When asked about his children's education, he said that all of his children go to school except for one, Badhon. Badhon does not like school and he prefers to stay home. We assumed that perhaps no one had ever talked to him about the importance of education. So we spoke to him and tried to explain the positive results of going to school. We made him aware of how he would not be able to achieve a higher standard of living without education. At first, we received no response from him; he kept his head down and kept silent. But, after a while, we convinced him to start school again! It was a delightful moment. For the first time in my life, I had the first-hand privilege of experiencing the life of a farmer- the tasks he performs and all the hard work he puts in. I actually learnt how to plough a field! My elder brother and a few friends prepared chicken barbeque for dinner that night and it was incredible!

After a night of almost no electricity, the next day was spent in cleaning our surroundings. Once again we were divided into groups and this time we were asked to clean parts of the Ashrai compound. We were asked to clean the backyard of the kitchen, which was littered with plastic bottles, polythene, and dead tree branches. We used shovels, lawn mowers, and large sacks to clean the premises.

Dinner that night consisted of *khichuri* made by all the students. Into the dish went a lot of vegetables, cut into small pieces and there was egg curry to go with it. The end result was something we cherished as most of us never had the experience of cooking at all!

The fourth and the last day of the trip came all too soon. We woke up, got ready to get our hands dirty, and walked about a kilometer up the road. We came across a farmer who had planned to clean his paddy field. We volunteered to help him out and so we got down into the marshy plain. This was a first time experience for each and every one of us. It was really difficult working under the scorching heat of the sun and our feet buried deep into the wet soil. In the evening, we visited the silk industries, which Rajshahi is so famous for, and was amazed to learn that a single silkworm produces up to 200 yards of silk thread! We were all fascinated to see the processing of silk yarn.

In the last night, we held a discussion about what each of us thought about the trip and what we learnt out of it. This was an important exercise since it is the experiences from such activities that enrich us beyond academics, and such practical education are just as important as the theories we learn in classrooms. The final trip of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Programme, Residential Project, had the strongest effect on me than any of the other trips I had been to. It has made me a better person and I feel like I know my country better.

It doesn't matter who you are or where you are from. You can do programmes at three levels, Bronze, Silver or Gold, which lead to a Duke of Edinburgh's Award. You achieve an Award by completing a programme of activities in four sections (five if you're going for Gold). The activities in general involve learning new skills, helping people or the community, getting fitter, going on expeditions and taking part in a residential activity (Gold only). The best part of the programme is that students choose which skills they wish to learn and which activities to be a part of. The Duke of Edinburgh's Award Programme is fulfilling and challenging and it is an experience which none of us should miss, as the skills we learn and experiences we gather will be with us wherever we go for the rest of our lives.

