

**Name: Thomas Rigollet**  
**Country: France**  
**Volunteering period: March – May 2019**



### **Final Impression, May 2019**

My name is Thomas Olivier Jean-Jacques Rigollet, I am twenty two years old and I am from France.

I have already been to India in 2017 and I visited Jodhpur and Sambhali for three days. I visited the Fatima Centre and Sheerni boarding home. I also visited the centre at Setrawa so I was able to see what the role of a volunteer was, and after this first travel, I wanted to come back longer. After one year of preparation, I decided to come from March 2019 to March 2020. After talking with the NGO called “Sambhali Trust”, I made an employment visa for one year. Finally, I only could come from 6th March to 31st May.

After having taken my mark at the guest house, I started to teach English at Abhaya Centre with another volunteer. What I’ve been through during these three months, I couldn’t imagine it before, I can’t even explain it, it’s more than only teaching. I received more than I gave. Besides the volunteering, I make my research paper about gender inequality in Rajasthan and the aim of an NGO in empowering women of India. It was so grateful for me to see how the women were in the centre, how they worked hard, learned fast and enjoyed these moments at the centre.

After three months, I think that my role was a little bit different from teaching only English. When I came here, I wanted them to speak properly English before I leave. But what is important for me and especially for them, finally, it is making them speak, share, laugh and try despite the struggle. I was so happy to see them helping each other, to spell the word when one woman was written on the board.

I will not lie, it was difficult at the beginning as a man, because I was facing so many women I wasn’t familiar to, trying to teach them something. I didn’t want to be the one who feels above them because I came from Europe and I speak quite good English, I really didn’t want that. I think I succeeded in this mission, I felt like a human being, sharing with other human beings, totally different but with the same will to learn. In a way, I was a student too. I learnt so much, in a human’s point of view. I think in Europe, some people forget about sharing moments with each other, even the stranger. Before leaving France, so many people said to me that it will be difficult, that I will see poverty, I will face so many hard things and these people, who never

travelled to India were totally wrong. I'm not saying that India is not facing a huge poverty and inequality, but people are so much richer in other ways. I felt happiness almost wherever I've been in Rajasthan. That is why I want to say, when you're going to India, to Sambhali, don't think that you will be the only teacher. People like the women from the centre, people from the neighborhood, people from tiny shops, people walking in the street will teach you more than you think, this is my feeling actually, I could write a book if I wanted. Be a volunteer at Sambhali, even one month will change you, in a good way, that's why I want to come back, I want to learn more.

