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Country: Germany

Volunteering period: August 2015 – June 2016



Final Impression, June 2016

I spent over eleven months, almost a whole year, at Sambhali Trust.

A lot can happen in one year and it did. Amazing things happened, happy things, things that made me cry or angry, crazy things. The whole package. Being able to experience a whole year of seasonal changes, connecting to people, finding really good friends, witnessing the positive change in behaviour in young girls and women, their learning progress, enjoying the Indian food, the attitude, the scenery and landscapes of such a diverse country, was one of the greatest experiences of my life. I feel indescribably happy about the chance of spending so much time in India and at Sambhali Trust and glad that I seized it.

Looking back, it feels almost unreal that my time here is soon coming to an end. I did not know time could fly by this fast. There is still so much to do, so much to see. I came to regard Jodhpur as my home and feel comfortable in walking the streets, spending time in the town and knowing my way around not just when it comes to orientation but also with the people. I feel like I can now grasp the picture of what their life is like here and what it means to them. I had multiple opportunities in talking with them, hearing their stories and thoughts. I am proud that I can count them as my friends.

Working with Sambhali Trust has been an experience of its own. It is amazing what Sambhali does and I believe in what we are trying to achieve with our work here. However, there are ups and downs. Being here for such a long time allowed me to really see the efforts and difficulties that come with social work as well as working with people from another country, a different culture who have different attitudes and other ways of handling things. There is beauty in that, too, but sometimes you just can't help but wonder and shake your head at how easy some things are approached and taking care of while others need so much time and patience to sort out. There were frustrating days, when my students still struggled after so much explaining, when I realised how my efforts go to waste, how some students just can't be helped, how they are called back to their families or married off, ending their studies and the only chance they got for education and widening their horizons. It is weird how I can have days where I don't feel any difference between me and the people around me and then have situations where a massive wall seems to be standing in the way, separating us. It saddens me how powerless I am in breaking that wall, even though I try.

I feel bad about returning to my old life, my privileged life, where I will be going to university and have all the opportunities and chances I could wish for in the world, knowing that I leave behind good people who will never have that and don't even realise what they are missing out on. It is hard to get to terms with that reality. I can't save them or give them everything they deserve. Instead, I focus on the little things that I can do for them in order to make their day a happier one and I am grateful for having spent so much of those days with them.