

SHAMLI





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Realising India Series (2017-2018)

District Shamli

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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Contents

1. History.....	01
2. Geography.....	01
3. Demographic Profile	01
4. Administrative Structure	02
5. Political Structure	02
6. Education	03
7. Health	03
8. Livelihood.....	03
9. Environment	04
10. References	05
11. Stories from the Field	07

SHAMLI

History of Shamli

Legend has it that Lord Shri Krishna travelled through Shamli from Hastinapur to the war zone of Kurukshetra during the battle of the Mahabharata. On his way, he rested under the cool and shady trees at Hanuman-Dham and drank water from an old well to quench his thirst. He then blessed the place by worshipping Shri Hanuman before going on his way to Kurukshetra. Former names of Shamli were Shyama Wali and Shyama Nagari. According to some stories, this city was constructed by Kunti's son Bheem, one of the Pandavas (Industrial profile of District Shamli, 2017).

Historical evidence suggests that Maratha soldiers developed this area as a Cantonment, and revolutionaries in the Indian freedom movement used it as a safe hideout (Industrial profile of District Shamli, 2017). The area was prominent during the first struggle for freedom against the East India Company in 1857. The town has also witnessed important wars such as all three Battles of Panipat, as well as battles during the rise of the Sikhs. The district was also at the centre of the successful Green Revolution that helped India become self-sufficient in food production and gave the country confidence during the years after the end of British occupation ("History of Shamli, Uttar Pradesh", n.d.).

Geography

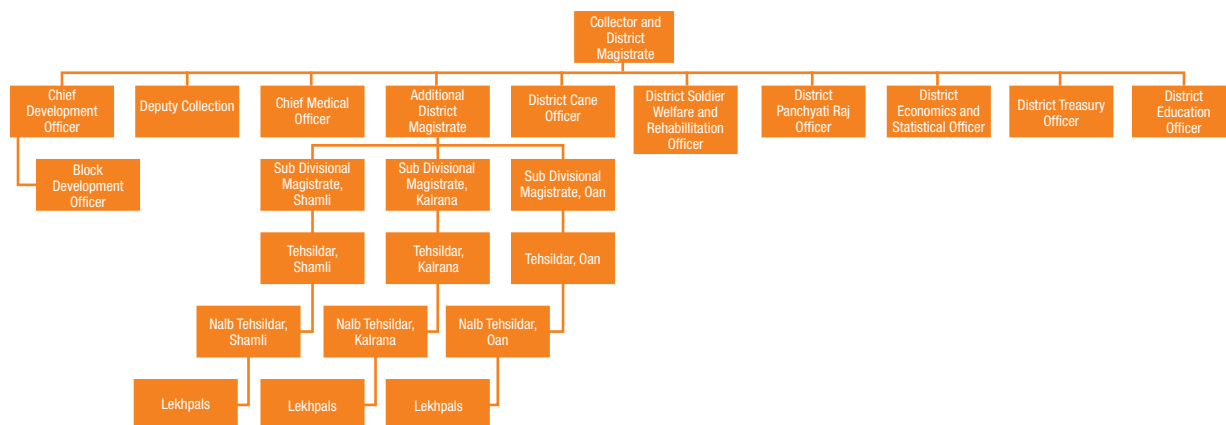
Shamli falls within the co-ordinates 29.45°N 77.32°E and is situated at an average elevation of 248m. It lies east of the Yamuna river. The Yamuna lies along the borders of two Indian states, Uttar Pradesh and Haryana. The region of land where Shamli is located lies between the deltas of two rivers, the Ganga and the Yamuna. This is referred to as 'Doab' (Two rivers) ("Welcome to Shamli", 2011). Sugar is a major crop cultivated in the region, while it is also known for its steel, paper and automotive wheel rim industries. The average rainfall in the district is 838mm. Temperature ranges between an average high of 33.2°C in the summer months and an average low of 13.8 °C in winter ("Shamli Climate", n.d.).

Demographics

- » Key Statistics (Demography Shamli, 2011):
- » Population (2011 Census): 13,13,650
- » Population Density: 1125/sq. km
- » Literacy Rate Total: 53.89%
- » No. of Gram Panchayats: 230
- » Sex Ratio (2011): 878
- » % of children under the age of 6: 15.9% (Census Handbook Muzzafarnagar, 2011)
- » % SC/ST population: 12.5% (Census Handbook Muzzafarnagar, 2011)

Administrative Structure

The District Magistrate is the chief functionary at the District level. All the departments such as General Administration, Police, Revenue, Education, Health, report to the District Magistrate (DM). The following organograms illustrate the same. The Superintendent of Police reports to DM at the District level, and Deputy Inspector General of Police at Zone level in Shamli ("Administrative setup, Shamli", n.d.).



Organogram of Dist. Administration in Shamli (“Administrative setup”,n.d)

Political Structure

Shamli district has three Uttar Pradesh Assembly constituencies - Shamli, Thana Bhawan and Kairana.

Shamli: This constituency has 2,75,490 registered voters (2012), consisting of 1,54,619 male and 1,20,871 female voters. The constituency was formed in 2008 following the Delimitation of Parliamentary and Assembly Constituencies Order, 2008. Voting first took place in 2012 in this constituency (General Election 2012 polling percentages, 2012)

Thana Bhawan: This consistency has 2,84,629 (2012) registered voters, consisting of 1,58,423 male and 1,26,206 female voters. Voting first took place in this constituency in 1974, and the full extent of the constituency was clarified in the Delimitation of Parliamentary and Assembly Constituencies Order, 2008 (General Election 2012 polling percentages, 2012)

Kairana: This consistency has 2,68,854 registered voters, consisting of 1,49,090 male and 1,19,764 female voters (General Election 2012 polling percentages, 2012)

Cultivators and agricultural labourers form 58% of the total main workers while workers engaged in mining and quarrying constitute 38% and the household industry contributing to another 2.7%. (“Working Population – Shamli Tehsil”, 2011) According to data available from the year 2001, there were 1,35,000 families that were Below the Poverty Line (BPL) in Shamli district (Shamli district profile, 2011). However, the situation has drastically changed after the communal riots of 2013. There are several reports and newspaper articles that mention the phenomenon of ghettoisation that has taken place in the district, primarily driven by the fear of influential Jat families after the riots. Muslims from lower socio-economic strata were the worst affected by this, since they could not afford to go back to their homes in their villages, having to join Muslim settlements to find shelter and safety. The riots have also notably severed the cordial relationships that existed between the Hindu and Muslim communities that peacefully co-inhabited the district. The Jat community was also indirectly affected by the riots as it reduced the availability of labour for cultivation and other farming activities. The agricultural labour community largely comprises of Muslims, who have been unwilling to engage in any activity with the Jats following the riots (Joshi, 2013). There were also a series of rapes that took place in the area and the riot-affected areas in the district especially became increasingly unsafe for women. This resulted in several imposed lifestyle changes for the girls and women in more ways than one. Girls in relief camps are married earlier than usual over concerns of safety (Tandon, 2013).

Education

Shamli has a number of education institutions ranging from 1071 primary schools, 425 middle schools, 98 secondary and senior- secondary schools, 10 colleges and 3 Industrial Training Institutes (ITI). Though

the numbers are good, there has been considerable number of dropouts reported (Industrial profile of District Shamli, 2017)

The Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan is a centrally sponsored program. The Central government provides 60% and State government (UP) contributes 40% to the state universities and colleges. The aim of participating in the program was to build the capacity and skill level of faculty, as well as infrastructural developments targeted at innovative learning environments – with a view towards socially sensitive and employable graduates (RUSA, n.d).

Health

The health profile of Shamli shows that there are no district hospitals in Shamli, but there are 5 Community Health Centres, 23 Primary Health Centres and 134 sub centres. Among 23 PHCs, only one works 24 hours. It has been found that the people in Shamli suffer from various diseases. Iron deficiency Disorder leads among the diseases followed by Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Diseases, Infectious fever, trauma and Skin diseases. The prevalence of cancer has also been reported in Shamli. Iron deficiency disorder which is due to the lack of intake of iron create risk for women of child-bearing age, pregnant women, infants and children who born prematurely. This is evident while looking at the Infant Mortality Rate (51), Neo-Natal Mortality Rate (37), Maternal Mortality Rate (204) and Under Five Mortality Rate (71). The concentration of pollutants present in the rivers and other water bodies are a major contributing factor to the cancer rates (National Health Mission, 2016)

Janani Surakhsha Yojana – it has been found that, there is a considerable increase in institutional deliveries from 2013 to 2016 (5914 in 2013 to 21, 313 in 2016) (National Health Mission, 2016)

Livelihood

Economy of Shamli: In Shamli Tehsil out of total population, 214,857 were engaged in work activities. 84.2% of workers describe their work as Main Work (Employment or Earning more than 6 Months) while 15.8% were involved in Marginal activity providing livelihood for less than 6 months. Of 214,857 workers engaged in Main Work, 52,406 were cultivators (owner or co-owner) while 48,720 were Agricultural labourer. (“Working population – Shamli Tehsil”, 2011).

Agriculture and Land holdings: Shamli is located in the extremely fertile upper Doab region with the Eastern Yamuna canal as an irrigation source. Agriculture is the primary occupation and sugar cane is the major crop as Shamli provides ideal conditions for sugarcane cultivation. The economy is therefore primarily driven by sugarcane production and processing. Other major crops grown are rice and wheat. Approximately 80% of the land is utilised for cultivation (Azharuddin SK, 2015). Agricultural land holdings in Shamli could be estimated from the following land holding pattern of Muzaffarnagar in the year 2011 when Shamli was a part of Muzaffarnagar (Lata & Rahman, 2013).

Sr. No.	Category of Land Holding	Size (In Hectares)	2000-01	2005-06
1	Marginal	0.02 – 1	60-70%	60-70%
2	Small	1-2	15-20 %	15-20 %
3	Semi – Medium	2 – 4	11 – 14%	8 – 11%
4	Medium	4 – 10	4-6%	2-4%
5	Large	Above 10	< 1%	< 1%

Source:

Shamli has a few industries - 7 large scale industries providing direct employment to 1976, 1 medium scale enterprise providing direct employment to 65 and 760 small scale industries which provide direct employment to 6079. There are also 2340 micro enterprises which provide direct employment for 5410 persons (Industrial profile of District Shamli, 2017). The 7 large industries in Shamli include three sugar mills (Upper Doab Sugar Mill, Bajaj Hindustan and Superior food grain Sugar Mill), two paper mills, a distillery and a rolling mill. The presence of these mills, as well as the proximity of Delhi and other important industrial towns have resulted in the per capita income of Shamli district being among the top ten in the country (Industrial profile of District Shamli, 2017).

Environment

The pollutants from the sugar industry has severely affected the local ecosystem, especially the Krishna River which now has very few live fish. The ongoing discharge of large amounts of pollutants from the factories prevent the fish from migrating and kills them over time.

Pollutants from the river has also affected the groundwater for the region. In May 2014, Dr Chandraveer Singh, a retired senior scientist at Haryana Pollution Control Board and resident of Daha village, sent some samples from the Krishna river for testing to SIMA Labs (testing facilities recognised by the Uttar Pradesh Pollution Control Board as well as the Ministry of Environment and Forests). The results were disturbing. Industrial units in western Uttar Pradesh, mainly sugar and paper mills and slaughterhouses release effluents into the river. The river water has seeped and contaminated the ground water. The State Pollution Control Board and the Chief Medical Officer are yet to act on this issue (Ali, 2014).

As per a survey, the prevalence of cancers, neurological disorders, stomach/digestive disorders, and skin lesions/dermatitis, respiratory disorders are as a result of heavy metals and pesticides toxic poisoning. Pesticides like organochlorine and organophosphorus have been identified in groundwater as well as surface water samples of the Hindon River catchment at levels that exceed national and international standards for safe bathing and drinking water by several orders of magnitude (Lewis, 2007).

Apart from water pollution, air pollution is also a major issue in Shamli. The current Air Quality Index shows that the condition is severe in Shamli. It may cause respiratory impact even on healthy people, and serious health impacts on people with lung/ heart disease ("Current AQI in Shamli", 2017)

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Stories from the Field

Waiting for a Miracle!

This story is about a resettlement colony in a riot-hit district of a north Indian state. This colony was built through donations by various international and national Non-Government Organisations (NGOs), and religious organisations on a piece of land donated by a local politician who subsequently won the next Legislative Assembly elections from the area. There are around 130 'pakka' houses and 150 shanties which accommodate people of the same religion. Some families residing in the colony were directly affected during the riots while some families left their houses due to 'threat perception' or 'lack of honour' in their villages.

In terms of basic living conditions, the colony lacks proper education, health and sanitation facilities. Issues such as lack of access to clean and portable drinking water, and improper drainage system cause flooding of dirty water which leads to various water-borne diseases. A lot of children and women have already contracted disease due to this. Furthermore, the average family size of the colony is 7 members which includes 3-4 young children below the age of 5 years. This also puts a lot of pressure on scarce resources which the families possess. Lack of traditional livelihood options due to relocation to a new place has caused chronic poverty in most families. Most of adult members of the family work as farm labourers now to make ends meet.

Another startling issue in this colony is road connectivity. The colony lies on a state highway and stretches around 100 meters in length. Only this 100-meter stretch does not have a paved road. The residents say that this stretch has not been built due to ignorance of the state government. On the other hand, the administration says that residents are not allowing them to construct the drainage system and road due to political pressure from the Member of the Legislative Assembly who represents the party in opposition.

Life goes on as usual. The residents are waiting for a miracle to happen.

Reflections: The living conditions of the resettlement colony was deplorable. The residents were caught in the intersection of political opportunism and administration apathy. Youth and children below age of 18 do not have access to basic education and health facilities which prohibits them from developing their full potential. This leads to reduction in terms of livelihood options. Therefore, it reinforces the vicious cycle of poverty. Large family size and loss of traditional livelihood options for adults also accentuates the problem further.

—Aditya Singh

Those that lead

The discussion was scholarly as we were ready to ask all our questions and who could be better than a district magistrate to answer. The conversation was polite. The oratory was humble and peaceful. There was energy and gravity in the meeting.

I like such meetings where I am fully prepared and receive a similar response from the other side.

In his preliminary speech, which was very brief, the district magistrate gave a detailed description about the socioeconomic and political scenario of Shamli district and also discussed his role and his perspective, since he was the the key decision maker. It was a very impressive meeting. We were excited as it was our first day for district immersion and our very first meeting was with the district magistrate.

For a group of college students, it was a very humbling experience to have the head of a district entertain us and spend a couple of hours just to help us develop a better understanding about the district. He also treated us to tea and snacks mentioning “if I let you go without sufficient hospitality, you will have an ever lasting impression that DMs are not kind persons to meet with; however I think after our meeting today, you will go with smiling faces and a good experience.”

We began with discussions about various social norms and culture, land, women, cattle etc. (Stree Dhan, Pashu Dhan etc.) We also spoke about the culture of Khap Panchayats and whether these are good or bad and how western UP is known for its social fabric. We found out more about Shamli’s history and all it has witnessed, including events like the battle of Panipat and its historical roots from the Gupta period.

We have already done our secondary research so we knew about its history and geography, but what we didn’t know or didn’t focus on was the future of Shamli. He rightly pointed out that because of sugarcane farming and a rapidly growing sugar industry, this region would face a major water crisis in the coming future.

We were really enjoying this discussion and took it forward by asking about the pollution level here as we felt that the air quality was poor despite having so much greenery around. However, he clearly said that there is no pollution here, as these sugar mills are following all norms and rules and his own residence is in the old sugar mill campus. When we raised our concern about the polluted river here which we have seen with our own eyes, he denied it, saying the pollution in the river is not because of our district, indirectly taking no accountability for it.

The reason I am going to remember this meeting for a very long time is because it was the first impression of a district head which is going to last me a long time for various reasons. It definitely helped me to understand society through an administrative lens- how decisions are made and how these affect a district, the rationale behind these decisions, compromises, and other factors they must consider. It was the first time that I was meeting the person who led the system of a district.

—Anupriya Kumari

The 'Jaundi' Yatra

I was diagnosed with jaundice a couple of days before the District Immersion Program. This happened at a time when I was completely immersed in the group process with my group for a month, and was conducting research and understanding the district deeply- making a lot of mind maps and causal loops, which reminded me of my mom making chappatis for me and my brothers! It was so exciting and interesting to explore the details of the district, connecting different sectors like health to

environment, education to livelihood in order to understand the overall picture of the district. Everything was great until the doctor said, “You have jaundice, and you need to be on bed-rest for at least 15 days.”

How would you feel if you are cooking chicken biryani patiently while hungry and then not allowed to eat it? I felt the same! I went back to Kerala and was admitted to a hospital. I received updates from my group mates and I understood that they were having great experiences in the district. I went to the district a week later after convincing my parents. I was very excited while travelling in train from Delhi to the district. It was the first time I was experiencing travelling to a north Indian district.

Just before getting off the train, I saw thick fog outside the train which forced me to take my jacket from my bag. I felt so happy thinking, how fortunate I am reaching the district in such amazing weather. Just after getting out of train, I took a deep breath to feel the fresh air. I still remember the kind of irritation I had in my throat and nose. For the first time, I regretted a deep breath I took. The district welcomed me with the special ‘SMOG effect’.

Once I reached the hotel, my team shared their experiences in the district, their visits to different offices, industries, households etc. The field work that I had done during my post graduate study, along with the videos and pictures my team had, helped me to connect with the experiences of my team.

The team had visited a riot-resettlement area one day. I felt so bad seeing the videos of people living ostracized due to circumstances. The communal riots that happened in 2013 in the district caused a lot of families to leave their homes. Later, they resettled in various relief camps. The area we visited was one among them. There were around 300 houses and 2000 residents in the colony. I wish I could take my mom here, because she always had the opinion that the most difficult place to live is in my room! There were ‘houses’, but the condition was abysmal.

It would be difficult to survive there, especially in the winter and rainy season because of incomplete constructions and damages to the homes. Most of them didn’t even have a proper bathroom. Children were playing in the narrow streets of the colony, where both the sides had open drains, faecal matter and mosquitoes everywhere. Being exposed to the unhygienic surroundings, children suffered from varying diseases. The value and right to a healthy life were being questioned here. As per a resident, there are around 600 people living there. It is definitely not a very small number.



Next day, I found an opportunity to meet the Community Development Officer (CDO). We were being told about the development approach for the community. I had to consume a lot of water, because I was just recovering from jaundice. Along with that, the cool climate of Shamli made me search for a restroom. I asked the security guard outside the CDO's office, where the restroom was. He told me something, directing his hand in the direction of gate. Since I'm not fluent in Hindi, I just followed the direction of his hand, but I couldn't find any toilet there. I asked a person who was standing near the gate and he showed me a corner which was just next the main gate. Yes! It had 3 walls which were as tall as my shoulder. I didn't know whether I should laugh or feel bad at that moment. Even as a male, I felt disgusted to see that structure- but how would a female feel since there was no toilet at all?

I think the most important skill one should possess is the 'skill to ignore'. I found this particular skill there in all segments of the community. People ignoring the pollution saying that "It is like this, its normal", government officials ignoring the absence of basic facilities saying that "Development is happening efficiently here". Who knows, maybe we are all wrong and with a bullet train and 100-crore statues we can solve all our issues!

—*Devas Boban*

🌀 The story of a Relief Camp

Arriving at the relief colony brought in no sense of relief. The camps were just as appalling as those online news stories and blogs I read. For once the media had not exaggerated and I wished they had.

Contaminated drinking water, fly infested open drains, rows of houses clustered together, cattle and children running about with sugarcane fields in the background standing tall, lush and green. "We didn't want to be here, we had no choice, our homes weren't safe. We had to leave everything behind", says Zaheda as she was beading the ends of a stole. The kutcha houses in the area are open, their only cover seems to be made of rag pieces of cloth – bed sheets and sarees. How they managed during the cold winter months and the monsoons I fear to imagine.

The little girl Mini, whose house we had visited kept following us, watching us intently but she refused to talk to us or even tell us her name. Her mother says she does not speak to anybody, not even her father and other members of their family. She turns around as soon as we approach her or just stands there with her eyes to her toes refusing to say anything, sometimes a small smile playing at the corner of her lips. The image of her often comes to my mind. I do not know what was wrong with her, what she was looking for, whether there was anything there at all. I didn't hear any words from her.

But what will become of these children? Children like Mini, in the midst of ailments and hunger, political and social exclusion and tension, unaware of their rights and opportunities while the rest of the world moves forward invariably leaving them behind. Some of the most generous people in the world also happen to be the poorest. Even then, they offer us hot meals and are happy to help and show us around with bright smiles painted on their faces.

—*Radhika Nair*

Of power dynamics and generation gaps

It is funny how people can get around just about anything. Any rule, any law. Good intentions alone never served any purpose. As is seen in this case. To have women involved in the community, reservation was introduced for women for the position of Pradhan in the villages. But to have to report to women is the last thing a patriarchal ego would take. What then becomes of these women leaders or supposed leaders? Yes, that's right, puppets. Puppets in the hands of the men in their lives. As if there weren't enough orders they were taking.

As we got to the Pradhan's house in this particular village, we realized that Sameer Pradhan in reality is not the Pradhan at all, but his wife Seema and we only got to know this because Sameer was not home at that particular point of time. I then mentally recalled all the hoardings I had seen on the way with a giant picture of a man, built heavily with a distinctive mustache and a much smaller picture of a woman in ghunghat (veil) at the top left-hand side corner.

As we went upstairs to meet Seema, we were abruptly stopped and told that our male counterparts were not allowed to accompany us to meet with her. Women in rural and orthodox communities are prohibited from meeting male outsiders. Seema is a soft-spoken woman, in her early 40's who seemed to feel that there is nothing wrong with the patriarchal structure that determines conduct here. But she is not to blame, it is the environment that you have been in that shapes you and molds your mindsets. And this village is where she has spent her entire life.

She didn't respond to most of the questions that we had to ask, another male member in the family doing so on her behalf. The reasons to me were not clear, was it because she was not sure of what was going on, not kept in the loop? Or was it because she believed that it wasn't her place to speak when there was a man around to do it? Was it because she doubted her own capabilities?

Quite on the contrary, her daughter who was also part of the conversation seemed to be well aware of what was going on, projects undertaken in the village, schemes running, and allocated budgets. She was a confident opinionated young woman of 18 years.

We asked Seema's daughter about the schemes running for menstrual hygiene in the village and she seemed visibly amused by this question. The male member of the family who seemed to have been the main spokesperson till this point, abruptly got up, mumbled an excuse and left. We probably should have asked that question a little earlier. We had run out of questions and the Pradhan had had enough of us. We were asked to come the following day when her husband, Sameer would be present.

But I see hope in her daughter, she says she will go to the nearby town after finishing her schooling to do her Bachelors in Education to become a teacher and I believe her. There was a sense of determination in her voice that seemed surprising and inspiring at the same time.

—Radhika Nair

Stories of Shamli

I still remember the day I found out that the team I'm part of at ISDM, was 'assigned' Shamli as the district that we were to spend some time in, to understand and make some sense of, in any manner that we possibly could. I still remember squinting my eyes at the projector screen in class assuming it read Shimla and not Shamli.

Wait, I had heard this name before. But when, and where? I just couldn't place it. A quick consultation with our wise friend, Google, made me realize that this was the same Shamli that we had spoken about in class many weeks ago, in connection with the Muzaffarnagar communal riots that had taken place in September 2013. The same Shamli that was once a part of Muzaffarnagar district but was carved out to be made a separate district in 2011, on purely political grounds, like most other similar decisions masked under the excuse of administrative ease. The same Shamli that is home to 3 out of the 9 'worst affected villages' due to the riots, as identified by the Uttar Pradesh state government. With this understanding in the background, we set out to explore Shamli, both from afar and from inside.

One of the themes that kept resurfacing at every step of this exploration is the issue of communal hate and how the effects of the hate are still so evident in Shamli. However, the believer and seeker of truth in me wasn't convinced by this narrative. "You really need to look for the injustice" said Prof A. K. Shiva Kumar in one of our classes where he spoke about India's 'population issue' and how it is primarily connected to the lack of agency and choice that Indian women experience. After spending a week and a half in Shamli, we decided to visit this sizeable and unique village named Gangeru, in Kairana tehsil. "Gaon mein bacche buzurg sab lage hue hain bunaayi mein (Everyone in the village is busy weaving)" said Aslam Bhai, our anchor and guide within Shamli who was born, brought up and continues to work in Shamli district. The place we were staying at, was around 4 kilometers away from Shamli town, so when we set out to visit Gangeru which was 20 kms away, we assumed it would take us about an hour to reach. A short ride in an e-rickshaw, a bumpy ride in a tractor, an exhausting ride in the local bus, a claustrophobic ride in a shared auto and 2 hours later, we finally reached Gangeru or as I will remember it - the village where 'sab lage hue hain bunaayi mein'.

The house that we first visited was the house of one Mr Kaleem, who would probably be quite uncomfortable being referred to as 'Mr Kaleem'. I'm guessing he'd prefer Kaleem bhai or Kaleem chacha (uncle). Kaleem chacha was a polite old man in his mid-60s, with a kind smile and humble demeanor. He lives in a joint family, with his siblings and their respective families. There were about 22 members in the household with members' age ranging from 6 months to the late 70s. Kaleem chacha sat us down, demonstrated top-notch 'mehmaan naawazi (hospitality)' like most people in Shamli and spoke to us about his life in Gangeru. He was a weaver like most people living there and so were the older two of his seven children. The rest of the children either study at the Madrassa near-by or stay back at home, helping around.

A little while later, he proudly tells us that the rug laid out of the cot on which we were sitting, was woven by him. He also excitedly shows us some doormats that he has woven and offers to show us the process of weaving. The house that he was staying in, had a few goats - this was a unique feature of Gangeru, a village where Muslims were a majority. Most households in the other places we visited in Shamli district kept cows or buffaloes and not goats.

Kaleem chacha's house had three weaving machines for weaving doormats, two spinners to spin the cotton yarn and one big weaving loom for the blankets and rugs, all housed in the small front yard. He explained to us that each doormat takes about fifteen minutes to weave and a rug typically takes two-three days. The weaving can be done standing up or sitting down, so there are small pits dug up into the earth that weavers climb down into and carry on this work. One of his sons demonstrates the process to us, also explaining that since the entire body is moving for the most part, there's very little chance of developing strains in the body due to this process.

The loom itself is not dependent on electricity in any way, though the day light plays a significant role in their operations. He also explained to us how their market linkages work. Panipat is the biggest accessible market for the workers in Gangeru and their 'maal' (goods) are transported to the market by middlemen who further sell it at a wholesale price to the traders and distributors, which ultimately are sold in various places. The families buy their yarn and other raw material for the doormats and rugs from various parts of Punjab in kilograms. The remuneration for each doormat that is produced is 8/- to 12/- depending on the type of doormat. These are typically sold in the market for prices anywhere between 30/- to 150/- rupees. The rugs are remunerated at around 150/- per piece and sold anywhere between 600/- to 1,500/- per piece.

Kaleem chacha's son later took us to around 15 homes in the area after we had spent time in their home and it was the same situation in each house. Three to four looms in an area of 15ft x 15ft where men and women work continuously 'at will' for around 8 to 10 hours in a day, come sunshine or rain, to earn their livelihood. The village where 'sab lage hue hain bunaayi mein (Everyone in the village is busy weaving)'. But nobody questions. Nobody organises. Nobody thinks about what well-being means beyond economic terms. We walked away from Gangeru with a million questions in our mind, the biggest one being - what is happening here, and what can be done?

—Ravali Pedaparthi

SB SARPANCH PATI - a Violation of Equal Opportunities?

"Every human being has the right to participate in decisions that define her or his life. This right is the foundation of the ideal of equal participation in decision-making among women and men. This right argues that since women know their situation best, they should participate equally with men to have their perspectives effectively incorporated at all levels of decision-making, from the private to the public spheres of their lives, from the local to the global"

Despite twenty-five years after women being given 33% reservation in local self-governance bodies, many women Sarpanch's remain faceless wives and daughters-in-law. The phenomenon of Sarpanch Pati or husbands who wield control in Panchayats by making their wives contest is neither new nor rare.

Meet Sangeeta Singh, she is 35yrs old, mother of two, lives in a Hindu-Jat dominated village of Shagnipur and is in her second tenure of being the Sarpanch. "I was awarded the "Best Sarpanch" of the district by the Chief-Minister last month" she says, "but my husband does all the work- be it resolving village-issues, inaugurating

schools/colleges, facilitating the monthly Panchayat meetings, and attending functions- I just sign documents”.

On probing about how she felt being elected the second time she says “I have been elected for five years now; I was a daughter-in-law before this and will be a daughter-in-law even after my term. I wear a veil now and I will have to wear a veil even after five years,” says Sangeeta.

Shagnipur was one of the first villages I had visited in the district- clean, beautiful, and peaceful at the outskirts but deeply rooted in gender biases. During the initial 3 hours, the team spent time talking to the villagers, everyone referred to the Sarpanch as “Sujeet Sarpanch”, so one can imagine the shock that registered on our faces when we sat across the table sipping tea with the officially elected village representative-“Sangeeta Singh”.

Sangeeta sits on the floor with her face veiled; the image is almost symbolic of women being faceless and unseen across different rungs of politics and governance at large. From local election posters which bear pictures of husbands of the contesting women and students union elections which feature faceless women, women’s efforts and contributions in public affairs are often brushed aside.

—Roshini Nair

My journey during Realising INDIA (ISDM)

Within two weeks of being here, I have had the opportunity to interact with multiple stakeholders in the development process – both from the beneficiary’s and contributor’s side. They range from industry leaders, corporate social responsibility managers and journalists to government officials like district collectors, block development officers, sarpanchs, etc. People like farmers, those belonging to scheduled castes and tribes, government health workers, school teachers and people from economically-weaker sections who live in slums also play a part in the development of this area.

Development is much broader than economic growth. A large part of development entails just the better usage and allocation of the income and resources that are already present. But if it is to continue after a certain level of development, this must be met by income growth. Income growth is a common characteristic which we can see when an area and a group of people experience development. These are common lessons that you will find in most textbooks.

From interviewing the multiple stakeholders mentioned, I find three problems in the development process:

1. When it comes to what we work for as development professionals, there is a provisional gap in the ‘demand and supply’ and what the needs and wants of the community are.
2. The impact of the work or policies of development workers that actually reaches the people at the ground level is very low.
3. Most importantly, however, there is a conflict of interests between various stakeholders. Can the process of development uphold the interest of every stakeholder? Are some stakeholders more important than others? Who should hold the decision-making power?

What I have truly learnt through coming here is this: development comes from within. No one can uphold your personal self-interests better than you. So, if we must reach the grassroot level of improving the lives of every individual, we must empower them to uphold their own rights and interests.

रंगों के बटवारे में, हरा हुआ मुस्ल मान और लाल हिन्दू ।

सब हरी सब्जियां ले लिये मुस लामन, सिफ्ट टमाटर रहा हिन्दू ।

समस्या तो आई तरबूज को, जो बहार से मुस्ल मान और अंद र हिन्दू ।

On October 28, Saturday, I started travelling for Shamli along with my team as a part of my ISDM district immersion journey. Shamli (formerly known as Prabudh Nagar and renamed as Shamli in July 2012) district was carved out of Muzaffarnagar district of Uttar Pradesh on 28 September 2011.

It is situated at western region of Saharanpur division. The district lies in the fertile Doab region between the Ganges and the Yamuna. Shamli is the district headquarter of district Shamli. The district has 3 tehsils, namely, Shamli, Kairana & Oon. Its Assembly seats are Shamli, Thanabhawan and Kairana. As per 2011 census, the district's population is 12,74,815 and population density is 1,200/sq. Km. 52% of Shamli population is Muslims and 45% Hindu. 25% of the total population are Jats. The major occupation is agriculture and the major crop is sugarcane. And while travelling to Shamli via Baagpat, we saw sugarcane belts on both sides of the road and greenery all around. Also, we saw lots of pucca houses, many private schools but the condition of the road was bad.

On the 4th day of our district immersion, we went to Kairana and there we met the Sub Divisional Magistrate (SDM) Mr. Vinod Kumar Singh and the tehsildar. We asked them about how a tehsil office works, how administrations work on the ground level, working of land revenue department, collection department, land reforms, the role of SDM in law and order. After receiving important insights from them, we went to Munawar Hasan Colony.

Munawar Hasan colony is the place where a relief camp was setup after the Muzaffarnagar riots.

The twin districts of Muzaffarnagar and Shamli have been witnessing sporadic violence. Shamli was carved out as a separate district by the Bahujan Samaj Party regime in October 2011. The Muzaffarnagar riots of September 2013 easily count as one of the worst instances of communal violence. The villages that were most affected by the violence were Lisarh, Fugana, Kutba-Kutbi, Bahawadi, and Budhana, forcing Muslims from even neighbouring villages to flee to refugee camps set up in and around idgahs, madarsas, or open land, by Muslim community members and leaders. Uprooted and displaced now, they have little acquaintance with the employers and do not find work on a regular basis. Open drains, poor health conditions, malnutrition in children, various skin diseases, heavy rains worsened the place conditions. It completely broke my heart to see all this. There are people around the world living in the midst of rubbish tips, open drains and garbage dumps. These are the poorest of the poor, living in the worst places imaginable. I could feel their pain and conditions, I could feel what they were feeling. I observed that while most victims have a roof over their head, they continue to live like refugees. Most of them are labourers, cloth vendors, and masons who were either employed by the people in their villages or worked with money borrowed from lenders back home.

As I walked into Munawar Hasan colony, the elderly woman sitting listlessly outside her house told me that the 6-7 children in the family all used to go to school. But now they don't. I was listening intently to her. A shy girl in her early teens, who was also listening to our conversation, declared: "Salim's children still go to school," referring to a relative who still manages to send his children to school. She did not know why she does not go to school anymore. This shy girl, Iqra, along and her younger sister, directed me towards their house. Iqra lived here with her family of 8 in two small rooms. Her mother and 3 of her sisters were putting the border on the sarees, working on duppattas (stoles).

I asked them about their work. They told that most of the women of the house do this work which adds to their family income and for this, they get Rs 12 per saree. A dealer takes and sells all this in Panipat or Delhi. Because it was the morning time, I didn't have a chance to meet the men of the house, so I interacted mostly with women. Iqra's mother told that girls of the house don't usually go out, though, before riots, Iqra used to study, but after the riots, because they came to this place, she discontinued her studies.

Also one thing that stood out for me was they told "Dar ke bhaag aye hum" (they left because of perception and threat given to them), and there was no actual violence that took place here. Many people got aid from NGOs and the government already, but now, because they have used all the aid which was given to them and they were looking forward to new aid and never thought to generate their livelihood out of the aid they had received.

For those of us who have been following this story of state apathy towards orchestrated violence, a pattern seems to emerge, which one needs to revisit and remember. Economic repercussions for the affected are woven in all these stories. Resisting communal polarisation had its own kind of consequences. The most important thing which I've learnt during my journey of Realising India is empathy, because when I feel empathy for others and for myself, I feel a sense of peace, connection, and perspective. And, when there is an absence of empathy in a particular relationship, situation, or in how I'm relating to myself, I often experience stress, disconnection. In Munawar Hasan colony, I was able to see things from their perspective. Empathy moves us to a place of courage and compassion. Some things we do in life go beyond cultural boundaries. A lot of people will think you are crazy when you help a person in need, the poorest of the poor. A friend of mine said one day that there will always be poverty. I don't know if I agree with that statement, because if you bring change and care for people in need, I believe it will change the whole nation. It will take time. It is so encouraging for me to hear stories of people who lose everything, but still have the courage to live like that and be hopeful and positive. I believe the place where I feel the most alive is in the midst of people who need me. I want to ask people to be more involved with the need of this world, and help one another.

—Tanushree Jain

Story 1: Conversation with a Government Official

We interacted with a government official who was very demotivated and disenchanted due to the administrative system in his department. While speaking to him, he was

constantly pointing out flaws and loopholes in the system. Lack of staff, no basic resources, no timely reimbursement of allowances, political and community pressure.

He said that before getting into government services, he was so excited to work for the people and bring changes to the system, but this system is so rigid that it changes people. Due to systemic problems, he has lots of work pressure which has caused him to have diabetes and blood pressure problem. He also recounted that the district does not have proper school where he could send his children. Earning of livelihood and social security are the only reasons for him to continue the government service. This conversation really moved us.

*Story 2: Interaction with Mr. Akshay Kumar ji**

It was afternoon, around 2:30 pm the three of us thought about exploring the Muslim community which was in the interior of the village. While in the community, we came across a shop which had some chips packets which we didn't want to eat and so we asked the shopkeeper to recommend any place we could get lunch. He replied that places to eat would be far away. But as we walked a few feet away from the shop, he invited us to his home. "Bhai saab come to my house, I will get lunch prepared" and we hesitated initially but we were very hungry, so we stepped inside his house.

As we stepped in, we went to the first floor of his house, we saw his wife was cleaning utensils, and he asked us to sit inside the room. As we stepped into the room there surrounded by 30 big and small posters of Baba Ram Rahim. Upon seeing these posters, we felt scared, our biases and judgements crept in. We initiated the talk by asking about the history of village and as he got comfortable with us, we initiated the talk about Ram Rahim. He said he was a truck driver during 90's and he use to drop commuters to Baba's ashram and because of that he also started visiting his "Pravachan" (religious preaching). He said he is been following him since 1995 and because of him he has learnt the values of how to live a life happily, he says his life has been so prosperous because of his teachings and it is due to those values that I am serving you food. I am able to live my life happily and in a simple manner. We also asked him his views on Ram Rahim controversy, he said because of Ram Rahim several drugs and alcohol units have closed down and people in these units are playing a dirty game. Furthermore, he said in his teachings Clause 85 says we should also help and serve the inmates so it is the call from the god that Ram Rahim is in jail. This conversation gave us many new insights on importance of role models and universal values.

—Ravi Jaiswal & Aditya Singh

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