DukeEngage in India – Ahmedabad
Educating and equipping women and children for financial independence

Dates: Saturday June 6 – Sunday August 2, 2020
(Dates subject to change up until the point of departure.)

Service Themes
- Education and Literacy
- Women’s empowerment
- Economic & Workforce Development & Social Enterprise

Program Focus
Participating in service-learning projects dedicated to educating children of rural migrant families, assisting women of very low-income families in acquiring financial independence, helping to devise programs for low-income aspiring social entrepreneurs, helping with micro-credit financing and data analysis projects, storytelling about underserved communities, and contributing to/advising on artistic fabric design to help rural weavers access urban markets.

Program Leader
Purnima Shah, Director and Associate Professor of the Practice, Dance Program, Duke University. Ph.D. in Performance Studies and Ethnography, with research and teaching interests in Asian theatre intersecting with ritual and performance, gender in performance, psycho-spiritual practices in devotional theatre, South Asian diaspora, and performance theory.

Program Overview
A large number of rural populations in India subsisting mostly on small scale farming have been displaced in the last few decades due to steadily rising inflation, debt, and globalization. On the other hand, urban development, industrialization, and a booming construction industry have attracted millions of rural residents to urban areas for employment in hourly/daily jobs. The majority of these migrant workers and their families dwell in urban slum developments and are unable to afford basic education, health care, nutrition, or pursue vocations for their children, youth or women. This DukeEngage program, in collaboration with the Ahmedabad-based nonprofit organization Saath, will work on projects meant to provide better opportunities to these migrant communities, especially women and children of very low-income families.

The Program Director has worked in this community in the past, and has partnered with Saath in order to develop this program.

Goals for Students
Social responsibility: Developing better cultural awareness, understanding and respecting cultural differences, learning to respect human beings who are less privileged, creating awareness for social issues; gaining new perspectives on and opening doors to a world that was previously unknown to them, taking the responsibility to give back to the society what they have gained from the world around them. Acquiring an understanding of the importance of volunteer work; continued service-learning engagement after graduation from Duke.
**Academic outcomes:** Global learning, incorporating service-learning experiences into writing and research; acquiring new or improved language and communication skills. Service-learning activities will lend ideas for future careers in the field or inspire engagement activities on a larger scale. Participating in panel discussions, conferences and public lectures; advocating service-learning to younger students. Using skills and knowledge to bring in additional resources for the successful operation of the NGO projects.

**Leadership values:** Gaining self-confidence, sense of self-discovery through the service-learning experience and interaction with communities they serve; acquiring maturity through interactive community work. Transformation in perspectives, decision-making, beliefs and world view. Gaining collaborative and teamwork skills, devising and contributing new skills to the community as per their need. Gaining a better understanding of the functioning of the non-profit social sector and understanding how their service could make an impact on the communities they work with; inspiring those communities to participate in the service of uplifting their own community.

**Partnership Opportunities**
Saath has pioneered an Integrated Community Development Program that seeks to uplift, enrich and provide opportunities for the well-being of slum residents, migrant laborers, minorities, underserved children, women and youth in urban and rural areas. Assistance is provided to these communities for access to health care, education, learning profession-based skills, employment, micro-financing small businesses, and acquiring affordable housing.

Duke students will be able to participate in any one of the following Saath projects based on their service interests, specialty areas, skills, and their career potential. Students will be mentored by Saath project leaders prior to project placements and then throughout the program:

- **Child-Friendly Spaces** makes efforts to liberate children from the labor market and provides education and nutrition support to them, as well as to children of migrant construction workers. Daily classes are run on construction sites. Duke students working on this project will aid in child education; research on and provide guidance for their proper nutrition; develop health awareness; teach any artistic discipline (song, dance, music) if applicable; and work with the Saath office to raise funds for education purposes and nutritious meals. Students could also help Saath develop curricula and methods of teaching children in creative ways. Saath supervisors will act as interpreters / translators for this group when necessary.

- **Udaan** focuses on orienting 18-35 year old slum dwellers, who are keen on seeking employment opportunities. Full time entry-level training in profession/career based skills is provided to these communities for at least three to six months. Courses in basic accounting, beauty salon services, management skills, basic computer skills, taxi/rickshaw driving lessons, etc., are offered to individuals in these communities. Efforts are made to find placements for those who have completed the training sessions. Duke students will work together with Saath supervisors responsible for these projects in terms of teaching health and hygiene, and organizing, administering and helping with placement services. Students will also work with the youth communities to help them acquire the self-confidence and leadership necessary to go out into the world outside of their familiar slum areas. Saath supervisors will act as interpreters / translators for this group when necessary.

- **Women@Work** provides training to women of low-income families with a goal to help them become financially independent. This project includes training in skills considered non-traditional for women, such as electrical service, plumbing, mobile repairing, taxi driving, entry into police force, etc. The aim is to break the stereotyping of gender roles at work. Placements are provided to the women who have completed training sessions. Women@Work also pays attention to making certain that underage girls do not drop out of school due to financial need. Duke students will work with Saath supervisors leading these projects and assist these girls and women in achieving their goals. Students will help with teaching spoken and written English, basic Mathematics, computer skills, operating their bank account, health
and hygiene needs, and with organizing and supervising employment placements for the trained women. They will help the young girls and women understand women’s rights, educate and provide literature pertaining to ‘Right to Information Act,’ and help them acquire the confidence and leadership necessary to manage and maintain their goals. Saath supervisors will act as interpreters/translator for this group when necessary.

- **Microcredit project:** Saath manages microcredit projects to help individuals, men and women, with very low income to acquire micro-financing, managing the loan and its repayments. From their past data, Saath claims that 99% of their micro-credit loans are successfully returned. With the help of Saath micro-financing projects, several of their payees have been able to establish small scale businesses and achieve financial convenience. Interested Duke students will be able to work with Saath mentors firstly, on learning how microcredit financing works, working with payees in product designing and marketing techniques, helping the office with microfinance records and data analysis. Saath supervisors will act as interpreters/translator for this group when necessary.

- **Social Entrepreneurship:** Small scale businesses in the informal sector in India are often undermined although they are a driving force within the overall economy. Saath helps empower those aspiring to informal enterprises by providing skills to become innovative and profitable entrepreneurs. Established business owners are provided guidance towards acquiring street vending certificates, educating them on state policies for street vending, creating short-term and long term budgets, loan acquisition, marketing and pricing strategies, and conducting internal business evaluations. Students could help devise worksheets for budgeting, loan acquisition, pricing strategies, business evaluation strategies, diagnostic tests, and so on. Saath mentors will help with translations where necessary.

- **Fundraising projects:** All Duke students in this program will contribute at least three hours a week to work with a designated fundraiser at the Saath head office, looking after the funding needs of all the current projects running at the organization. Using online tools such as crowd funding platforms and social media, students will assist staff in raising funds for various SAATH projects. Students will also assist with ideas for developing the Saath Research Center and help with updating their website.

Duke students will work at the Saath office and on appointed days each week, visit field sites for the above-mentioned projects, all of which are located within the municipal jurisdiction of Ahmedabad city. Each student group will be accompanied on project sites by a Saath-assigned (English speaking) project supervisor. Duke students will work full time on their assigned projects at Saath office and on field sites from Monday through Friday.

**Program Requirements**

Language: Hindi is the widely spoken language in northern India. Basic level language skill would be helpful, but is not required. Students will have daily spoken language lessons at Saath office throughout the two-month period of their stay in Ahmedabad.

Coursework: No prior coursework is required. Any level of study on South Asia and any coursework on Indian History or Languages and Literatures of South Asia would be helpful but is not required.

Personal Qualities: This program seeks students with the ability to work as a team, most particularly, the ability to work and interact with diverse populations of rural migrants, women, slum youth and children, SAATH staff and supervisors. There will be less private time and less scope for personal space than students may be used to, and students should be able to work in crowded situations. Qualities sought include:

- Commitment to and respect for the communities served together with Saath
- Commitment to ethical behavior; commitment to follow protocols and procedures of Duke Engage and Saath; respect towards Saath organizers, supervisors and host family members; commitment to follow the general expected etiquette of the local culture

**DukeEngage 2020 Program Profile – Ahmedabad, India**
• Ability to work cooperatively with the student-team; openness to improvement and feedback from co-
    students and Saath supervisors; having patience in working with perseverance under unfamiliar
    environments
• Maintaining self-awareness, self-reliance, self-confidence and the use of good discretion at unexpected
    situations. Ability to manage stress in unfamiliar socio-cultural environments.
• An open mind and willingness to integrate with the global community during their term with Saath,
    curiosity in experiencing global cultures first-hand
• Ability to do problem solving; possess analytical skills in producing the desirable outcomes for the
    served communities, for the organization and for students themselves

Please note: Large portions of Gujarati communities are vegetarian. Gujarat is also a “dry” state and hence it
would be illegal to consume alcohol without acquiring a legal permit. Students will comply with local laws and
not engage in any risky activity outside the activities described in this program.

Program Details
Description of Community: Ahmedabad is spread on the banks of the river Sabarmati and is the former capital
city of Gujarat State, located on the western coast of India. Nine bridges connect the old and newer settlements
of the city, sprawling on both banks of the river. As old as a millennia, the city was formerly known as Ashaval
(11th century) and later as Karnavat, and was named Ahmedabad by Sultan Ahmed Shah in 1411 CE after its
capture by the Delhi Sultanate. Ahmedabad is renowned for its hand-woven and printed textiles and became a
textile hub during and after the British rule. The city is a thriving center for commerce with flourishing textile,
chemical, pharmaceutical, and other industries, providing employment to millions. Diverse religions thrive in this
city with Hindus, Parsees, Jews, Christians, Muslims, Sikhs, and Jains residing here.

The independence movement developed its roots in Ahmedabad when Mahatma Gandhi established his ashram
(residence and center for nationalist activities) in 1917 on the banks of Sabarmati. It is from here that he led his
peaceful, non-violent Quit India movement against the oppressive British rule.

Ahmedabad is known for its architectural splendor, both ancient and contemporary, which beautify the city’s
landscape: 15th century architectural monuments survive side by side with contemporary architectural institutes.
Ahmedabad is the sixth largest city in India and a very safe place for students. Monsoons generally set in during
mid-July. During June and July, the temperatures may range from 85-100F, with periodic drizzles or heavy
downpours.

Housing and Meals: Arrangements will be made for Duke students’ homestays with local families. The rooms will
be furnished and secured with lockable doors. Rooms may be shared with another Duke student of the same
gender. Students will have access to a shared bathroom either within or adjoining their room. Most rooms will
have ceiling fans and air-conditioning.

Families will provide students with breakfast and dinner on weekdays, and all meals on weekends. Saath will
provide lunch on weekdays. Host families as well as Saath offices will provide filtered drinking water. Choice of
vegetarian or non-vegetarian food will be discussed with the Duke students in advance of their departure and
assigned with families accordingly. Saath will provide only vegetarian food, fresh from the kitchen at their head
office. Restaurants, groceries and provision stores will be easily available in the neighborhood area.

Local Safety, Security, and Cultural Norms: If you have special needs related to health, cultural, or religious
practices, please contact the DukeEngage office, dukeengage@duke.edu, to discuss whether or not your needs
can be reasonably accommodated in this program.
For information related to how your religion, race, sexual/gender identity, ability or other aspects of your identity might impact your travels, we recommend starting with the Diversity, Identity and Global Travel section of the DukeEngage website.

We encourage students who have questions or concerns about health or safety in international programs to check Duke’s International SOS (ISOS) portal for relevant information.

Reflection and Enrichment: Every Friday afternoon students will reflect on their progress with their projects, on the various goals they have set, and on issues raised by weekly guest speakers, and will discuss the readings recommended to them. Students will maintain an active log/journal of their experiences, questions, investigations, achievements, impressions, visions and inspirations for future service work, and will volunteer to post comments on the program blog.

A local language instructor will teach spoken Hindi language to Duke students. Local experts will give guest lectures on various topics, including careers in the nonprofit field and Indian history, culture, literature, art, music, and other related topics. On select Saturdays when Saath is closed, Duke students will visit local historical and cultural sites such as the following:

- Historic Ahmedabad city
- Modhera Sun Temple and Rani Step Well in Patan
- Calico Textile Museum and Mahatma Gandhi Ashram, Ahmedabad
- Weavers’ village in Surendranagar
- A ‘Bollywood’ movie (Hindi cinema)

Curricular Connections
At Duke, Prof. Shah will help students integrate their service-learning experiences with their respective academic disciplines and inspire students to further their commitments to community service at Duke and beyond. She is willing to mentor students in independent studies, Program II majors, or honors theses on topics related to their experience.

Some examples of relevant courses are, Gandhi: Image and Reflection (AMES 258), Indian Civilization (History 219S), Children’s Self Expression: Literacy Through Photography (Documentary Studies 224S), Refugees, Rights and Resettlement (Sociology 178FS), Digital Documentary Photography: Education, Childhood and Growth (VMS 212S), Gender, Sexuality and Human Rights (GSF 368), Women in the Economy (Econ 348), Epics of India: Ethics, Politics and Performance Traditions (Religion 278S), Indigenous Journeys in South Asian Film and Literature (AMES 252S), Dance and Theatre of India (Dance 355), Indian Cinema (AMES 251), Asian American Theater (Theatre 232).

More Information
- Bhargava, Pramila H. The Elimination of Child Labour: Whose Responsibility? A Workbook. New Delhi,


- Garva, Radhaben and Sushma Iyer. *Picture This! : Painting the Women’s Movement* [eBook of 147 paintings], 2013. [From her home in a small village in the Kutch district of Gujarat, Dalit artist Radhaben Garwa has documented the rural women’s movement in Western India and beyond through her drawings].
