

RURAL IMMERSION PROGRAM

WITH SPAIN GROUP AND NANDINI 2.0

20

24

BHANPUR VILLAGE MEHSANA



DATE: 14TH AND 15TH SEPTEMBER 2024

WITH IMMENSE GRATITUDE IN OUR HEARTS, WE BEGIN BY ACKNOWLEDGING THE JOY AND PROFOUND CONNECTION EXPERIENCED DURING THE RURAL IMMERSION PROGRAM ORGANIZED IN COLLABORATION WITH THE SPAIN GROUP AND ESI, USING THE NANDINI VAN 2.0 AS OUR MEANS TO JOURNEY INTO THE HEART OF RURAL LIFE. THE PROGRAM AIMED TO FOSTER DEEPER UNDERSTANDING, CULTURAL EXCHANGE, AND SHARED HUMANITY BETWEEN THE PEOPLE OF BHANPUR VILLAGE AND OUR CHERISHED VISITORS FROM SPAIN.



DAY 1: 14TH SEPTEMBER 2024

The day began with the Spain family gathering at the Peace Pole in the Maitri space of ESI, where we joined hands in a circle of gratitude. The sense of unity was palpable as heartfelt prayers were shared, expressing thanks for the opportunity to come together in this sacred space. This spiritual beginning set the tone for the day, filled with humility and appreciation for the experience ahead.

After our circle of sharing, we boarded the NANDINI Van, where lively discussions ensued, lifting our spirits as we traveled to Bhanpur Village. The warm breeze fanned us gently, as did the excitement of the day, and soon we arrived at the village, greeted with immense warmth and traditional Indian hospitality. The welcoming ceremony, accompanied by the rhythm of the *dhol*, was a beautiful display of Indian culture. The villagers adorned the Spain family with *tilak* and *sutar* in an *aarti*, symbolizing the divine presence in every guest, in line with the revered belief of "Atithi Devo Bhava"—the guest is indeed God.



The vibrant beats of the garba soon filled the air as the villagers and Spain family danced together, transcending all barriers of language and culture. This joyous moment was followed by an intimate gathering at Bharat Bhai's house, where both the villagers and the Spain group introduced themselves, sharing stories, smiles, and a genuine sense of kinship.

Each Spain family member was paired with a host family, where they spent five enriching hours. In these homes, they were not mere guests but part of the family, eating what the villagers ate, learning about their daily routines, and immersing themselves in the simplicity and beauty of rural life. This experience left a lasting impression on the Spain group, who expressed feeling truly welcomed as family members, embraced by the village's hospitality and warmth.

Afterward, we embarked on a village tour to further deepen the connection. We visited different communities to understand the diversity and unity within village life. The tour included stops at temples dedicated to various deities, such as ****Kali Mata****, symbolizing the fierce and protective force of the mother goddess, and ****Lord Hanuman****, the epitome of strength, devotion, and selfless service.

We then visited the government-run *anganwadi*, the Panchayat office, and a mineral water plant, where the Spain family witnessed firsthand how the village receives essential services. A discussion about the election process and governance in the village provided valuable insights into how rural communities manage their local affairs. The visit to the dairy showcased the intricate system of milk collection, its testing for quality, and the role of cooperative dairies like Dudh Sagar in supporting the rural economy.





THE DAY CONCLUDED WITH A HEARTFELT CULTURAL PROGRAM, WHERE VILLAGE CHILDREN AND NITIN BHAI PERFORMED FOLK DANCES AND PLAYS AIMED AT RAISING AWARENESS ABOUT SOCIAL ISSUES. THE SPAIN GROUP AND VILLAGERS JOINED HANDS FOR A FASHION SHOW, SHOWCASING TRADITIONAL INDIAN ATTIRE LIKE *CHANIYA CHOLI*, *KURTA*, AND *SAREES*. THE NIGHT ENDED WITH A JOYFUL *GARBA*, UNITING ALL IN CELEBRATION OF CULTURE, DIVERSITY, AND SHARED HUMANITY.





DAY 2: 15TH SEPTEMBER 2024

The next morning began with a heartwarming breakfast at the host families' homes. We then gathered at Rajal's house to celebrate *Ganesh Visarjan Divas*, paying homage to **Lord Ganesh**, the remover of obstacles and the embodiment of wisdom and prosperity. This sacred moment was a reminder of the divine blessings that had graced our journey.

Following this, we made our way to the serene banks of the Sabarmati River, where we engaged in a peaceful meditation session. The calm waters of the Sabarmati have witnessed centuries of history, from being the lifeline of Gujarat to playing a pivotal role in Mahatma Gandhi's *Dandi March* during India's freedom struggle. The river is a symbol of peace, resilience, and renewal, much like the experiences shared by the Spain family during their immersion into the simplicity and richness of rural life.



As the time came to bid farewell, the Spain family exchanged gifts with their host families, a gesture of love and gratitude for the warm hospitality they had received. It was an emotional parting, as both groups had formed bonds that transcended geographical and cultural boundaries.





Our journey continued with a visit to the **Mauhadi Jain Temple**, where we sought blessings and had lunch. The serene atmosphere of the temple provided the perfect space for reflection on the deep spiritual and cultural exchanges that had taken place over the past two days.

We returned to Parikshid Sadan, where we had the honor of sharing our experiences with Shri Jayesh Bhai. With profound humility, the Spain group expressed their heartfelt gratitude for the opportunity to be part of such an enlightening and transformative journey. The program concluded with a closing circle, where we collectively reflected on the lessons learned and the shared humanity that had bound us together.

