls, play area and drawings of leaders and their quotes, national animal, flower on the walls. It also had a functioning mid-day meal preparation room which was serving Khichidi to the kids during our stay at the school. During our conversation, we also got to know that the headmaster's son studies in a private CBSE syllabus based higher secondary school near the city and he also belongs to the so-called lower caste community.

With the help of the headmaster, we went to the Pradhan's house. Unfortunately, the Pradhan had gone to his relative's house in the city, but we did get an opportunity to have a conversation with his uncle, a retired schoolteacher. We were served jaggery balls and namkeen, after introducing ourselves. The Pradhan's family seemed affluent with a couple of cars and bikes, and a tractor in the parking area and their house had two floors. The Pradhan's uncle was telling us about his family achievements and Jaunpur's illustrious history for most of the time during our conversation with him.



While on our way to meet other sections of people in the village, a fragile old man sitting in a chair, who belonged to the same so-called upper caste, Brahmins as the Pradhan's family were, called and asked us questions. After replying to his questions, he burst into tears and shared his sad story that his son was ostracised by the village as he was in love with a girl from the so-called lower caste. This shocking story was contradicting the statement said by Pradhan's uncle about no communal or caste divides in the village.

On our path to visit the so-called lower caste community in that village, we met a man who belongs to the mallaah community and he lives in the same part of the village. And he did a transect walk for us, which is also one of the tools and techniques we learnt to know places and boundaries of the village. His house along with other two was made out of the remains from the crops and there was nothing inside their houses except a few clothes, utensils and gunny bags. This sad reality showed us how our hard-earned money that we pay as tax to the government for development goes waste due to bad politics and poor administration.

Just leaving before their hamlet, when I asked about what their aspiration is, they replied, "how we can dream, when we are struggling to survive a day". That reply made a huge dent in my heart. Even in this tragic situation he also gave us two big Guavas to eat, which they would have kept for their children. After much compulsion, we accepted it and bid adieu, and I made a promise to myself to learn and work to the fullest for the upliftment of those deprived people in the society wherever I work in the following years.

—Manikandan

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## *3 The Story of Struggle*

### *The Sad Truth: The Other Side of the River*

This moment leads me seven years ago where I remember the time when my father narrated a story of my great grandfather and his family struggles- being poor, having a hand to mouth existence, bare minimum clothing to wear and work as a manual labour. Hah! This story was just a narrative for me, but my father was conveyed a message that my young mind couldn't comprehend.

Years passed by...

On 19th June '17, my colleagues and I visited a village where I went to a small community called Luwa. It was 500 metres away from the main road. As I walked, the small lanes were so sandy that I could see my footprints. As I walked further, the path towards the community was sandy and there were trees on both the sides of the lane. The place was beautiful but there was a shady version to this blissful ecstasy. From the distance, I saw children and women looking at us. As I came closer to them, they greeted me and I did the same. They stared at me as if they never see an outsider coming to their place; maybe they had lots of questions to ask or maybe they had lots of stories to tell. Their eyes were probing and dense.

As my colleagues started talking with the men, I decided to talk to the women.

At first, the women shied away and paused reluctantly before talking to me. I insisted and tried my best to talk with them. Later, they opened up to me. One of the wom-

en said that the land that they are living on now doesn't belong to them, it belongs to the so-called higher caste. The land that belongs to them originally was taken by the government which was beside the river for construction of a bridge. Therefore, they had to move out and settle in the place provided by the so-called higher caste. They were not paid compensation as well by the government. I can feel the sense of melancholy in their voice.

As I went around to their house- they showed everything that they have. The houses were built with thatched roofs and I wondered how will it be during rainy and windy seasons.

As I interacted more with them, I got to know that they have limited awareness about the schemes and policies that are implemented and available. And also, they mentioned that most of the time, their rights are denied as they are the lowest community in the village. Their voices fall on deaf ears.

One of the intriguing responses was by a girl when I asked her if she goes to school. She said she studied till the V standard, after that she left the school, further she stated that they are so poor that her parents can't afford to send her to school, so, she discontinued her studies. Her mother said that when her daughter reaches the marriageable age, she will have her married. And I stood there, just helpless.

They have such little resources, but they try their best to sustain themselves.

As I walked back, it was heart-rending. My life is enriched with the things I want, there are so little limitations. The life that I am living is because of being born in a privileged family. But I never tasted hardships and struggles that my great grandfather, grandfather and my father underwent. I realised now why my father narrated that story to me seven years ago. I know and understand myself more now why I am in this development and social sector?

Still, I wonder when development will reach the Luwa community?

It baffles me to see this level of disparity, life isn't fair all the time, but the obstacles are simply impossible for some. I have come to realise one thing; a star shines the brightest when it is the darkest. When I feel lost, when I am bogged down by many difficulties, it will be a consolation in itself to have knowledge of the fact that there are people who undergo a lot more but still face every day with a smile.

*—Imdangjungla Jamir*

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### *🌀 The Story of Rights - A Day in Primary School*

The district of Jaunpur is known for the educational infrastructure that it provides. To understand the district and its deliverables in terms of social and economic well-being for the population we started by exploring the situation of primary school facilities among many public institutions of the district. Upon interacting with few of the prominent individuals in a block, I was given an interesting piece of information, that Jaunpur is the only district in UP to have achieved 100% coverage in providing complete boundary to school infrastructure, which was a new metric for me to measure standard of the school. This information was surprising for me that most of the govt primary schools in the state do not have defined boundaries, which is vital for the safety and security of the school and the pupils. I thought for a while

about how authorities can be ignorant to missing out on such a basic aspect of such an important institution?

The next day we were in a remote village to observe the way daily activities happen in and around and how life goes about in that area. We went to a nearby government primary school where the children were happily running out because the school had announced an early leave to the students as the harvesting season was around. The headmistress of the school was welcoming as we introduced ourselves to her and our agenda of visiting the village. She invited us inside the school premises to discuss about education in the village. The premise contained of three small buildings where each building was of the size of a small classroom of which one was out of order due to structural instability. We took our seats, along with the headmistress, three teachers and two Anganwadi staff who were running the school. They spoke to us about the positive efforts invested by them like the distribution of Identity Cards and books to the students by the head of the school which had resulted in increased enrolment rate of the school; their positive incentives had resulted in continuous increase in the number of students enrolled in the school in past five years, which was a very positive sign.

During the discussion I came to notice that on one of the building ‘class I – III’ was written in Hindi, which lead me to ask how they manage such high numbers of students (108) in seemingly limited infrastructure? I came to know that they conducted three different classes from I to III in the same classroom.

This information led me to contemplate on the learning outcomes of the students of the classroom. Primary education plays a significant role in the development of a child, and this age bracket is considered as the most formative period during an individual’s development. Nurturing and imparting right and quality education is of utmost importance for the development of cognitive abilities of a child. The Indian government has already acknowledged the fundamental Right to Education for every Indian citizen, regardless of age or socio-economic status. In this context, I wonder, what do we actually mean by right to education? It’s hard to foresee hope sometimes, but I like to be optimistic in this case.

—Fijesh Vanian

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### *🌀 The Story of Despair*

“Siksha Nagari Jaunpur mein aapka swagat hein” (Education city Jaunpur Welcomes you)

It was a hazy and bumpy ride from the railway station to our hotel in Jaunpur after an unanticipatedly long train journey. The first thing that caught my eye was a big board welcoming people to the city that said, “Education city Jaunpur welcomes you”. The inclination people have towards education is very pleasing and the awareness about importance of education is very high.

One day, three of us from our team went to a village which is in one of the top two blocks with respect to literacy and education in Jaunpur. We were guided by the Sarpanch and he took us to different bastis (clusters) in the village. They were all mostly pockets of people of the same caste or religion living together. My heart started beating really fast when I stepped into this basti which was dark and insubstantial. It was a Muslim populous village where most of the people were unemployed. A

minimum of one member of each house had migrated in search of employment and were working in Mumbai, Gujarat or Delhi. The entire family relied on remittances from that one earning member for their survival. The place looked abandoned and disconnected, the houses were small and looked very fragile and temporary, no electricity, no sanitation facilities and it seemed like this village has been long forgotten in terms of delivery of public services.

While I was gazing at everything happening around me, suddenly, an old lady came near me, held me by my hand and dragged me near her house. Tears gushed down her cheeks and she started crying loudly. I got to know later that she was deeply stressed by a debt trap her family was into. Her son had taken a loan of Rs 50,000 with an aspiration of starting his own business but due to very high rates of interest, the repayable amount has summed up to around 1 and a half lakhs now. Her son was working in Mumbai and she was living in a very small house along with her daughter-in-law and her grandchildren. While she was crying, she started shouting at me in a few instances and requesting me at other instances for help. She mistook me as the block development officer (BDO) of that block and thought we had come there for helping them out of their miseries and problems.

In our earlier conversation with the Sarpanch, we got to know that the BDO of that block is a woman. I was shocked at this mistaken identity and started feeling nervous as there were many people around me witnessing this scene. She gestured to fall on my feet and I had to go down on my knees to stop her from doing that. She said, “I fall on your feet and beg you to help me”. I felt so bad and dumbstruck sensing what was happening there. It was painful seeing someone as old as my grandma trying to fall at my feet. I started telling her that I am not the BDO or any government official but a student who has come to this village with a purpose of learning.

She kept voicing out loud and I was on my feet to tell her that I was not what she thought I was. The information asymmetry and the level to which there is engagement between officials and the village communities was very evident then. She kept asking me what I could do for them and I had no words to say other than to tell her again that I was only a student. I didn't want to promise her that I would pass on the information about the situation to the concerned person or the BDO. Her voice kept ringing, “what can you do for us? What can you do for us?” I told her, “When I come to a position in life when something is expected of me, I would never let anybody down”. While I was walking back from her house, I realised what I had promised to her. It seemed like my world was not only the people close to me but it was way bigger than that. This will stay in my memory like a lifelong reminder for me to always be an authentic development professional.

—Neerajha

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### *3 The Story of Innocence*

It is still a very vivid picture in my mind; her eyes wide open, her palms covering her mouth which had dropped open because of the question I had asked. “Nahi, hum aisa nahi kar sakte” (No, we cannot do that), said the little 7-year-old.

On our final visit to villages in Jaunpur district, we went to Potariya village which was very secluded and far away from the city. The way to the village had difficult, narrow roads full of potholes and ten of us were jammed in one car. Once we reached

the village, we split and went in different directions. Two of us saw two girls who were wearing their school uniform, sitting on the pavement and writing something in their book. I asked them what they were doing but they responded coldly (quite understandably since they had seen us for the first time). We thought we would go ahead and find the school they were going to. All the children had gathered around the school after their afternoon namaaz (prayers offered in the Islamic faith), waiting for the headmaster to come and open the Madarsa gates.

The children looked at us with complete astonishment, some giggled at us when we waved at them, some hid behind their friends when we looked at them and mostly, everybody seemed to find us amusing. The headmaster and the teachers came in a while and we asked them if we could interact with them and the children. They welcomed us in and introduced us to a section of 6-7-year olds.

When the children saw us coming with their teacher, there was a sense of trust in them and they started talking to us. They were a bunch of happy, excited children who couldn't stop giggling after every sentence I spoke. The girls sat to my right and the boys were sitting on my left. I started asking them questions like do they like coming to the Madarsa, what all do they learn here, what do they like studying the best, who are their friends, what do they do all day. Then I asked them what they would want to become in the future, and they didn't have many answers. I asked them if anybody wants to become a teacher. A few hands rose up.

Quite naively, we asked if anybody wants to become an engineer, forgetting that our audience were second graders. Then I asked if anybody likes to paint and they all had a very blank look. It seemed unusual to me. I instantly wondered if they had ever painted before and played with crayons. Do they enjoy dancing? Nobody answered and stared back at me; but one of the girls gasped in astonishment, her eyes wide open, her palms covering her mouth which had dropped open because of the question I had asked. "Nahi, hum aisa nahi kar sakte! Yeh haram hai! (we cannot do this. It is forbidden)" It affected me deeply to see how we do not even give the freedom to experience simple joys in life to our children in the name of religion, gender, caste etc and all such societal constructs that govern our conscience.

In a world where values seem to have been forgotten, we seem to tell an entire generation what is to be considered immoral. She knew that dancing was not for her without even letting her body flow with music. It is important that we do not take away childhood from our children.

—Drashiti Shah

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### *🌀 The Story of Discrimination - The Mangta community*

Kulhana Mau Khaas, in Jaunpur district was the first village I visited during the 'Realising India' journey.

It all began that morning when we met one of the affluent members of the village to know about the village. Over the course of the conversation I found out about the caste structures in the village and the discrimination perpetuating because of that. Among the so-called lower castes resided the lowest caste people, called the Mangtas. They were categorised as general and were not given any privileges or any government schemes.

After having a chat with this person, we proceeded to the village primary school that catered to 173 children from the Mangta community. We went there with a young boy sent by an affluent person. He waited for us at the school while we spoke to the principal. During the conversation I found out that the school has been there for past 4 years but there is no electricity. And this was just one of the many problems that existed in the school. I realised that we can't even imagine our lives with such problems.

From the school we proceeded to the Mangta community. I requested the young boy to introduce me to someone to start a conversation. What happened then shook me. The boy refused to talk to those people. While we just turned to speak to someone, the boy vanished from behind our back. For a while I couldn't understand what had happened. Only a little later I realised that he was from a so-called upper caste and so he wouldn't stand in the so-called lower community, interaction was a far-fetched thing.

This visit brought out indifference, discrimination (caste, class, gender) lack of care for fellow humans, children deprived of their right to education, unbelievably difficult living conditions, uncertainty, power structures, lack of voice and expression and so much more. In the same community, there are people working hard endlessly to make their ends meet so that their children can go to school, and on the other hand people who don't send their children to school just because they think it is not important. Higher caste people don't talk to lower caste people, forget helping them in need. People in this community depend solely on daily alms for survival.

—Priyanka Gupta

### *3 The Story of Privileges and the lack of it*

In the course of development discourse,  
You come across some amazing buzzwords.  
Makes you feel invulnerable, invincible  
Poised to take on the whole wide world.

Reality, in all it's mighty glory  
Naturally puts a spanner in those dreams.  
A moment is all it takes  
And in that, you stand naked, enveloped in screams.

He wasn't much to look at  
You would ignore him on your usual stroll.  
His pains invisible, indifferent to you perhaps  
Unnoticed lies the misery that has taken its toll.

His shanty was made of broken bricks  
Those few additions, leftovers of some site.  
He offers you rotis, his ration for the day  
You refuse of course, not trusting what you bite.

He understands it, obviously  
Your privilege radiating in the forefront.  
No envy, just a resigned acceptance  
Years of indifference evidenced in his brunt.

‘There never has been electricity here, saheb’  
My mind wanders to that 7th day of September  
Of that heinous torture I went through  
When electricity went off... 27 minutes, I remember.

I ask him about the depilated village,  
He pauses... torn between two conflicting thoughts.  
Should he praise the village to an ‘Aditi’  
Or should he state the misery the land had brought?

Ready was I, preparing for the litany of abuses  
Or the choicest profanities, screaming in agony.  
On the Pradhan, on the collector, the system  
and on that ‘Brahmin’ scowling from that elevated balcony.

He does none of these, much to my surprise  
Pointing to the river, he asks for my company.  
An easy choice to make,  
An escape from all the uncomfortableness.

The river’s beauty for all to see ...  
Marred by the sight of a glaring figurine.  
Standing like a pillar ... an untended bridge,  
Seven years into the making, still undone.

‘Crores of Rupees, Sahib’, he says ...  
The quantum giving weight to the value.  
Seven years of disuse ... seven years of apathy  
No thought given to us few.

He breaks down ...  
His cries echoing, so painfully desolate.  
And as I walk back to my room...  
All that is left - a question about my privilege

—Sajit Nair

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