

FRIENDS OF MANJUSHREE VIDYAPITH SCHOOL & ORPHANAGE

Newsletter No 8. July 2012



Dear Friends of Manjushree

At the end of April I returned from a 2-month trip to the Orphanage – my sixth visit. What struck me most this time was THE WEATHER! Traditionally the good weather 'windows' have been March/April and September to November. After the extreme cold and the snows everyone looks forward to a sunny April to dry out and warm up before having to face the endless monsoon rains that start in May. This year, apart from a few beautiful bright blue days in March, it has been wet, wet, wet.



Weather patterns are definitely changing. While England was enjoying a heat wave in March – we had two feet of snow in Tawang, followed by rain, hail and fog. Manjushree and Somerset both suffered a cold, wet April.

The excessive rains cause huge problems. Building works at Manjushree are often brought to a standstill. Communications are hampered; power, internet and telephones are affected. Since April there has been no internet connection. The army struggle to keep the Sela Pass road open – first because of the snow and ice, then because heavy rains cause seas of mud and frequent landslides. Heavily polluted water sources result in outbreaks of amoebic dysentery.

Happily there are good hygiene routines in place and the children are strong and healthy – none of them got dysentery. However, what with the altitude, my age and western constitution, I got it so had first hand experience of the hospital and medical facilities in Tawang. Whilst I have huge respect for the doctors, they have very limited resources to work with. If any of the children have a serious problem then they are taken to hospital in Assam – a 14hour drive away – on a good day..

News from Manjushree

Despite the difficulties created by the weather, at Manjushree there is a calm, uncomplaining acceptance – life goes on. Under Lama Thupten's wise and loving care, the school and orphanage continue to grow and flourish. There are now over 170 children; 137 of them at school at Manjushree



Early in June I heard troubling news:

*"Our school temporary academic building was damaged on 27/04/2012 around 11:30 P.M due to collapse of base wall. **But no one was hurt.**"*



Now we are constructing a new temporary academic block on our school ground and we are constructing a new wall."

Until reconstruction of the temporary building was completed, the children were having their lessons in the dormitories.



I have now heard that the rebuild is complete and the children are back in their classrooms. They take their studies very seriously and achieve good results. 38 seniors are now attending 3 local secondary schools. Most are in the top ten of their year group.

5 senior boys are at army boarding school in Assam, sponsored by the Indian Army. Another 5 boys have chosen to train to be monks and they are studying at a monastery near Bangalore.

Four Manjushree girls have just completed their penultimate year at Tawang High School. They are all very keen to do well and are star pupils. There are 270 students in the year and one of our girls, Bulu, took first place in the class XI exams - Dolma took 6th place.



The seniors were all on their holidays while I was at Manjushree. Many of them spent several hours a day helping with the construction work in progress; for example digging the foundations for the new academic block. The students are amazingly strong and willing workers - **they are so proud and happy to be helping to build 'their school'**



Of the 19 students who have completed their secondary education, 2

have had vocational training and are now working at Manjushree and 15 are at University or college. I am delighted to report that the first Manjushree student to complete his further education is now in employment. Mani, who has lost both his hands, has a government job in the Tax and Excise department. Tsultim has completed her MBA in Tourism and been offered a job with Kuoni Travel.

There is an amazing sense of 'family' at Manjushree.

The older children help in the care of their young brothers and sisters, happily and responsibly carrying out their duties in school and in the dormitories.



His Holiness the Dalai Lama continues to take an interest in Manjushree; he is currently funding the building of a Stupa to be dedicated to world peace. The chosen site

is near to the birthplace of the 6th Dalai Lama; the site is adjacent to and overlooks the orphanage. It is hoped that the Stupa will attract more visitors to the Tawang district. The guest rooms at Manjushree will provide a source of revenue for the orphanage.

FMVSO is in its sixth year of giving support to Lama Thupten Phuntsok in his mission to improve the lives of handicapped children and orphans of Tawang district.

Our priority has always been to feed the children.

Food prices continue to rise and the cost of food varies, depending on the time of year and weather conditions. Donations of food from the army and from local individuals and organisations are irregular. However, Lama Thupten assured me that our quarterly contribution just about covers the cost of the food.

Vegetables grown on the two terraced fields help with the food budget as well as providing good nourishment. The children eat well



and they all help wash up!



FMVSO funds almost all of the further education costs, mainly through individual sponsorship. The number of students completing their secondary education and going to university or college will escalate greatly in the next few years.

All students will be fully funded for 3 years. Those achieving 85%+ in their XII grade exams will have the opportunity to apply for the better universities in Delhi or Bangalore. After 3 years most students will go on to further studies but will be encouraged to seek part-time employment to partially support themselves. FMVSO will provide some support if needed. Once they have graduated, the students will willingly 'give back' to their home and family, either with a financial contribution or by returning to Manjushree to work, in an administrative, caring, or teaching role.

FMVSO is committed to providing the necessary funds to feed the children and to pay for their further education – for the foreseeable future.

All donations to FMVSO go direct to Manjushree. No expenses are deducted and our trips are self-funded

A huge thanks to all our friends who have continued to loyally support our mission.

Di Gallagher

FMVSO Trustee
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