



When Kokad tai told me about her new kitchen project at her Divya Vidyalaya school it immediately reminded me of my social tourism initiative which I always wanted to do for my audiences. The objective here is bifold

one is to provide extra income for my NGOs

Two to sensitise my audiences towards social causes these NGOs are working for.

While doing all this conservation of the environment and experiencing some of the most beautiful habitats and ecosystems always will remain top priority.

Thus MEE decided to do its first social tour (a tour for a cause) to Jawahar-the largest tribal belt of Maharashtra on 27 November 2021.



The trip took off to a flying start with 9 exciting participants and a 7 month old puppy Junno early on 27th morning. After a refreshing drive along the twining roads right from Manor to Jawahar. We finally reached Divya Vidyalaya school - A school for the physically and intellectually challenged.

After a very different yet tasty breakfast of Nachini idlis and some mouthwatering moong wadis with a hot cup of tea We left for some sightseeing. Our first stop was the Raja Vaada The Palace of a tribal king (Yashwant Rao Mukne) built by amazing Craftsmen of Rajasthan. The tall mansion in all its grandeur was captured by our mobile cameras but more importantly in our minds and hearts. The interpreter told us that the king has done a lot for this place in terms of giving land and building the Hospital, the collectors office ,the school etc. The king's grandson comes once in a year annually to flag of the jaatra.

After a quick visit to the Hanumanpoint and the Hanuman Temple the group started the activities it was actually here for that is to experience the daily routine of a tribal which started with fetching water from a close by well ( a few kilometres away ) and getting the water back home in steel Handis. The other daily activities of plastering the home with cow dung grinding millet in the stone Ja Tau growing vegetables etc were also tried out by all the participants. The tribal who the group fondly called mama was very excited to show us his house and share his in-depth knowledge of the ayurvedic plants with us



After satisfying hard earned this activity group then visited Shirpaamaal the point where Shivaji Maharaj was welcomed by the tribal king on his way to Surat. By now all the participants stomach's were growling and were treated to some wonderful hot food and refreshing chass.



The next activity was probably the one the group enjoyed and appreciated the most. They learnt some simple yet very effective tips to do warli art by Mr Vishal Shinde (a young student) and an artist. He taught the group to draw the popular Warli dance called the Tarpaa dance on to paper and the group was pleasantly surprised to see their wonderful outputs and thanked Vishal for his wonderful guidance.



The school visit was done for the group beautifully by Nitin Sirr again a very young teacher who teaches the blind children Braille. He showed the group the classrooms ,the play area the computer room, the skill Centre and also showed the group a small demo of -how Braille is taught to the children. The one thing I appreciated the most was that the school has a lot of young



teachers as a part of its unit and they are very proud of their work and have chosen to stay back in their villages rather than migrating to the city for better jobs.

The exhibition of all the products made by the adivasis were received well by the participants and all of them bought a lot of products as they now understood and emphasised how these products are hand made. This was the main objective of the tour. And I had already received a wonderful feedback because the group bought many products.

The butterfly garden is something I feel participants will never forget as they were welcomed by hundreds of butterflies. The group loved Plucking ripe Red gauvas and eating them till their hearts and stomachs content.

The group was treated to some wonderful devotional patriotic songs sung by visually impaired children once again taught to them by a young music teacher (aarchana eacher) who comes to teach them on weekends on a voluntary basis.

The group had bought a lot of utility material like books, blanket, sarees, cloths which they donated to the NGO. Last but not the least the group was bided of a goodbye with a musical Tarpa dance done by the same children.



Each one in the group said that they have gone for several tours but never had such a great trip along with fun and entertainment gives a lot of statics factions of supporting such a wonderful cause. All congratulated MEE on its initiative and have already booked their seats for the Forth coming tours.



### The Special features of the trip

1. This was a trip where the group learnt from the beneficiaries rather than teaching them anything. For example they learnt warli art they tried to dance the Tarpa dance they understood the lifestyle of the tribals etc.
2. The people who were the guides for the trip were are all young and enthusiastic and very proud of their culture.
3. The tribals also who showed us their homes and their living felt very privileged to show their lifestyle.
4. The trip for a cause was thus realised in every sense and both the visiting group and the NGO they visited benefitted from the visit.