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Field Observation 2

Honors India Study Abroad

1. What have you observed,
2. What was your initial reaction to what you observed
3. What have you learned about what you observed to try to understand and contextualize it further
4. Any final insights or understandings

Observing each of the Ashoka fellows, their organizations, approaches, and executions brought me more questions. It has been incredibly motivational, heartfelt, and impactful to share these experiences, moments, and cultures; but it has also made me wonder how the fellows decide the extent of what they address. We held many insightful conversations following each of the case studies— there were times when Akhtar asked us to question what choice actually means (have any of these job opportunities really changed in the last 50 years? It's still goat herder, seamstress, fruit seller.), times when we questioned how and why these initiatives had to specifically target women in order to have *any* gender inclusion (and yet what kind of space do they actually create for the women?), and times when we questioned the cultural pressures around education, oppression, and the intertwining of religion and culture. As we're discussing each of these, and confronted with the double edged blade of in-person experiences and sobering statistics, I've also been curious about how each of us have changed and absorbed this time. We seem to have all learned the power in our voices— a development from a culmination of things, but that seemed to take a head at the start-up panel and pitch-deck summit. In a room of industry heads, internationally recognized changemakers, and more, we introduced ourselves, and we told them our opinions on the discussions and pitches, and we learned to say "This is bullshit." We learned to be a skeptic, largely from Ella calling out Bob and all of his angles on creating metrics around changemaking, and "impact." We learned to reflect on whose voice needs to be the loudest in the room (the sochnapreneur, the fellow, the stakeholder?) via Alissa creating the space for that voice. We learned the power in coming from a perspective of unknowing, but also in coming from our own experiences. So as we round off the Bangalore chapter, I am full of questions; but I am also full, just full.