



SHAHANI ACADEMIC AND GLOBAL EMPOWERMENT FOUNDATION  
**Enlightened Education for Creating Extraordinary Lives**

<http://thesagefoundation.com/>

## **SAGE JOURNEY TO INDIA - making a difference - voluntourism at its most rewarding.**

It's not often you get an opportunity to step up and make a real difference while experiencing travel and adventure in a land of paradox. This is exactly what we are inviting you to do when you join us on this incredible journey of the heart in India.

You will experience India like you have never dreamed before on the most unique, inspiring and soul fulfilling travel adventure.



SAGE Journey to India is no glossy travel itinerary. Come with us to experience India at the grass roots level. This journey will be one of the most profound of your life and stay with you forever. Simply by being on this tour you will save lives and give people hope for perhaps the first time ever. We will combine social responsibility with the adventure of the real India, far from the India seen from the windows of a luxury coach.

### **Day One: Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> February:**

Your adventure starts in Mumbai - which is the thriving hub and gateway to India. Mumbai is a cultural melting pot and bustling urban metropolis combined with incredible poverty. A city of over 13 million people and without the infrastructure to support its growth, it's surprising anything can be achieved here, but it is and it's absolutely thriving.

Mumbai gets its name from the temple of *Kali* Goddess *Mumba* or *Maha Amba*. *Aai* in Marathi means mother. *Kali* is the goddess of enlightenment or liberation. You will find spiritual significance embedded right through the Indian Culture.

On your arrival at the airport look for your name being held up by our friendly driver who will weave his way through the traffic and take you to the Godwin Hotel (a comfortable 3 star hotel in South Mumbai). It is likely different members of the group will arrive at different times and it may be in the middle of the night however please ensure you are ready to join us by midday on the 15th- if you are arriving the day before just let us know so we can arrange accommodation at the same hotel for you.

This morning you can relax - walk on the nearby sea front - explore the local streets or simply sit on the rooftop of the hotel and take in the view of the sea and surrounding area. Or join us for coffee at the nearby Italian coffee shop.

Journey Organized and Conducted by Shazar Robinson for Sage Foundation.  
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A good breakfast will be supplied at the hotel.

At 12.30 we will meet on the rooftop for a cold drink, and a brief orientation and introducing ourselves. We will then head off for an Indian style “thali” lunch at the Golden Star Thali.

They serve a style of food that originates in Gujarat and Rajasthan. It will be a delightful feast to introduce you to the wonderful tastes of real Indian food.

A thali is a selection of different regional dishes, served in small bowls on a round tray usually made of steel. Dishes include rice, dhal, assortment of snacks and vegetables, chapati, papad, curd (yoghurt), small amounts of chutney or pickle, and a sweet dish to top it off. Don't be concerned if you are sensitive to spicy foods - we can arrange for mild dishes for you. Let me tell you - it is delicious food!



After lunch it's time to walk it off! We will start our afternoon adventure -Maya Shahani will accompany us and she a great story teller - so you will be well entertained as we go along.

We will visit Mani Bhavan (Gandhi's residence) a very special place which will give you a real sense of the power of one man's stance for freedom.

Next we will drive past August Kranti Maidan where Gandhi flagged off his Quit India Movement. A monument commemorating this historical event is currently located in a garden inside the Maidan. The locality surrounding this ground is known as Gowalia Tank. The name "Gowalia Tank" refers to the olden days when there was a water tank situated here where shepherds ("Gowalia" in Gujarati) used to bring their cows and sheep for water.



And on via the Babulnath Mandir (Shiva Temple), ascending Malabar Hill, with a view over Chowpatty Beach to the Hanging Gardens, then down to BanGanga.

According to local legend, it sprang forth when the Hindu god Ram, the exiled hero of the epic Ramayana, stopped at the spot five thousand years ago in search of his

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kidnapped wife Sita.

As the legend goes, overcome with fatigue and thirst, Rama asked his brother Lakshmana to bring him some water. Laxman instantly shot an arrow into the ground, and water gushed forth from the ground, creating a tributary of the Ganges, which flows over a thousand miles away, hence its name, Banganga, the *Ganga* created on a *baan* (arrow).

This is a fresh water tank fed by a spring, only steps from the salty sea.

It will be time to rest for a short while on the steps here - the feeling is peaceful and deep. Then when ready, we will wander through the back streets behind this water place to take a look at the nearby Dhobhi Ghat - the local 'laundry'. You will be amazed at how these washer folk manage to keep track of the mounds of washing and know where to return it once it is dry!

A short drive will see us at the Hari Rama Hari Krishna Temple where we can sit together for a delicious vegetarian snack in their Vrindivan Gardens surrounded by all the elements required to provide a good digestion and sharing of the day's events. The garden is a miniature replica of the Vrindavan gardens where Krishna used to play with the Gopis. (female cowherds - his friends)

Finally we will take a stroll down the famous Chowpatty Beach which is a wonderful way to end the day by as it is a spectacle not to be missed. Every evening, this beach gets filled with people, amidst food kiosks, ferry rides, balloon sellers, etc. It's a place where everyone loves to come after the day to please their taste buds, breathe in some fresh air and simply watch the passersby!



### **Day Two: Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> February.**

Today we will drive out of the craziness of Mumbai traffic onto the Expressway which leads us up into the Western Ghats - (the escarpment that leads to the plateau beyond) on the road to Lonavala - our destination for the next days. Lonavla's original name, Lenauli - means the places of many caves (lena meaning cave).

This trip takes about two to three hours and on the way you will feel that change in the atmosphere as we climb up into the Ghats area. This is a beautiful area much frequented by Mumbaikars as they escape the summer heat of the city.

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It's usually an exciting ride - as the traffic is undisciplined and runs on rules the Western driver cannot comprehend. And by lunch time we will arrive at Malavali to the existing Shiksham Gram Shelter for Homeless Children.



Here we will meet the children and Satish and Yogita, the tireless and visionary leaders of this place which provides care and love to 86 children between the ages of 4 and 15.



Nandini Chandraratnam - our co-guide - will also tell you the story of her own love affair with the children and her role as skilled fundraiser and one who continually invites others to share the vision. Her story is one of profound trust and how following the guidance of her Spirit has led her to a life deeply



entrenched in this heart centered work.

As she says: *“My calling has found me and guided me at every step.”*

So here in the village this will be “getting to know you” time - as we have been invited to join the whole ‘family’ for their midday meal and will sit cross legged on the floor with them all and enjoy a delicious and nutritious meal. They are sure to offer us some chai tea as well .. (sweet, strong, milky and flavored with the spice of India, usually cardamom or ginger) - once you develop a taste for it - it will always remind you of India!

**And you are sure to already begin to fall in love with the children - they quickly work their way into your heart.**

Here you will also meet Satish Moon and Yogita - the couple who’s vision has created this wonderful project.

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You will be as inspired as I am I'm sure by Satish's stance on life, education and the importance of giving these children every opportunity possible.

After lunch we will leave the children to their afternoon activities and make our way to settle in to our accommodation and relax into the peace of the surrounding countryside. You will find everything you need - and if there is anything you need please just ask.

Once we are settled in its time to wander around the new and rapidly evolving site for the Shiksham Gram refuge and school. You will begin to understand the need for our assistance to this far reaching project.



Tonight we will enjoy a typical Indian dinner - accompanied by good local wine or beer that we can collect at the 'bottle shop' in the village if you wish.

The rest of the evening - is free for you to chat, share, play cards, snooze or even check your emails if you like.

We will spend some time over dinner discussing the following day's program and the

different options that we will each have to contribute in the most beneficial way to the building and development of the new project - or simply working and playing with the children themselves.

### **Day Three: Friday 17<sup>th</sup> February:**

Wakeup is early here - you can join the morning meditation - or snuggle back down into bed, or simply take a walk in the nature that surrounds the site.

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It is an incredibly beautiful area.. and the early mornings are wonderful. You can even go and join the karate group for an exercise workout.. no they will not expect you to keep up.. but you will be very welcome on the training ground.

After breakfast - and yes we will have real coffee for us addicts.. we will begin our days work. There is a huge area for **garden** and we can **plant trees**, nurture **fruit trees**, prepare the soil, tend the **compost heaps**, begin the process of growing seeds, and generally help out with this area to assist provision of fresh food for the children's nutritional needs.



The work that we will be able to help with will vary depending on our personal skills and what we can contribute the best.



The needs of the Children of the orphanage will be carefully considered as we discover where we can each help to the best of our ability.

Playing with the children will be a big part of our contribution as the exposure to different languages and cultures is very helpful to them.

English lessons are always welcome.

Once our day is done, we will shower and change and drive a few kilometers to Sunny's Dhaba, the popular typical open roadside restaurant.

Here we can relax on charpoy, drink local wine (remarkably good) or the renowned Kingfisher Beer or possibly some of the delicious fruit juices or 'lassis' and enjoy a great meal. This will be a good chance to discuss our impressions and ideas about what we are

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seeing and experiencing in the day. This time working together with the local people will bring many insights to be shared.



**Day Four Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> February:** Today we will leave early for the hike (350 steps) up to the Buddhist Karla Caves which lie in the western ghats, about 114 kms away from Mumbai. They were carved out almost **2,000 years ago** - and have a large collection of Chaityas (halls).

Although as exquisite as the more famous Ajanta and Ellora caves, these caves are less crowded and make for an extremely pleasant outing. The beautifully carved Chaityas and Viharas (monasteries) take you on a journey back in time, narrating stories of the past.

These caves were home to Buddhist monks who lived and meditated here and created such incredible carvings. Some of the smaller meditation cells (caves) have the strongest acoustics resonating right through your body.

We will come home via the small busy town Lonavala and have a typical Indian late lunch at the very popular Rama Krishna Restaurant.

You can feed your sweet tooth at one of the many famous Chikki (Local sweet) Shops here in town! Or simply surrender to the delicious Kulfi icecream in the Rama Krishna.



Once we have been back our rooms to freshen up and take a rest, we may have two choices. Those of us who would like to continue their work at the site may do so - and others for whom the spiritual path is intriguing, may take a walk to the Vedanta Academy for a guided tour. Founded in 1988 by Swami Parthasarathy, the Academy offers continual three-year residential courses on Vedanta.

*“Vedanta is the essential philosophy original to the Hindus, but we claim it is the essential philosophy of all religions. The major ideas of*

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*Vedanta are, first, the ultimate existence. We hold that all the things we see around us are ultimately reducible to one substance.”*

If you are intrigued by what you see here you may be able to attend a videoed lecture of Swami Parthasarathy and we will either have dinner at the Academy or back at Shikshan Gram.

**Day Five: Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> February:**



An early morning start for those who wish to have a chance to meditate with the Training Group for the Strong Village Project and have a karate or Chi Gong workout with them.

Then it's back to work we go - to continue our project (s) and spend time with the children. A chance to really roll up our sleeves and get our hands dirty, or teach computer skills if that is your bent!

**Day Six Monday 20<sup>th</sup> February:**

After all that hard work today is a day out! We are off to Pune - to shop, eat, and see the sights. Pune is home to the famous Rajneesh Ashram - and has many international visitors - some excellent shopping and wonderful food. If you are up for it we will take the local train, and autorickshaws once we are there.. both are experiences you will enjoy!

The Mahesh Lunch Home is our favourite restaurant and you will not be disappointed here. The name "Lunch Home" sounds like a sandwich bar but it is far from that!

We will visit an outlet which showcases products from all over India made by craftspeople who have been retrained to assist them to become self sustaining and to have opportunities previously denied them. You will find beautiful gifts here to take home.

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And for those of you itching to get into Indian fashion - Fab India is a one stop shop for this. We will come home after lots of fun and have a great 'show and tell' of the finds we made today.

### Day Seven and Eight - Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> February & Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> February:

We will have two more days of working - with the kids and at the Shelter. These two days will fly by, and you will really enjoy your time as you get stuck into the job at hand.

But there will be time for each of us during these days to enjoy a healing and rejuvenating Ayurvedic massage - you will be refreshed and have all the kinks ironed out by our wonderful friend Mumta.

### Day Nine Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> November:



Just down the road from where we are staying is a place of quiet and peace - a wonderful Buddhist Meditation Retreat. We have arranged for some time out here for those of you who would like to visit and have an opportunity to soak in the depth of stillness here. It's likely we will leave to walk there before sunrise.. a perfect time to take superb photos as the sun peeks over the edge of the flat topped hill across the valley.

As this is our last day here in the village,

### **Dinner tonight is going to be a surprise celebration - so bring your party clothes!!**

You will not forget this evening - and will finally say farewell to all your new found friends - knowing in your hearts that coming back will be high on the list of things that are must do's in your life. **Something to definitely put on your bucket list!**

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### Day Ten Friday 24<sup>th</sup> February:

We will pack and leave by 10 am after last farewells to the children and our new found friends. The long road to Mumbai beckons and we will wind our way down the Ghats and back into the noise and bustle of this huge city. But on the way.. there is a sumptuous buffet lunch prepared for us at the Jewel of India in Worli. Yes we know - eating is a very important part of Indian life and you will certainly not go hungry on this trip!

After lunch we will be dropped at the ferry which will take us across to a small island which houses the biggest unsupported dome in the world.. the Global Vipassana Pagoda.. this is such an incredible place.. and deserves to be seen. It can seat 8000 people to meditate in the main hall and has been completely constructed by donation from those who are practitioners of the Vipassana meditation technique.



We return to the Godwin Hotel (you will most certainly be amazed at how far and wide you feel you have been since you were here last.) Settle in.. relax, shower and rest for a while - and we will go for dinner together in the local vicinity. If you wish you may simply take the evening off and explore on your own or stroll by the beach. There is no obligation to be always with the group - please feel free if you wish to have space for yourself.



### Day Eleven Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> February:

Breathing exercises on the rooftop at dawn for those who like to join. Or an early morning stroll on the beach. You may breakfast in the hotel or for those who like to go out - breakfast

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at the famous Leopold's Café two blocks away though I must say the coffee is better at the Barista around the corner!

We will leave for the day's outing at 9.45. Our first visit will be the Koli Village where the fisher folk ply their trade. The fishermen are called 'Koli' in Marathi (Interestingly, Koli means a spider - one who weaves a web or net). They were one of the earliest residents of Mumbai.



Moving on, our main objective this morning will be to visit the Geeta Nagar slum where the SAGE Foundation supports a school. Shazar says: *"Maya Shahani took me there in November and it was a highlight of my visit to India as I am sure it will be yours as well."*

In the **Geeta Nagar** slum over 40,000 people survive in absolute poverty. Geeta Nagar is a hub of sprawling hutments situated on a prime land in the heart of South Mumbai but the people here do not have even basic facilities like water and toilets. Help is needed to impart formal and non formal education, health care and vocational skills training for under privileged children, youth and young women. These innocent children become victims of child



abuse, and women are beaten up by their drunken husbands if not given the right kind of nurturing through education and social empowerment.

You will have the privilege of meeting Sagaya Mary - a tower of strength and a woman who knows almost every slum dweller by name and is a godmother for them.

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Lunch will be held at the trendy Moshe restaurant named after the owner, Moshe Shek, India's first signature chef. Having catered for celebrity guests like Madonna and Jeffery Archer, Moshe's Penne, his Signature Fondue and the Baked Philadelphia Cheesecake are to die for. Moshe's boasts of having the largest desert menu in the country. Quite a contrast to where we have just been.



In the afternoon we will take in some of the essential visits for Mumbai - visiting the beautiful Prince of Wales Museum - to stroll through the halls and view the many fascinating exhibits.

Time permitting we can also go to the Jehangir Art Gallery next door. And a brief walk away will take us to Cottage Industries - where you can view and buy many different crafts made by artisans from

different states of India- - you are sure to find some delightful gifts and keepsakes here.

A short walk away is the Gateway of India on the waterfront, built to commemorate the visit of King George V and Queen Mary to Bombay, a place where over hundreds of years a variety of ceremonies are performed. The last British troops to leave India, passed through the Gateway in a ceremony on February 28, 1948.

No visit to Mumbai is complete without the taste of luxury of the 6 star Hotel which is the iconic Taj Mahal Palace. Since it opened in 1903, this amazing hotel has



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created its own unique history. From Maharajas and Princes to various Kings, Presidents, CEOs and entertainers, the **Taj** has played the perfect host, supportive of their every need. We will meet at the **Harbour Bar** here for a drink together and will have a chance to share our impressions of the day, to plan our return journey and offer our ideas for how we can continue to add value to Shikshan Gram and the Strong Village Project.

Back to hotel to freshen up and we will meet to go to dinner if you are still hungry!!

**Day Twelve Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> February:**



Our last day and a chance to shop, or simply wander and soak in the energy and vibrancy of this incredible city of Mumbai. You will discover treasures to take home to your family and friends or simply as a remembrance of your journey.

We recommend **FabIndia** and **Bombay Stores** as great places to find gifts and wonderful fabrics, clothes and other items - at very reasonable prices.

Or the Khadi shop for an experience of old world India and a great place to buy cloth and other traditional Indian artifacts.

Some of you may leave for home this evening depending on flights and some may be staying on for your individual experience of India or if you are joining us in Rajasthan we will leave for the airport together. If you are returning to spend more time in the village we will arrange your transport back and someone to meet you there.

Through our experience and our valuable contribution this project will be assisted to become a template or model to provide a vehicle for people to stand up on their own feet. The children are being given the opportunity to learn skills and become educated to rise out of the poverty that has previously imprisoned them for lifetimes. We know it will be a mutual education! We will learn much from each other.

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Join us to share the journey.



**Dates: February 15<sup>th</sup> - 26<sup>th</sup> 2012.** Land costs which cover all expenses, meals and accommodation - airport pickup and transfers. AUD2095. Twin-share accommodation. Single room available - surcharge - \$55 per night (Mumbai) and \$30 per night (Malavali).

Flights, Indian Visa, Insurance, additional drinks (alcohol) and internet not included.

To find out more details or to reserve your place on this journey of a lifetime - email us today - there are limited places so don't delay. We will be happy to help you with your flight bookings - so let us know as soon as possible.

Deposit of AUD500 payable on booking - balance to be paid by January 15<sup>th</sup> 2012.

Travel Insurance compulsory. Indian visas are required (fees not included) Once you book you will receive and information pack including info on the visa.

**Contact: Shazar Robinson**

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