

March, 2009

After returning to Khandbari from the mountains, I very quickly recognized that if our goals for the Teacher Training School were to happen I needed to spend a longer time in Khandbari.

For ten days or so I worked very hard to accomplish several tasks. We made the final arrangements and moved the girls to the new rented hostel situation. This really felt like the right thing to do, the new location is much quieter, seemingly safer, much better water throughout the dry season and a huge area for farming to help us cut some food costs and give the girls an opportunity to farm while living at the hostel. This move didn't make everyone happy in the Bhotia community. They were used to their past living situation and liked to have the girls under their watchful eye. We felt it was time for the girls to have some independence and Sunita and Dhanjik feel confident in their ability to run the hostel.

With moving the girls it meant that we would need to spend about three thousand dollars to get the facility up to par. I had new beds, desks and office and full kitchen set up. The new facility is amazing with a library/study room, full kitchen with a new gas stove that cuts down on pollution and cooks much more cleanly than their past oil and wood stove. It is also so much better for the environment. Each day the girls and I painted, cleaned, set up composting systems, a shed for two goats, and built a fence part way around their facility. The owners who live next door helped us and created a nice working partnership.

This entire time the girls were in school and working on their off hours. In the morning the girls would head to class and I would work on the hostel until they arrived then we would start painting, planting etc. In the evening I would give informal English classes that were just hilarious, and turned into a good game of charades. It definitely made for interesting full days for them and a busier schedule than they were used to. We also set up a volunteers room in the ground floor of the owner's house. This will be very handy for visitors and hopefully a nice supplemental income.

Each night Sunita, Dhanjik and I worked on the computer I brought. We set up rules and guidelines for the hostel and worked each day on the budget and how they could communicate with us from the other side of the planet. I really enjoyed this time. In moments I would daydream about my lost plan to ride to India, but during the day I knew I had made the right choice to stay. I was feeling that each day there was crucial to the future success and improvement in this program. I also made many local contacts while visiting the Barun Campus (college that the girls attend.) One of the teachers and I became very good friends and enjoyed meeting in the evenings and sharing plans together. He taught me a lot about the local culture and guided me in the local politics that has an effect on the girls.

I planned on leaving the hostel for some time and again just like in the mountains, each day something kept me. Either being invited to a local celebration or wanting to finish a project, I just found it difficult to leave. My ever approaching finish to my trip kept pulling me back to Kathmandu. I finally had to find a stopping place in the work and fly out. The day I left Khandbari didn't seem real. The weather was exactly like the day I arrived and my jeep to Tumlingtar was with the same driver that I had arrived with. It really had a feeling that I had only been there a few days. As I started down the hill to Tumlingtar I could see Sunita and Dhanjik walking back to the hostel and I could picture my life starting up again in Sisters. The two worlds were separating again. I can't really explain this feeling. Going back and forth to Nepal for the past years is a surreal experience. It is truly a different experience in life over there and I feel so lucky to have a little piece of it.

I really think the Ten Friends involvement is going to give the hostel a lift and going to assist the dreams of Chunduk, Josh Brody, the Bhotia people, and the girls. I feel we are one step closer to getting these mountain girls back to their culture and helping give a quality teacher and community leader back to their villages. This could have such a dramatic effect on village children. Especially girls that are going to have an example of what a young women can accomplish which has not been seen from these mountain areas.

I returned to Kathmandu and checked in with Dinesh. It was time to make the final arrangements with the Rotary of Dillibazaar and check on filters and the update of the sponsored children to take back to Mark. A final visit to Hopeful Home and several meetings with Dinesh ended my Ten Friends work for the winter. What a change of life being back into the pace of Kathmandu. It is amazing that it is the same country. The villages are a world apart from the city. It was time for me to buy my import items and say goodbye to my Kathmandu friends.