

### An Educational Excursion to Pune, Maharashtra, India

Educational excursions enhance the students' knowledge and broaden the outlook towards the world beyond classroom training. The sole reason institutions conduct educational excursions is to educate the students about things beyond textbooks and the general curriculum. The *International Institute for Population Sciences (IIPS)*, Mumbai, also organized an educational excursion in Pune to make us aware of the richness of the visiting places regarding biodiversity, culture, education, job, and prospects. This trip was for two days and was organized by course coordinators **Dr. Laxmikant Dwivedi** and **Dr. Preeti Dhillon**, for M.A./M.Sc. in Population Studies and M.Sc. in Biostatistics & Demography students.

The excursion began on 1st of February, 2020. There are forty students, along with two faculties who went for this educational excursion in Pune. The institute arranged a bus that took us to the destination in about 2.30 hours (7.15 AM- 9.30 AM), covering 150 k.m.

The first visited institute was the **Symbiosis Statistical Institute**. It is a renowned private institution in India, offering degrees in Data Science, Biostatistics and Data Analysis, Industrial Statistics, and Operations Research courses. Along with the regular classroom curriculum, it offers internship facilities in the campus. Other than the regular credit courses, the Institute also conducts tutorials, hands-on workshops, series of guest lectures, scientific colloquiums, skill development lectures, and value-added courses. The institute's Director informed and discussed these courses' relevant time flexibility to finish the course. He presented the course structures and the prospects in academia, industry or IT field based on their courses and training.

The next destination was **the Population Research Center (PRC)** in the **Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics**, credited with pioneering methodologies in demographic surveys. The PRC has undertaken studies on various family planning programs at various stages, starting with communication methods, maternal and child health, RCH approach of the program, RTI/STI, unwanted pregnancies, etc. The PRC has also undertaken evaluation of the work of NGOs in the field of family welfare. In recent years the Centre has evaluated the sterilization bed reservation scheme, family welfare training institutions, the functioning of ultrasound sonography centres, urban health posts functioning, etc. In the area of data collection on a broader scale, the Centre has participated in major evaluative and fact-finding surveys and analytical studies. One of the

institute's faculties shared the experience with us about these activities. Presently, they are involved in various studies and projects related to the health and demographic field. **Prof Anjali Radkar** informed students about Gokhale Institute, its history, scope for demographers and the importance of Demography and Economics. Students also got information about the collaborations of institute with ministries, and IIPS and IIPS alumni.

Students and faculties halted for the later part of the day in the guesthouses that the IIPS had reserved in advance for students' excursion in Gokhale Institute. Students enjoyed the meal in the campus and did some group activities in the evening. The next day was exciting for all the students as they got a chance to visit an age old place named Aga Khan Palace. This place is famous in Indian history as it has been allotted as a prison for the Father of Nation *Mahatma Gandhi* from Aug 1942 to May 1944. He lived here with his wife, *Kasturba Gandhi*, along with many freedom fighters of India. In the afternoon, students reached the famous fort and a historical place called Shaniwar Wada; it chronicles the glory and pride of the Maratha Empire that enlighten us with the richness of Indian history and culture. Later in the evening, students returned to the IIPS.

This excursion was informative and taught students about the beauty and importance of visiting rich places. It also taught to love and care for nature. The campuses of these two institutes were impressive. The lectures given by the faculties of those institutes were very inspiring, valuable, and interesting for students. The knowledge students gathered in this excursion was unique because it widened views and opportunities in demography and health. Students are quite hopeful that these avenues will broaden the opportunities for working in their interest in the future. Students truly loved this educational excursion.

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Students (MA/MSc (Population Studies) and Masters in Biostatistics and Demography) visit to Symbiosis Statistical Institute and Gokhale Institute for Politics and Economics, Pune