

Saturday November 22<sup>nd</sup>

We were up around 7 am this morning. Shortly after that Sahadev, Kashi and Suroj came to move the remaining school supplies to the Bandipur Multi-Development Committee office for later distribution. We also had to move to another hotel room across the village as this room was booked for the night. So we had to pack up and move it all for one night. Sahadev also made a trip to Dumare to have a box built for the Tibetan Prayer wheel that I purchased in Kathmandu. This was the only method of safely transporting this incredible piece of original folk art. Hopefully I will be able to hand carry it with me. This part of the “resort” is built on the edge of the mountain so our balcony literally hangs over the edge with a view of the valley below and the Himalayas directly on the horizon. There is of course no hot water or heat in the room, standard for the hardy Nepalese.

Kara wasn't feeling well so she stayed back today. It was a hard decision for her because we were hiking to Sahadev's parent's home in the valley. Each year I have visited them. In 2004 Jeannie and I were the first outsiders Sahadev had invited to his home. His parents are absolutely wonderful and always want me to spend the night but I needed to check on Kara.

On the way down the hill we stopped at Kashi's home and had some fresh warm milk. His grandfather was there, a 90 year old man who is still mentally quick and farms as he is able. We should all have these genes!

The hike down to Jopati is steep and the last incline is simply where the water has shed away the soil to rock. It is uneven and slippery. Once in the valley we traverse around the rice patties where there are again farmers and their families in various stages of the harvest.

When we arrived, Sahadev's father, Bamadev presented me with flowers and his mother Lila blessed me with the red mark of the Hindus. Sahadev's niece Shreeya was there also. Last year she was so young that she cried whenever I pointed the camera her way. This year we played ball, she sat on my lap and chattered to me in Nepali which of course showed her my illiteracy.

There were several other children from the area there so I blew up beach balls and made quick friends. I also brought Lila photos from last years visit as well as the neighbor girl Pratima, a beautiful young teenager, they were both thrilled.

We took a short hike into the rice fields where I saw men pulling a rope, similar to pulling wool onto a spinning wheel. They pulled straw for a stack and twisted it and it was as if a rope formed from nowhere. They use this to then tie the bundles of straw for transporting on their backs.

We also took a short walk to Suroj's home and met his mother and father. They served us a cup of curdled milk, similar to a liquid yogurt, very tangy in taste. Suroj also keeps bees and had two hives in large hollowed out logs. They were both very active. He also had a small box hive similar to the western version but said the bees wouldn't take to it.

We hung around being very lazy, talking, playing with the kids, watching the activity in the fields, feeling the soft breeze blowing across the valley bringing the faint scent of the many smells of the crops and animals. Lila brought us popcorn (freshly hulled), roasted soy nuts, and a dish of beans and green leafy vegetable, a nice snack to sustain our energy for the climb up the hill. We said our goodbyes and headed out.

One of the things I have observed over the years is that there is little touching between people other than the fried ship between girls and boys (and men) of holding hands. I am so used to hugging my mom, Kane and Kara, my friends, etc. as a natural part of who we are. That isn't part of the culture here although the love between them is apparent.

The climb up the hill was tough. I have had a little congestion and so my lung capacity was diminished a little and found myself breathing hard. The bottom third of the climb is almost straight up over uneven footing and so trying to establish a pace was difficult. As I mentioned before, even if you are physically active, trekking around these mountains is unlike going to the gym or physically working on outside chores. It took about an hour to arrive back at the main bazaar.

I headed back to the room with Kashi leading carrying my newly built box. I wanted to carry it all myself but they wouldn't have it. When we got to the large flat ground, Kashi counted 35 buses and hundreds of people picnicking, playing loud music, and generally having a day out. When I got to the room Kara was feeling better. I showered (brrr) and felt better out of the sweaty and smelly clothes. Kara was finishing the book "Three Cups of Tea" while I did some re-packing.

This was our last night in Bandipur. We brought school supplies, helped deliver some of them, met with principals, teacher and students, saw first hand the needs, and experienced part of the struggle that the Nepalese have in their daily lives. We strengthened friendships and made new contacts. We are leaving the Bandipur Multi-Development Committee with \$250 to purchase clothing for the poorest children, purchase benches and tables for those classes with standing students, and purchase additional school supplies as needed. I always wish we could do more. We have also paid a \$150 fee for interpretive and guide services for the assistance we were provided.

We ended the evening with dinner and drinks with Sahadev, Kashi, Suroj and Sushil (another young teacher), laughing and enjoying our friendship. These young men have been instrumental in the work this year, providing interpretive services and acting as our guides and contacts to the rural schools. They are deeply committed to the children and schools of the area and have accompanied us everywhere.

So this ends our time in Bandipur. We are headed to Pokhara tomorrow morning with a short stop in Damauli to pick up some Rotary paperwork.

Until then, work for peace in all that you do.