

**BODHGAYA, BIHAR, INDIA**

**HOTEL-SCHOOL**

**INTERMEDIARY REPORT FOR THE EAGLE FOUNDATION**

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## **THE CONCEPT**

The Bodhgaya Hotel School (TBHS) is a unique combination of a hotel and a school, which welcomes international and local guests. The unique hybrid business model provides a real-life learning experience to unemployed youth, and the opportunity for guests to actively participate in the sustainable economic development of a country. With a view to optimizing the hospitality sector in India, The Bodhgaya Hotel School combines a social and customer driven strategy with an international learning environment.

In Bihar, one of India's poorest States, the growing and labour-intensive hotel industry contrasts with the high rate of unemployment among youth. Thanks to the flourishing hospitality sector, an opportunity has come forward to associate training with a self-sustainable Hotel School that provides youth with the skills needed for employability in a variety of organizations such as hotels, restaurants, clubs, resorts, and industrial catering including educational institutions, hospitals, and the Government. There are many businesses and thus a great deal of opportunities to find employment awaiting TBHS students.

By connecting students directly with guests, TBHS combines a proven curriculum with a learning platform that allows trainees to deliver high quality service to customers. The Bodhgaya Hotel School maximizes economic and social benefits for all stakeholders and invites guests to participate in a unique experience.

This innovative approach of hospitality training intends to meet all stakeholders' expectations from young adults seeking employment to responsible travellers, and professional partners. It involves many different actors of the value chain, including hotels, tour operators, development agencies, and the Indian Government. Moreover, it creates local service excellence by mixing Indian culture with international standards allowing guests to dive into a true indigenous experience while feeling at home.

The objectives of TBHS are therefore manifold:

- Enable young generations to receive professional training and to successfully integrate the labour market;
- Supply quality staff to hotels and contribute to the professionalization of hospitality services in India;
- Offer guests the opportunity to actively participate in the sustainable economic development of Bihar.



## **OPERATIONAL PARTNERS**

The Bodhgaya Hotel School came into being because of a unique collaboration between two countries: India and Switzerland. The 3 partners involved in the project are:

- **Aragami India**  
Aragami India is an autonomous private voluntary non-profit organization formed in 2001 by a group of development professionals with a common vision — improving the quality of

life of vulnerable families. The organization focuses on Bihar, where it has programs in twelve districts, including Samastipur and Gaya. Its Registered Office is in New Delhi.

- **EHLsmile**  
EHLsmile is a non-profit association created in 1996 by a group of students of the Ecole hôtelière de Lausanne (EHL). Its main goal is to ally hospitality knowledge with socially responsible projects in developing countries.
- **IFPD**  
IFPD is a Swiss Foundation (with legal status according to articles 80 and following of the Swiss Civil Code) which was established in Lausanne in 1999, and is presently based in Geneva. IFPD is a development NGO and strives to contribute actively to the elimination of poverty among the most vulnerable groups in developing countries. IFPD promotes and supports community based, integrated programmes and project activities in health, education, sanitation and social entrepreneurship.

The Board of the Hotel School includes the following persons:

- **Ms Rekha Masilamani, Secretary of Agragami**  
Rekha Masilamani is a well-known reproductive rights activist, public health expert and independent development consultant. Thanks to her many years in the field, she has acquired the in-depth knowledge and built up the necessary network to guide this project to success.
- **Hélène Bayeux, Executive Director of IFPD**  
Hélène Bayeux is the executive director of the International Foundation for Population and Development (IFPD), Geneva (Switzerland). She is in charge of developing IFPD's strategy and mission to sustainably lift women and youth out of poverty through an integrated approach combining actions on health, education, and social entrepreneurship. She coordinates development projects in India, Nepal and Switzerland, and creates g partnerships with the public sector, academic actors, and private organizations.
- **Olivier Beiner, Coordinator of EHLsmile**  
Olivier Beiner worked as a project manager for several decades and opened luxury hotels in the Maldives, Sierra Leone, Comoros, Kenya and Morocco. The vast experience he acquired positions M. Beiner as a specialist in hospitality establishments in challenging environments. As a member of the EHLsmile association, he volunteers to carry out hotel industry training in disadvantaged countries.

## **THE SCHOOL**

TBHS was officially launched on November 14<sup>th</sup>, 2018, with 6 students and 2 instructors. In the coming months, the number of students and instructors will be progressively increased.

The school offers a one-year certificate program in hospitality services. Students can select between two courses:

- **Certificate course in Food Production:** this course allows students to master Indian and Continental cuisine by rotating between the hot section, the cold section, bakery/pastry and stewarding. They are exposed to modern kitchen equipment to ensure that they will be familiar with their future working environment.
- **Certificate course in Hotel Operations:** in this course, students acquire knowledge, as well as experience, in the three main operational departments of a hotel: Service, Housekeeping and Front Office.

The courses involve 25% of theory and 75% of practice. Both courses include training in English, professional behaviour and hygiene. Students who have attained the required skill level and an average score of 70% or above will be certified by EHLsmile. Students who successfully completed

the course will be supported to ensure employment. Thanks to this unique model, guests staying at The Bodhgaya Hotel School positively impact the students' future and thus the local community.

Each student receives following benefits during his/her year at TBHS:

- Uniforms
- Hygiene supplies
- Daily meal
- Teaching materials and facilities
- Living essentials

The Bodhgaya Hotel School targets youth who wish to:

- Be trained through a dynamic one-year hospitality programme
- Increase their career opportunities in a fast-growing sector
- Learn in a stimulating international environment

A class 10 certificate and basic communication skills in English are mandatory. In principle, the financial capacity to pay a symbolic school fee of INR 500 per month (CHF 7.35) is also required. Depending on the availability of donations, students may apply for a scholarship. Applications are evaluated on a case to case basis, subject to students' background and personal motivation.



The current team, from left to right: Ajay Kumar (Manager), Shyam Kumar Pandey (Food Production instructor), Sumit Saurav (F&B and FO instructor), Ashish Kumar (Hotel Operation student), Ashish Kumar (Hotel Operation student), Rohit Kumar (Food Production student), John Ramesh (Hotel Operation student), Vivek Suman (HK instructor), Nidhi Priya (Hotel Operation student)

See Annex to meet some of the current students.

## **THE HOTEL**

The hotel consists of 20 rooms, fully equipped with new materials. The hotel is located in the centre of Bodhgaya within walking distance from the main attractions. It also features a 40 seat restaurant with an à la carte menu consisting of Indian and continental dishes. The restaurant is supplied with vegetables, spices, and fruits grown by local farmers.

All services provided to hotel guests are prepared and executed by students, under the supervision of the teaching faculty, who is being coached by two young EHL graduates since the beginning of the project.

The 20 rooms are located on 3 floors, which are accessible by elevator:

- 4 Standard rooms
- 11 Deluxe rooms
- 5 Superior rooms

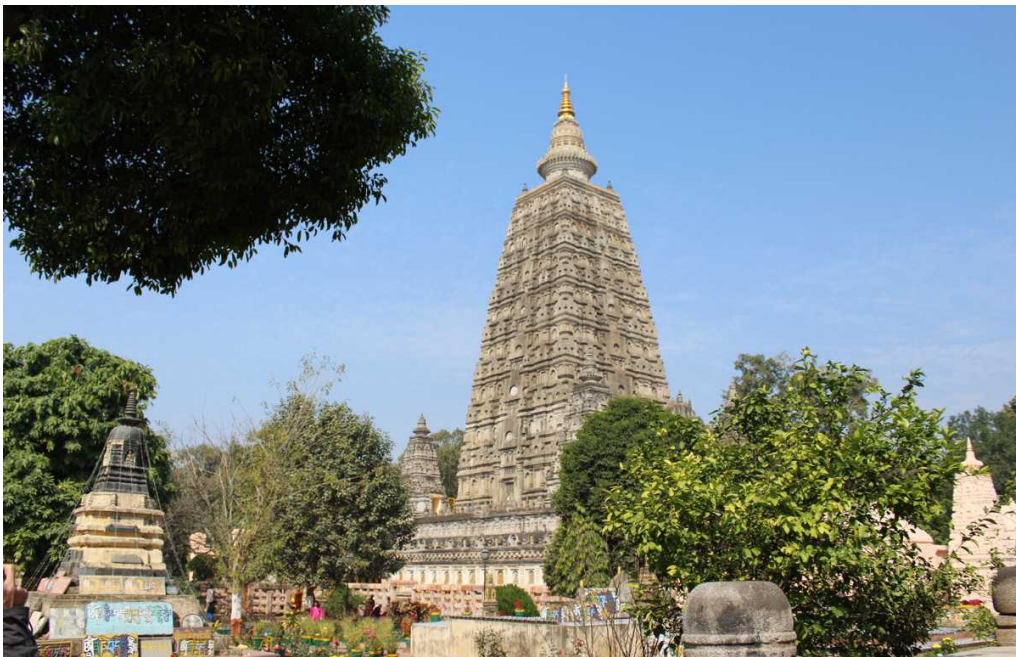
Room equipment:

- Complimentary Wi-Fi
- LCD Television with national and international channels
- Air conditioning
- Electric kettle and tea amenities
- Shower amenities
- Hairdryer



Bodhgaya is the most important Buddhist pilgrimage place in the world. It's here that Lord Buddha became enlightened during intense meditation under a Bodhi tree. The exact spot is now marked by the sprawling Mahabodhi Temple complex. The Bodhgaya Hotel School is conveniently located only a few meters away from the major tourist attraction, the Lord Buddha statue, but away from noisy streets to allow peace and quietness. The Mahabodhi Temple is only a 5 minute rickshaw ride or a 15 minute walk away from the Hotel.





Other facilities available to guests include the organization of transport / pick-ups, a selection of newspapers, an in-house laundry service, and the provision of personal tourist guides to set up personalized tours.

#### **PERFORMANCE & OCCUPANCY**

The Bodhgaya Hotel School opened in mid-November 2017; a few months later, the students are already fully endorsing their responsibilities and working like professionals, which proves the validity and pertinence of the project concept as well as the good performance of the instructors

The level of guest satisfaction is very high. To date, TBHS has 14 reviews on Booking.com and its rating is 9.4 on a 10 point scale. Staff and students share the concept of The Bodhgaya Hotel School with guests, who highly appreciate the initiative. The Hotel School is a social project, which is an important asset to differentiate it from similar establishments, and create a unique reputation among potential clients.

The Hotel performance for the first 3 months of operation is as follows:

December 2017					
Occupancy rate through Booking. com	Room Revenue through Booking.com	Total nights through Booking.com	Occupancy rate of walk -in guest	Room Revenue through walk-in guest	Total Nights through walk – in guest
4.48%	42,310	30	21.45%	203,348	133

January 2018					
Occupancy rate through Booking. com	Room Revenue through Booking.com	Total nights through Booking.com	Occupancy rate of walk -in guest	Room Revenue through walk-in guest	Total Nights through walk – in guest
17.58%	181,484	109	29.68%	323,110	184

February 2018					
Occupancy rate through Booking. com	Room Revenue through Booking.com	Total nights through Booking.com	Occupancy rate of walk -in guest	Room Revenue through walk-in guest	Total Nights through walk – in guest
5.65 %	66926	35	29.03%	3,28,609	180

Room rates are adapted according to high season (October – February) and low season (March – September). Prices in CHF in the table below are indicative.

Room Type	Single Occupancy (High Season)	Single Occupancy (Low Season)	Double Occupancy (High Season)	Double Occupancy (Low Season)
Standard	INR 2400 – CHF 35	INR 1100 – CHF 16	INR 2700 – CHF 40	INR 1500 – CHF 22
Deluxe	INR 2500 – CHF 37	INR 1800 – CHF 26	INR 2900 – CHF 42	INR 2300 – CHF 34
Superior	INR 3100 – CHF 45	INR 2700 – CHF 40	INR 3500 – CHF 51	INR 3100 – CHF 45

To date, the hotel is listed on 3 booking agencies: Booking.com, Goibibo and MakeMyTrip.

### **CORRECTIVE STRATEGIES**

The number of students was initially held lower than planned to allow a "soft opening" and a progressive increase of activities. It is planned to integrate 20 students by September 2018. A maximum of 20 students has been deemed more appropriate by the management to adequately implement the project than the initially envisioned number of 30.

Students prefer to commute between their homes and the Hotel School instead of living there. The initially planned dormitories have therefore not been put in place, and corresponding funds are being allocated to the students' transport costs and school fees, which encourages and motivates families to let their children study.

## **ANNEX**

Meet some of our current students:

### **Ashish Kumar, 20 – Hotel Operations Student**

He proved to be a hard worker who understands the importance of organization behind the scene. Ashish is eager to learn and is committed to what he does. He has three brothers and one sister, and is the son of a local farmer of Bodhgaya. His family got expanded by his recent marriage to which he kindly invited his fellow students and instructors. While he is not at school or caring for his family, he enjoys a game of basketball with his friends. Before joining TBHS, he completed the +2 examination and ever since his graduation has been seeking for a way to launch a professional career. Through training at The Bodhgaya Hotel School, he found an opportunity to acquire the skills needed for a successful career in the hospitality industry. His goal is to become a housekeeping supervisor in one of Bodhgaya's many hotels.

### **Rohit Kumar, 19 – Food Production Student**

His dishes are not only appreciated by our guests, but also by his fellow students and staff during team lunches. Besides his cooking skills, he brings the right attitude to the workplace. Rohit has successfully passed +2 examination. He grew up in his uncle's custody, who is a local businessman. Rohit's ultimate goal is to open his own school; he already generously promised discounts for the future kids of his fellow classmates. Rohit prefers to spend his leisure time inside with board games, his favorites being ludo and carombole.

### **Nidhi Priya, 21 – Hotel Operations Student**

Nidhi comes from a big village called Mocharim, and is the daughter of a local farmer there. After completing +2 examination, she is currently pursuing a bachelor's degree through a correspondence course besides her course at TBHS. Nidhi was already familiar with the NGO Agragami India. She participated in the sewing course offered by the organization to promote female entrepreneurship. With her strong willpower, she learns quickly and proved to be very reliable. This motivated young woman lives her passion for the hospitality industry and chases her dream of becoming a receptionist.

### **Yenugula Ramesh, 24 – Hotel Operations Student**

Ramesh has been called "John" since he was at school. He comes from a small village called Rattibigha where he successfully passed class 10. He holds a strong connection to the orphanage in which he grew up to become an energetic young man. Prior to starting his course at TBHS, he gave English classes to the children of the orphanage. Today, he is the proud father of a two-year-old and a loving husband to his wife that he met at the orphanage. At school, his biggest asset is his open and communicative spirit towards guests and fellow classmates. He knows how to identify their needs, and is happy to accommodate every wish. His goal in life is to open his own orphanage, for which his hospitality skills will come in handy.

### **Ashish Kumar, 19 – Hotel Operations Student**

He grew up as a farmer's son in the close by city of Gaya. The same name is not the only thing he has in common with his classmate Ashish Kumar. He as well was raised with three brothers and one sister. Before attending TBHS, Ashish has passed the +2 examination. If you want to know the latest cricket scores, just ask Ashish, he is able to inform you about them in detail. Besides cricket, his heart is also beating for the hospitality sector. He is seeking to pursue an international career in the hotel industry. Ashish is not only appreciated by external guests, but also by his classmates and instructors. He is a real pleasure to work with, always smiling and motivated. Whenever there is a guest or student in need, he is there to help.