

Thursday November 22nd

I didn't sleep at all last night. Nafeeza went out for water at 8 pm, called at 8:30 to say she had been invited for tea. I waited for her as the hours went by, worrying about her like a father, being out with people she had just met in a new town, etc. Sahadev had told us over dinner that there was a gang of young boys that had been creating problems, she heard that. During the night I thought several times of going to look for her but where, everything would be closed.

I got up at 6:30. During the restless night I had made a decision that she was going home. It was another irresponsible act and the last line to be crossed. She came in shortly after I got up, apologetic that the conversation had gone into the early morning and people had provide her a place to sleep. It turned out that they were my friends but that didn't change my decision. I told her to pack her things and I would help arrange a ride to Kathmandu where she could change her flights to an earlier date for a fee. I went looking for Sahadev to assist me in this task and when I found him and confided my need for assistance he was confused so I had to lay out the issues from the beginning. He convinced me to allow her to stay one more night and try to arrange the flights, etc from here. Kara also spent time with Nafeeza in consoling so that Nafeeza could have someone to confide in. The bottom line is that this isn't a match and hasn't been from the start. I let it go too long hoping for some aspect of self awareness to open but it didn't.

So this put us behind more than an hour in our planned trek to outlying rural schools. We finally met at the hotel and packed up the physics lab, first aid kits and soccer balls for the two schools. It would be a three hour hike in, not counting small stops and rests.

The walk down from Bandipur is at a fast pace until we reach the valley floor. As we cross the rolling landscape, there are still fields of rice being harvested at all stages. There were men and women in the fields; cutting and lying the cut sheaves out in patterns and bunches that could be easily handled when carried to the thrashing site. Sometimes the thrashing is done in the fields, other times at the home. The remaining stalks are piled in a haystack for livestock feed throughout the winter. As we walked through the small villages and by homes we saw millet and dahl spread out on large mats to dry in the sun.

At the first small school we stopped at, there were only about 25 children. They were all in dirty clothing or tattered school uniforms but all had a smile or cute shyness about them. We left them a soccer ball and pinned a West Virginia pin on each of them. Additional supplies will be brought to them later. There was one small boy, about 7 yrs old that had three fingers on each hand. He was born with one finger and two were fused and were separated. He was so damn cute! One of the women across from the school cut a fresh papaya up for us which was delicious and quenched the thirst with a wonderful sweetness. On one of the teachers from this school would accompany us to the other schools also.

We eventually began the uphill climb to the other schools. This wasn't too bad; it was mostly winding up and around the mountains in a steady incline to about the mid point in elevation. The

next school is one that Jeannie Kirkhope and her fundraising efforts had built almost two years ago. This one room school is about 30 x 30 ft, sits on a small space scraped level on a hillside and they have 50 children when they all show. When it is harvest time many stay at home to help in the fields or watch the other children. Today there were about 25 in attendance. There were two teachers today, one is an unpaid volunteer who we found out was going to be paid by a newly found sponsor. We handed out pencils, toothbrushes, WV pins, and left other school supplies and a first aid kit. We got a great group photo of the kids and teachers in the school. As people heard that we were there, additional kids came to school and several teenage mothers with their babies came to be a part of it all.

So once again we were off to the final school. We would again have a small climb around the mountains which brought us by small homes where the harvest work was being done. The school, Kalika Lower Secondary School, has 148 students and 8 teachers. It consists of three rectangular buildings in a U shape, no electricity or running water, this is a very rural and poor community. We met for a while in the principals office and Sahadev unpacked the physics lab and demonstrated how some of the equipment worked. We then walked down the hill to a farmers home who had prepared a meal for us of rice, dahl, spinach with beans and a cup of curd milk. It was all very good. I took a photo of the group but first the farmer went inside and came out with his best coat on, what a sweet man he was.

When we returned to the school, the cultural program was being put together. They began with speeches first with many people speaking. When it was my turn I thanked them for inviting me back and told them it was not us who should be honored but the teachers for their dedication to teaching, the parents for seeing the value of sending their children to school and the students who are the future of Nepal. I also thanked the Bandipur Multi-Development Committee for their commitment to the community, schools and children. We were then presented with necklaces of flowers. Then four boys began playing hand drums, tambourines and singing the songs of their village and Nepal while three young girls performed traditional dances for us. We were of course brought into the dancing and the highlight was when Sahadev, Kashi, Suroj, and Krishna each joined in. What a wonderful honor for them to take this time.

We began our walk back at 4:30, knowing we would once again be trekking the mountains in the dark at the end. It took us three hours travel with the last hour up the long mountain to Bandipur. It was exhausting. Although I am in good physical health, I don't do this everyday so it is a challenge.

When we arrived back at the bazaar we looked pretty ragged. I searched out Nafeeza to see what she had accomplished during the day. It turns out, not much. She had taken a hike to the Sitta Cave and had met a man that said he was a travel agent heading to Kathmandu with another female tourist and offered her a ride. I asked Sahadev if he knew him but he didn't. I asked Nafeeza if she was comfortable with this and she said yes. My choice was by public transport but

she made the choice. She stated that she would arrange the airline changes in Kathmandu. This was something she could have done online but for some reason didn't.

From there Kara, me, Sahadev, Kashi, and Suroj went to a small café and had a cold beer. Such a great taste after a long, exciting, and exhausting day. We hung out about an hour and then headed back to the rooms. We both showered and crashed hard after that.

So...good night from Nepal.