

# **PAPA'S HOUSE MAGAZINE**

**EDITION NUMBER ONE MARCH 2018**

**COVER PHOTO BY SAM ISHERWOOD**





# **PAPA'S HOUSE MAGAZINE**

**EDITION NUMBER ONE MARCH 2018**

# INTERVIEW WITH THE NEW DIRECTOR OF NOH MRS. SUNITA PANDEY

**You have been working with NOH in various capacities for many years now, had you at some point seen yourself becoming the Director?**

When I first joined the Skylark school. I used to see Papa everyday bringing the kids to school and caring for each kid personally. I was very touched by his work. I used to wonder if I could also do something like him. One day Papa offered me a job as a teacher to teach some of the girls. I was very happy and excited to work with him and teach the girls. That was my first step in Papa's House. At that time, I never would have thought that I would ever be the director. Then I

started to work as Volunteer Nepal's assistant director. With time I was offered many other responsibilities in the organization which I accepted happily. After working for some years and knowing the organization, and self-development, I thought that I could lead the organization with everyone's support.

**Would you mind giving a brief description of the many different services NOH provides?**

Since its inception, NOH has been providing different services to many groups of people, be it: children, senior citizens, women, people with disabilities, and underprivileged families. Outside of our own homes which began fourteen years ago, we have the following programs.

**Chelsea Education and Community Center (CECC):** Through CECC

we provide vocational training, academic enrichment, life skill lessons for our children and free English, Nepali literacy and basic math classes to the women in our community. Today, there are 250 women who regularly attend classes at the Chelsea Center.

**Volunteer Nepal:** With a simple belief that 'Helping others kindles happiness', Volunteer Nepal program was introduced 11 years ago to individuals who wanted to contribute their time to work for organizations or causes and serve the Nepalese community. Every year we get more than 100 volunteers from different parts of the world. Our placements include teaching at community schools for underprivileged children





and children with disabilities, offering life skills workshops in our Chelsea Center, assisting in health clinics, working with other nonprofits for human rights and even helping farmers in their fields.

**Out Reach Program:** As part of its mission, Nepal Orphans Home has long supported other local charities.

*Bal Mandir:* Besides Papa's House, we also support nutritional program for the infants at Balmandir. Balmandir is one of the oldest orphanage in Kathmandu.

*Kanti Hospital:* We work with terminally ill children at the Oncology ward in Kanti Hospital. Every Monday and Friday, we distribute fruits, eggs and baby food as a part of our nutritional program. We also celebrate birthdays and organize wish granting programs for kids with a life-limiting illness. Support (generally for pain medications) is provided for poor families who cannot afford the medical costs.

*NIBDA blind Home:* We support a small home for the blind by providing necessary supplies to the kids every month. We send one of our staff every Tuesday and Friday to help the kids with their home work, and organize games. To ensure that they have enough caretakers, we also sponsor staffs salary and provide tutors if necessary.

*Dumrikharka School, Ramechhap:* The Dumrikharka school was completely damaged by the earthquake in 2015. Through our earthquake relief fund, we built a new school for the kids. Today more than 200 students attend the school, some even receive scholarships. Besides this, we also support a daily nutritional program for a whole school and pay for the English teacher.

*Everest Children Home:* We support this orphanage in Sindhupalchowk with food supplies every month.

*Dolkha, Bigu:* We support a Buddhist Monastery in Bigu with teachers and finances to help rebuild that which was destroyed by the earthquake.

*Community Educational support:* We support the education of 56 kids in our community. 27 of them go to an English-medium school and the rest to government schools in and out of Kathmandu valley.

**Other Outreach projects:** We also provide emergency financial support for families in need.

**You are a mother of two children, you're first a son, and then his little sister; how do they feel about your new role? How about your husband?**

My new role as director brought new responsibilities, and with increased responsibilities came a greater work load. I was overwhelmed by my responsibilities at the beginning, as I had to be conscious of the needs of both my children and my job. But, my kids are very supportive. As they realized that my job required more of me, they started contributing to household chores and spending more time caring for family members.

Both my kids were attached to Papa's House from a very young age and seeing me a director has broadened a sense of responsibility in them to help, and contribute to the community, as well as those in need.

My husband has been very accommodating. Also, a board member, he knows the organization

well and helps me with government works and legal issues of the organization. I couldn't have asked for more.

**Having just started as the Director, it is too soon to discuss legacies, we hope that you will be here for many, many years, however, how would you wish to be remembered for your time as Director of NOH?**

I want to be remembered as someone who was inspiring, and uplifting. Someone who always believed in the people we help, and someone who initiated and encouraged ideas.

**The NOH homes have always been at best 20% male and 80% female. What are a couple of the most important lessons you feel you can impart upon both the girls and separately upon the boys?**

I want to teach the girls to love and to be considerate of others whilst developing the confidence to speak up and be independent. With education and the right skills, they can rule the world.

For boys, I want to pass on the invaluable treasure of moral values so that tomorrow they turn out to be responsible human beings.

**Can you convey to our readers, in brief, the impact that NOH has had in Nepal?**

NOH has provided a family to almost two hundred children who had been sold, abandoned, or impoverished, and given to all a childhood, encouraging their dreams, and helping them to make them a reality. It has enhanced the quality of life in the community by providing basic education and training to the women. Similarly, NOH also supports the urgently needful people and eases their life in our and many other communities in Nepal.

# PAPA'S HOUSE TIMES

## INTERVIEW WITH ANITA THAPA

### Would you like to introduce yourself Anita?

I am Anita Thapa. I came from Dang District of Khaira Dhikpur. I have four members in my family, I, my two sisters, and my small brother. Before coming to Papa's House our family condition was very poor. At present I am the cook didi in Possibilities House. I also take training for beauty salon.

### There are many options, why did you choose beauty salon?

I was very much interested in make-up art from childhood.

### What have you learned so far?

I have learned to do facials, nail art, hairstyle, make-up, highlighting, hand massage, Henna art, and more.



Anita Thapa



By: Srijana Khatri

### Are you going to open your own salon and why?

Yes, because I have learned many skills and I want to utilize those skills and set my life up.

### Has the training been difficult?

Oh yes, I found many difficulties, like in facials sometimes I forget my steps, while threading because I found it difficult to make the shapes of eyebrows (laughing here) in cutting hair.

### Did you think to quit?

Oh no, obstacles come in every field, I love doing these things.

### Have you felt any changes in your life by training and being the cook didi?

Yes, when I was a student I had to only read, but now I am the staff of NOH family, so I have to work as others, I have also learned to be independent, in this way my life has changed a lot.

### What is your goal in life?

(laughing) to be a make-up artist.

### What do you like most about the beauty parlor?

When I make the person beautiful and attractive, and send them out, I feel extremely happy inside. Also I get to know many people and they treat me in a good way.

### What suggestion would you have for your younger brothers and sisters?

Never lose hope if you fail in exams and leave study. Always take help from your elders.

# THE POSSIBILITIES BOY'S HOUSE



By: Rajan Yadav

I was five years old when I came to Papa's House. Now I am fifteen years old, and about to go into grade 10 and sit for my final exam. My name is Rajan Yadav.

Possibilities House, also known as the Boy's House has changed over the years. We have had already five houses, six managers, and two dogs. When I came we were thirty-two boys but at present we are ten, as other boys are in college house and others still independent now.

In this house we have two floors, the boys on the second floor and the first floor we have four girls and the didi. Our Managers are Sam brother and Anita Didi who are married.

During Friday nights we enjoy watching a film together and eating out Friday night special. We each help the cook with dinner once a week. In our backyard we have a small garden where we grow vegetables.

I hope this helps you guys to understand about our house, but maybe it is not enough to describe about our beautiful house.





# VOLUNTEER NEPAL VOLUNTEER



By: Sita Timalsina

## How do you feel as a volunteer?

Heather: I really love it and feel privileged to be a part of NOH. The students are very enthusiastic, hardworking, and caring for one another.

## What sort of plans did you make before coming to Nepal?

Heather: Originally my plan was to spend time with three different non-profits and with one school.

## What places do you like to visit?

Heather: In any country that I visit I prefer the Historical places, temples and natural beauty.

## There is a lot of religion in Nepal as well as the culture, have you noticed this? What kinds of religion and culture do you see here?

Heather: I see mostly Hinduism and Buddhism. About the culture I see things like festivals, advertisements of different types of food like Newari, Thakali, Chinese, and Nepali. I also like the various types of dress and to listen to so many languages.

## What type of guide do you prefer?

Heather: I like those people who take me to the remote area, but they must be able to feel the pain of the people there and understand them. They should be able to tell all the history of the area.

## Most tourist come for a visit once or maybe twice, how are you different?

Heather: Well first I came with my school through Volunteer Nepal to study. I liked it so much I came back on independent study still through my university, through Volunteer Nepal. I will have spent ten months straight so when I leave I will not be able to return until next year.

## Do you ever feel like leaving here and living in your native land?

Heather: For the most part I do not want to leave, but I miss my family and friends.

Heather during the Bhai Tika celebration.



# THE SHOE SHOP



By: Seema Chaudhary

I have been working at Papa's House Shoe Shop for three years. I work alone now but when I first started we were twelve students and a teacher.

I work three days a week for one hour after school, and then on holidays and Saturdays I work most the day. I like making shoes because it helps people who need shoes. I help Papa's kids and kids from other schools too. I can make two pairs of school shoes in one day. Small shoes are more difficult to make, I want to make comfortable shoes for people to wear. I enjoy making different types of school shoes. I get very happy when I see people wearing my hand made shoes.



## INTERVIEW WITH PAPA'S HOUSE BOARD MEMBER ASHOK YADAV

**What do you do as a Board member?**

I represent the children.

**What do you like about being a Board member?**

I like knowing about the organization, plans, budgets, etc.

**How do you feel by being a board member?**

I feel very proud.

**What do you see five years from now?**

I see myself as a great entrepreneur handling a lot of small business's.

**What responsibilities do you have?**

Ashok: I present the children's life and try to help make the best policy for the board for my little brothers and sisters.

**Why did you decide to become a Board member?**

I didn't decide but Papa decided to make me a board member.

**What type of decisions do you put in to board meetings?**

Actually, individual decisions are not made, we agree by all board members.

**What is your biggest contribution to the organization?**

Recently I am managing the mentorship program to help my brothers and sisters.

**Are you going to continue to be a Board member?**

For now yes, I am not only contributing to the organization but I am learning so much from the other board members.



By: Shaloni

**What changes is the organization experiencing now?**

The organization is changing a lot now, becoming more systematic.

**What is one of your most memorable days?**

My first Board Meeting is sure one of them.







By: Khusbu

## INTERVIEW WITH RUPA CHAUDHARY OF CLASS 10

**How would you describe yourself?**  
Peace loving, cooperative, and gentle.

**How are you feeling to be in your final year of school?**  
I am feeling sad to soon be separating from my Hostel sisters, I am also feeling excited.

**What do you want to do after you take your SEE exam?**  
I am planning to study management and business and find a part time job.

**What do you like to do with your free time?**  
Being with my friends and sometimes doing pranks on them.

**What do you see yourself doing in five years?**  
I see myself as a manager of a very nice Hotel.

**What have you liked best so far in your life at NOH?**  
I have learned to become a helpful person, dedicated to my life, to work in groups and to share ideas and life with them.



*Rupa on the right  
with Mary.*

# LIFE OF CHILDREN



By: Anisha Chaudhary

Children should be seen as a precious gift of God. They should be the brightness in any family. And with the family they should come to learn the meaning of life.

Children born into poverty receive no awareness of education's importance. They suffer a lot and many become orphans also. Parents who are poor don't understand the problem of not giving education to their children.

I am a child of poverty and abandoned but taken in by NOH. I am in my 10th year and will sit soon for my SEE exam and then start college. NOH children are orphans or very poor, but they work harder at their studies and learning vocations than children who have parents who can afford them.

NOH is an organization which is helped by Michael Hess who we call Papa, it is my family and I am happy, and my life is filled with happiness.







# VALENTINE'S DAY CELEBRATION



*By: Ramita Chaudhary*



Thank you to Possible Worlds Foundation, Toni Sister, who for many years sponsors our Valentines Day Celebration which is held at our Skylark School. This year many students from papa's House and the Skylark school performed dances and songs. The children voted on around 13 superlatives before the day and winners were announced

and prizes rewarded. We ate many varieties of food cooked in Hope's Café by our senior sisters and brothers who have been well trained for this. It was delicious. We took photos in a photo area with Papa, sisters, brothers, friends and teachers. After the program we each have a personal Valentine Bag filled with Valentines from friends, and lots of chocolate treats.



## SKYLARK SCHOOL



Our school is located in Dhapasi next to the Chundevi Temple. The environment is fresh, green and with colorful flowers. We have been attending for maybe eight years now, it is run by a wonderful woman Mrs. Sangita Rai. She has great knowledge to run the school. Teachers in my school are friendly and cooperative with the students and each other. The Principal Mam has facilitated us by providing a library, science lab and computer lab. She knows what activities are important to students. At our school is also Hope's Café for our children and the Brother's Café, run by our students but for all the other children, it is their own Café.

We have lots of activities like basketball tournaments, competitions in academics. In addition many festivals are held like sports day, cultural day, worship of Saraswati, Goddess of education, parents day, children's day, and Valentine's Day.

## GETTING TO KNOW SUMITRA BETTER



By: Khusbu

Sumitra

### What makes you happy?

Adventure trips and being with kids.

### Sad?

To be scolded or ignored.

### Annoyed?

Crowds and noise.

### To smile?

Friday night and a novel.

### How would you describe yourself?

Creative, adventures and friendly.

### How are you feeling in the final year of school?

Excited and nervous. A new life will begin, I will be in the college home and more independent.

### What do you want to do after your SEE is finished?

I am not sure till now, but if I must choose I want to be a nurse, and a tourist guide. I will get a scholarship for nursing college. Oh, and I want to run a bakery shop.

### What do you really want to do in life?

I have no idea. Maybe I will be a nurse.

### If you could have three wishes what would they be?

I want to be a travel nurse. I wish I had a supernatural power. And I

would be in a world where no one would notice me.

### What do you do for fun?

I play with kids and hang out with my friends. I like to listen to music and dance to its rhythm.

### What do you see yourself doing 5 years from now?

I see myself being a successful nurse, athlete, and best tourist guide ever. I also see myself traveling the whole world and discovering new things.

### What do you consider to be your greatest strengths and weaknesses?

My strength is patience and making my life look easy. My weakness would be I get angry fast and cry easy.

### And last, what do you like best about your life so far?

I have grown up to be a good girl and have always donated my love and I respect others.





# MY FIRST BUS RIDE A MEMORY



By: Kailashi Chaudhary

I had woke early on the day of my first bus ride, rubbing my eyes as I listened to people murmuring outside my window. That was eight years ago. I got out of my bed and went outside to see what was happening. Three men were standing with a large group of our girls talking about Kathmandu. The word Kathmandu brought a smile to me and I joined the group.

I was living with close to 100 other girls at Lawrajuni the NOH homes in Narti, of Dang district. The three men had come from the NOH homes in Kathmandu and said they would take anyone wishing to come to the Kathmandu homes for a better

study environment. I had heard so much about the Kathmandu that I raised my hand and so many of my friends did also. I hurried and excitedly packed my bag and as soon as I did we started our journey to Kathmandu on a long old bus the men had hired. The three men we got to know as Vinod daddy, Sam brother and Jake brother. At first I was so excited to be on the bus but soon I got dizzy, groggy, and vomited, as I was a small kid and it was my first and longest journey which I had never experienced. I slept on the bus. After 10 hours I woke to the magnificent view. When Vinod daddy said we were

in the Kathmandu valley my eyes were wide open and my smile grew wider. I mostly noticed huge buildings attached with one another, huge shopping malls which I had never seen before. The lifestyle of people was different compared to the village, those buildings amazed me with how big they were. An hour later we reached Papa's House, around 7pm or 8pm. I saw many brothers and sisters. Moreover, I saw many friends whose height was same as mine. At first I did not talk to them because I was new and felt awkward. Time passed and as I lived with them they became family, and my new life began.



## INTERVIEW WITH SAM AND ANITA



*By: Bimala Gurung*

### **When did you meet?**

Sam and Anita: We met in September or October of 2008 in Papa's House.

### **How long have you been in a relationship?**

Sam and Anita: We have been in a relationship for three years.

### **What do your parents think about your marriage?**

Sam: My mother is very happy because she has a daughter in law.

Anita: My parents are very happy because they like Sam and he is good.

### **What do you like about each other?**

Sam: Anita is very smart and has a great personality.

Anita: I most like that Sam is kind and helpful.

### **Do you think that you will face challenges and obstacles because of different culture?**

Sam: Funny joke. No, because Anita has been to America and her brother lives there. Also her parents will be there and many other Nepalese live there also.

Anita: No, I can manage different cultures, I know his culture and I can adjust.

### **Will you be happy in Marriage?**

Sam: We will be happy together because we care about each other.

Anita: Yes, because we understand each other.

### **Ok, two things you like the most about each other?**

Sam: Her sense of humor and her smile.

Anita: He is so kind and helpful, and I like his smile also.





# THE ACTIVITIES OF PAPA'S HOUSE



By: Bhumika Rana

My name is Bhumika Rana, I study in class seven at Skylark School and have been in Papa's House for six years.

My schedule is, I wake up early in the morning and have tea and biscuits. I then study and do my assignments before breakfast. Then I get ready for school and we walk together there as a group from my house.

After school we have a snack and change into our out dress and go to the Chelsea Center. There we

attend math, computer, and study hall classes. We go home after two hours and prepare for our dinner. After dinner I return to my homework, after that I sleep. Friday is the day we call "good Friday" and some schedule is different. After school we go to the Chelsea Center but instead of classes we have workshops to learn more about life. Then after Chelsea we have dinner and watch a film while eating our Friday night special.

## **The Chelsea Education and Community Center**

On Saturday my schedule is different. I wake up late and after breakfast I go to the Chelsea Center to use the internet. After coming back from Chelsea all our family gathers at Papa's House to enjoy the weekend. We are all together to talk and share our happiness or sorrow with each other. It feels really good to be together with our NOH family.



## AN INTERVIEW WITH A COLLEGE GIRL

By: Anupa Gurung

### Please introduce yourself.

My name is Apsara Basnet. I am eighteen years old and I come from a small village named Singarchae which is in Sindupalchowk district. I have five members in my family, my mother, my elder sister, my little brother, and me.

### How was your early life?

I was small when I came to Papa's House, I was seven, so I have spent most of my time here. However if I have to talk about my early time in my village, it was not good. The condition of my family was very poor.

### What are your hobbies?

I have many hobbies in my life. First of all, I like reading books, which may be text books or novels. Second, I like to travel to new places and conquering new things. Beyond that I like dancing, listening to music, spending time with friends and watching films.

### How do you feel about college life?

It is my first year, so we can say that I just stepped into a new phase of my life. This new phase is very challenging, but I am enjoying the college life.

### How is the environment of your college?

The environment is very nice, we have been learning many things. The teachers are amazing and very dedicated. However, some extra curricular activities are lacking in my college. The friends there are amazing and very supportive.

### What is your major subject and why did you choose it?

Science. I chose science as it will help me reach my destiny. It is interesting and challenging, but I am very determined.



### What are your goals?

I wish to be a doctor. Once done I will do social work and encourage education all around.

### Why have you chosen being a doctor?

I want to be able to save people's lives, I believe that the happiness and satisfaction in saving someone's life can not be experienced in any other work.

### Would you like to give suggestions to the children of Papa's House?

Thousands of children out there are lacking the opportunity we got, we should utilize this opportunity very carefully, never be afraid to fail or to try something new in life. Be hardworking, determined that nobody can stop you in anything.



# THE SKYLARK BOYS' BASKETBALL TOURNAMENT



By: Bimal Shahi

Every year we have an interschool basketball tournament organized by the Nims School. The tournament is called the "Jeeten Thakuri Memorial Basketball Tournament" This was the 7th year of it.

Last year we made it to the final game where we lost to Nims by three points. But we were runner up which means second. This year we did not have our starting five from last year as they are now in college. We were a bit discouraged, but we had hope. This was my first senior inter school tournament.

The first team we played was the Chambaugh School and we beat defeated them easily. I also played in this game and that was fun.

Our second game was against Radiant which was our future final opponent. It was a close game but in the fourth quarter we went ahead and won by 9 points. We took a deep breath after this game.

The third match was against Mount Kailash and we won. The score was 15 and 40, we never thought we would win easily and after this we were qualified to be in the semi-final match.

We won the semi-final match against the Lovely Angel school, we defeated them easily and were now 4 and 0 and prepared for the final match. We thought we would be facing Nims School but they unexpectedly lost to Radiant by four points.

The day of the game everyone was wishing us well. Then at the game more than 200 of our students came, along with teachers to support us. Students from Radiant were also present and then many chief guest, officials, and others worshipping for the final game. They played the National Anthem and the game started. We ended the first quarter with a draw, 8-8. Our coach and theirs were leading us very loudly.

The game was very interesting, one team would score then the other team would score, and it remained like this until the final minutes of the fourth quarter when we really took over and when the whistle blew we were ahead by 9 points. Everyone was screaming, and they ran to the court shouting "Larkers, Larkers". We had a ceremony and then carried the trophy back home.

In the morning assembly next day, the Head Mam announced our victory in front of the whole school. We created history because we were the first time winning the tournament with glory and happiness our Head mam gave us a special treat and the players were sent to the cinema hall to watch a movie and to have a party too.



# THE LIFE OF HOPE ANGEL



By: Gita KC



Hope is the smallest child of NOH (Papa's House). She is so sweet with a cute smile, her sweet smile makes other people smile.

Before Hope was a child in a village. It has been almost five years that she has been living with us. She came on August 7th 2013 when she was 13 weeks old. She moved into the Imagine House with Anita

Mahato who became her mother, Papa has always been her father since bringing her. Every member of Papa's House felt that she was a precious gift. The day in which she came to papa's House added one more happiness in our lives.

Now, like us, Hope studies in the Skylark School in LKG. In Nursery she was number one in her class, her percentage used to be 100% in every subject. She is talented, brave, smart in everything. She understands and speaks English so well, she has a talented mind that captures everything she sees.

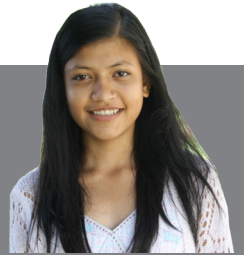
Hope has two best friends, Kai and Pretty. When ever she goes to play or to school she needs them. Her best color is blue. She has so many dolls that have been given by Papa and others. She plays games on her mothers phone, and she enjoys cartoons and films on an I-pad. Her favorite food is Tomato Pizza, but she especially likes pizza made by her Papa. She loves ice-cream and chocolate, but her mom has said only on Friday can you eat sweets.

She has grown so tall, she is almost five now, she loves insects and butterfly's, she talks with them and plays with them. She likes to chose her own dresses and sometimes will put make-up on by herself in front of the mirror, you should see it.

Hope is kind and caring and we love her. She is the girl that if we look we don't want to remove our eyes because she is so beautiful and loving.



## ABOUT SAMUAEL TAMANG



By: Saraswati Thapa

Samuel Tamang Isherwood was born on October 1st, 1984 in Kathmandu, and was adopted as a baby. He has lived in America ever since. He has a mom, elder sister, brother-in-law, five nephews and three nieces.

He had a memorable and fun childhood. He began school at the age of five at the Apple Montessori School in New Jersey. He was very bad in his studies but used to pass his exams. He completed school at eighteen and began college. He came to Nepal at 23, in 2008 and has been a member of the NOH family ever since. He has worked in several departments, volunteer department, basketball coach and manager of the boy's house. He finds being here like it is his second family. He loves the mountains, the outdoors, and the people. When he goes back to Washington State he finds it relaxing but he misses the children very much. He feels himself special being a big brother to many kids because it is always good to know that he is being helpful.

Samuel is engaged now to a Nepali girl (Anita Mahato) and after marriage they are planning to move to the US.





## INTERVIEW WITH ASHOK BROTHER



By: Muskan Pariyar

**You are doing so many things at such a small age, you are a teacher, student, and entrepreneur. How does it feel to be doing so many things?**

I feel proud of myself with what I have been doing, but still it is not enough.

**What is your most important source of motivation?**

My dreams and support of NOH.

**What are the challenges that you are facing in your business?**

A lot, mostly co-ordination of employees.

**How do you think your business has inspired others?**

Yes, this place has taught me a lot of things in my life and I still learn a lot. It has become the greatest place in the world for me.

**what are the benefits of this job?**

Some of our children have taken over the management of our tailoring shop, some the shoe shop, some have become teachers, but I am the first to open a restaurant by the support of NOH. So, I think it helps them to have a bigger vision.

**What is the most important lesson you have learned from opening your business?**

Team work, trustworthy staff, and support of family and friends.

**Are you having a hard time running the restaurant?**

In the early days, but now some relief is coming with my good employees.







By: Muskan Pariyar

## VOLUNTEER NEPAL

Volunteer Nepal was opened in 2004 to support Nepal Orphans Home. More than 100 volunteers come to Volunteer Nepal every year. Presently we have five staff members serving the volunteers needs. Volunteer Nepal gets its volunteer rs from many countries like USA, Australia, New Zealand, the UK and many others.

After the orientation a volunteer chooses their placement, the placements are divided by inside the valley or outside the valley.

Inside the valley includes teaching, medical, animal shelter, work with the elderly, work with crippled children, and orphanages.

Outside the valley allows the volunteers to see the real Nepal. Outside they stay with a host family in the village and do mostly teaching and orphanage work, but some medical also.

The main goal of Volunteer Nepal is to provide interested volunteers to the places in need of them. Our older brother Saroj helped with this report. He is a volunteer coordinator for many years.



Saroj Darji

## MY AIM IN LIFE



By: Anu Basnet

Aim in life means the strong intention to achieve something. Aim is set for our bright career that keeps a certain target to be fulfilled. Everyone should build up on aim in their life, a person without aim is useless. They dawdle aimlessly and can never attain success. Aimless life persuades no one, in fact, without aim no one can grow. Everyone has something that they want or dream about, so take aim.

I have two aims in my life. My intention is to be a social worker. A social worker is a person who serves the society with full faith and allegiance. I want to immerse myself in helping needy persons mostly of the remote areas of our country. In my country, Nepal, we can discern majority of people begging for their alms. So as far as possible I want to encourage them to stand on their own feet and fulfill all their dreams they have concocted.

I think that I could not be extremely delighted but when I assist impoverished people. I believe that my happiness comes when I have done these things according to my desire. I will be extremely happy when I have altered someone's life. It reminds me that life's greatest pleasures are often life's simplest ones. I consider myself living fully happy when I make this kind of effort. Like most people I have a deep desire to fulfill this aim because these are the things I have experienced in my own life and I want to attempt it.

I constantly endeavor to remind myself that our character is shaped not through life's easiest experiences, but during the toughest ones. It is in the course of life's most trying times that we discover who we really are and the fullness of the strength and power that lies within us.



Anita in her earlier days

## INTERVIEW WITH HIMAL SHAHI OF V.N.



By: Anu Basnet

### What is it like meeting volunteers who come here to volunteer?

It is really exciting to meet new people who come here to volunteer. I really love meeting new people and listening to their great stories and get to know them closely.

### What is it like sitting in the house with them?

It is normal like sitting with other people, but we spend more time together discussing different topics and getting to know one another.

### How long have you been working for Volunteer Nepal?

Two years now, it has been a golden opportunity and a great time to learn so much from the people all over the world.

### Are you going to miss this time one day?

Yes, this place has taught me a lot of things in my life and I still learn a lot. It has become the greatest place in the world for me.

### what are the benefits of this job?

I get motivated by hearing the life stories of the volunteer, their struggles, and it gives me the will and power to dedicate myself to my studies and work on my goals.

*Himal is one of Papa's House boy's. He has been managing the volunteer home for two years and makes very special the time of every volunteer. Saroj Dargi is Papa's House first son and also a volunteer coordinator for the last three years.*





## INTERVIEW WITH ANITA MAHATO

### CHILDREN'S MANAGER (CECC ASST. DIRECTOR)



By: Lalita Chaudhary

#### Would you introduce yourself?

My name is Anita Mahato, I am 27 years old. I have eight members in my family, my parents, my daughter Hope Angel, two sisters, one sister in law, one brother, and myself. My daughter Hope will be five soon, she is a very smart girl in LKG who has made my life so different and beautiful.

And my second family is Papa's House. I am from Siraha, in the village Brampuri. I have a happy and beautiful family. The best family that always understand and support each other.

I feel I am one of the luckiest people to have such a beautiful family and my precious daughter Hope.

#### Why did you wish to become a Manager?

I was older than most girls when I came to Papa's House, and so the children all saw me as a big sister. When I finished class ten we were bringing more girls to Dhapasi from

our Narti home. I had been to Narti many times and so I knew many of these little girls. Papa needed a manager for them and he felt that I could do it and so I said yes

#### How long have you been in Papa's House?

Over eleven years, eight as a manager.

#### How do you feel being a manager?

I am very proud. Becoming a manager is a very big responsibility to care for these young girls properly and to teach them what is important in life.

#### What are the basic requirements for the children?

Everything. Education, good facilities, proper food, medical care, their happiness and cleanliness, being there to have them talk about anything with, making sure they know they are loved and cared for. Teaching them respect and love of their NOH family, teaching them good character like honesty, integrity and some wisdom, able to tell all the history of the area.

#### Do you grow tired of being manager?

Never. I love the children and find happiness sharing their lives, and they always come to me to talk and have fun, there is so much laughter always, so this makes my life very nice.

#### What type of moral lesson do you teach?

To be good, to respect your seniors and love and help your juniors. To put others needs before your own, to respect yourself and learn to depend upon yourself.

#### Do you have other duties beyond manager?

Yes, for many years I handle the daily accounting for the managers and for Hope's Café, I give the money to each in the mornings and collect their receipts, then I enter everything into a daily log and once a month I give that to the office. I am also the senior manager and so the other managers will discuss with me their problems and together we find answers.

#### Thank you Anita

Thank you Lalita, good questions.



# BIRTHDAYS



By: Susmita Chaudhary



By: Khusbu Singh



This month there are eight children celebrating their birthdays, and also Dawn Kumari. The children are Khusbu, Sarmila, Shova, Ranjita, Kailashi, Seema and Gomarti for girls and then Ashok for the boys.

The managers give them two packets of chocolates to give to all their brothers and sisters, friends, managers and all. Papa writes them an emotional letter and sends a large photo and a large Dairy Milk.

The managers ask the children what do they want for their birthdays and the kids say things like clothes, shoes, money, etc. Then the managers go shopping to get these gifts. There are two types of cakes, strawberry and chocolate cake. We all sing a birthday song and then blow out the candles and they are ready to cut the cake.

## WHAT CHILDREN SHOULD ASPIRE TO

Childhood is the foundation of one's future life. Children aspire to have freedom, and peace to promote prosperity.

They all aspire to be provided with proper love, care, and opportunity. The children are dependent, innocent, curious, and achieve by nature. They are in need of a friendly and healthy atmosphere to live in peace. They learn and explore new things which make them mature and responsible.

Before the environment has a chance to do anything, all children aspire to be successful by their own definition. What a child aspires to be naturally evolves over time and with age. Girls don't all want to be princesses, dancers, fairies etc anymore. Now more girls want to go into science, technology, engineering, and math careers as boys do. Among boys, the most popular future job is athlete, engineer, astronaut etc.

Therefore, their natural aspirations should be fulfilled through love, support, and positive reward. Parents and educators should play their part by supporting those aspirations. Children should be taught about the world and way of living. They should learn to dream big and live big.



## INTERVIEW WITH HILLARY BERNHARDT (CECC DIRECTOR) AND PRASHANNA BISTA (CECC ASST. DIRECTOR)



By: Sita Timilsina

### How do you feel when you are in the Chelsea Center?

PRASHANNA: The feeling is special. It's like being home. Actually, it feels like we are creating a home here.

### How do you feel while speaking to the women of the Chelsea Center?

HILLARY: Wow! I love talking with the women. They say every English phrase or word they know to me: "Good morning," "Nice to meet you," "Good afternoon," "Thank you," "You're welcome!" Yes, I love spending time with the women.

### What are the plans you've made for the new school year?

PRASHANNA: We made a survey that we have distributed to the kids. The survey asks questions about classes we've never had before, like "Life after SEE" and "Transition to Independence." We are still in the process of making the schedule.

### And for the women of the Chelsea Center?

HILLARY: For the women, we have International Women's Day coming up on March 8. We had an audition last week for the women, and next week, we will have another audition for International Women's Day.

### What progress do you see in the students now?

PRASHANNA: Yes, I would like to say a couple of things; our kids have had many things to say but they were not expressing themselves before. But, nowadays, they have become very expressive and some are also initiating new programs on their own. They are coming up with many new ideas. We recently conducted Winter Camp and they have now come up with the idea of Summer Camp. They enjoyed the first camp a lot. They felt they had learned or achieved something, and

they are now very excited about planning Summer Camp.

HILLARY: In terms of our kids' academic progress, we have actually just designed a "Mentorship Program." Many students have signed up and are looking for ways to succeed. Also, for me, Winter Camp was a big turning point in seeing our kids show creativity, confidence, and their many talents.

### When you have free time, what do you usually do at the Chelsea Center?

PRASHANNA: I wouldn't say we have "free time." Actually, we have a list of things that we plan to do throughout the day. Every day, we have a meeting at 9:30am and we discuss what we are doing each day. We have some big projects coming up, like International Women's Day, as well as regular daily tasks, like communicating with the staff.

HILLARY: One project Prashanna just finished working on was analyzing the grades of all the students for the past four years.

PRASHANNA: When we arrive here at 9:30am, we have a very clear idea about the things we will be doing throughout the day. Actually, the only time we have "free time" is during lunch time. At the end of the day, we debrief the day by going through our list again and planning for the next few days.







# SATURDAY GATHERINGS



*By: Sandhya Chand*

Saturday is a special day for everyone at NOH because we get our Holiday on this day. It is a day that we gather together with all our NOH family and share our feelings, problems, perspectives, together.

There are three Hostels in NOH, they are Sanctuary House, Harmony House (usually called "Papa's House") and Possibilities House. A fourth Hostel is for the college kids and they do not have a name. On Saturday all of these people will gather together at Papa's House. Among all the children is a feeling of being siblings. Together on Saturday we eat a special tiffin cooked by our lovely Papa. As we are all not free on other days we get this opportunity to be together and cheering each other and make our relationship stronger. It gives us a chance to share our feelings,



or problems so that we can get a good and creative solution. During the other six days we are busy with school and the Chelsea Center and mostly see only our house mates before and after. Usually the boys play basketball on Saturdays, small

children run and play, and big girls sit in groups and gossip and talk with our elders. Then around 3:30 it will be time for each house to go home and they then spend the rest of their time in their smaller families.



# REMEMBERING MY PAST

I still can remember when I was a very small boy, running away from school instead of to school, swimming in the river, and enjoying the day with my friends. I was very crazy and used to disobey my grandmother. After time passed, one day my mother came to the village from the city and she asked if I wanted to go back with her. I was very excited and told her yes.

Everything in the city was new to me. My mother used to stay with her friend and one day she put me to stay in a hostel where I met my new

brothers and sisters. We were not happy at that Hostel because the warden was not a good man and they used to beat us and all twelve of us had only one room. One day a foreigner came with another Nepali man, the foreigner looked sad. Then two days later another man came and he said he was going to live with us. His name was Vinod. He said he would make sure we were never beaten again and would take care of us. We called him Vinod daddy, he was a good and great person. The foreigner came back each day and now he seemed



*By: Hari Kumal*

happy. Soon he brought a foreigner woman with him, her name was Mary. We learned soon to call her Mary Mom. Mary mom was very kind and beautiful, she used to teach us English, songs, dance and one day she showed us an exciting film called "Nemo" which was our first movie ever. We all had a really great time with Vinod Daddy and Mary Mom.

## **Mary Mom and Hari**

Then one day was the most happy moment ever, we moved to a new Hostel where we met more children like us. We also got to know the foreigner was Papa. Then we saw Papa a lot every day. We went to a new school with many teachers and Mary Mom would help after school along with Daddy. On Saturday's Mary Mom and Vinod Daddy would take us to church. At Church we would sing songs and talk.

But one day Mary Mom had to leave. We were all so sad. We hid her bag so that she would stay with us, but that was not possible.

We were so happy in our new school and we made many friends. Then one day ten more boys from Kalikot came to live with us and we welcomed them with great pleasure.

Now it has been almost eleven years since I have been living with NOH. I am really grateful to Papa for showing me the right path for my future. I am really grateful to be part of NOH.



*Mary Mom and Hari*

## OUR MOTHER

Dawnkumari is the mother of NOH (Papa's House) family. She is lovable and kind to every child of NOH family. Her heart is filled with love of every children of Papa's House. She holds every children's hand when they fall down.



Before coming to NOH she lived in Ghorka which is very undeveloped. She had three sons. The condition of her family was very weak. She has been with Papa for over 14 years now. She is the first to work with him. She is also a board member of Pap's House. Her three sons, Sujan, Sudip, and Sandesh are studying in school and college. Sujan and Sudip in class 9 and Sandesh in college. They are hardworking like their mother. She has been in my house since I came. She is hardworking, friendly, understanding and funny. She

makes us laugh every time. She is one of the best mothers. She also cooks delicious food which is very tasty and good. She is a great supportive mother.



*By: Ramila Khadka*

## SANCTUARY HOUSE

My name is Mary Singh. I am from Humla District and I study in class eight. I came to Papa's House family in 2010. There were four houses then, they are Sanctuary House, Harmony (Papa's) House, Possibilities House, and Imagine House. I joined Sanctuary House. The manager was Mrs. Gita Tamang and the cook was Mrs. Sunmaya Tamang.

The environment of Sanctuary House was friendly, cooperative, funny and memorable. The people living in the house are amazing, we were all new to one another, before unknown to each other. Since 2010 we have been together and are very close to one another.

There were two amazing rules in our house. There were eight rooms and we had to clean our rooms. They should be neat and clean. The manager would check our rooms and whose room was cleanest would receive a present. We all were very hungry to get that gift. The next rule was she used to look at our results from school and the room with the highest percentage would get a gift.

I don't know how time would pass so quickly.

It was on Saturday April 25th. We were watching a film when suddenly our TV room was shaking. We knew it was earthquake. Our TV room was on the first floor, instead of staying

down we all ran to the top floor. How foolish we were. Days later we moved from that house to our present house. The manager and cook had almost a year before changed and we moved together with our managers, Shila and Deepa. Our new cook was Santi and she had a small son named Sujan.

After one year our managers and cook again changed and we had now Kamali Sister as manager and Puja sister as cook. We were all very friendly and never was anything negative. Sanctuary House has won the name and fame, we are the flower of a different garden living together by sharing happiness, ideas, and opinions with one another.



*By: Mary Singh*



## INTERVIEW WITH SKYLARK OWNER AND PRINCIPAL MRS. SANGITA RAI



By: Papa

Mrs. Rai. I am excited to have you sharing more about yourself than the students would know or be comfortable in asking. You have been a dear friend to me, and the children of NOH for eight years I think now, this is long overdue.

### Please introduce yourself

I was born and brought up in Darjeeling, India. I was raised by a strict mother who was a trained nurse under the British management. All though she was a bit harsh to us she always made sure we attended the best schools and received the best education. I attended Loreto Convent school, one of the best, and graduated from the Government College of Darjeeling.

### Please briefly explain the philosophy that guides your life.

I was very much interested in make-up art from childhood.

### What have you learned so far?

Life in this world is for growth and struggle. The failure in life is not trying. Always be honest in what you do and realize there is no short-cut in life.

### Please give the impression you currently have of the children of NOH after having served them for the past 8 (?) years, has your view of NOH and their children changed over time?

I have spent almost half of my life working with different NGO's and looking after under privileged children. Becoming a part of their life seemed to be the best way to combine important areas of my life. I have learned how incredibly resilient children are. I do have a different perspective of the children of NOH after serving them for so many years. I really do admire them for their tenacity in dealing with the challenges of a rapidly changing world; their ability to grow day by day, their ambition and determination. Deep inside I do

feel that Skylark had a part to play in their growth as they realize the importance of their existence and realizing the purpose of their lives.

### Please share one thing that children might be surprised to know about you.

Chuckling, Well, .....I sometimes lock the door and dance to very loud music. The only people who know about my secret are Pallaviee (daughter) and Waro (Nephew).

### Humor is an essential part of a good life. What makes you laugh?

when I meet my old circle of friends, when ever I am around them I seem to forget everything and go back to my teenage self and have a really good time. My students also make me laugh with their mischievous yet funny activities, especially the junior students.

### What would cause you to feel disappointed in someone?

My life's intention is to look after Skylark to the best of my ability. The people with whom I associate the most are my students, teachers, and parents. The amount of respect they have given me, and the belief which they have in me has made me believe that no one misunderstands my intentions.

Mrs. Sangita Rai  
Principal



**Do you feel young at heart?**

The amount of duties and responsibilities I have in my life has led me to become serious and focused, and on this point I seem to rarely feel young at heart.

**Would you share both a high point and a low point in your career?**

We all have a low and high point in our lives. I experienced my low point when Skylark suffered a setback ten years ago. But these lower points often define what is possible depending upon your willingness and courage to turn them into a positive. From the year 2008-2009 Skylark again stepped up the game and stood out to be one of the best. Our students were growing in number, people loved our work, and we received many awards. Most importantly we regained the trust of the people. This has been the high point of my career and it continues.

**Please describe what for you would be the perfect retirement.**

Four years from now I have considered retirement might happen. I would like to handover Skylark to a dynamic person who would take care of my school with more energy, to implement new ideas, and to take us to a different height. Moreover, I want him or her to love and nurture Skylark as I have for more than half my life. But Skylark will always be under my wings.

Then, I want to travel to as many countries as I can, traveling has always been my hobby. I think then too I would wish to get involved in social issues.

**Thank you very much Mrs. Rai.**

Thank you, this has been a pleasure for me.

# MARY'S STORY

*By: Papa*

Karanga is a small village so deeply rooted into the western Himalaya's that only when the sun is directly overhead is its warmth felt by those living there. Even in summer the mountain tops glisten white, and the strong winds fill the deep blue sky above with blowing snow.

Houses are small, made of stone, and remain cold and dark inside thru out the year. Mary's small two room house was typical, there was no electricity or plumbing, toilets do not exist in this part of Nepal, people go into the heavily wooded area for that.

"Where is your sister?" Mary's father asked his eldest daughter, in a voice worn out from mounting difficulties in his exhausting life; but before she could answer there was a loud crash and thud. "Bhagwan (Dear God) what has come to us now!!"

"don't be talking like that husband" chastised Mary's crippled mother, but to no one as the father had already gone out to see what the matter was. He found Mary lying on the ground, on her back as if resting; she saw her father and sister and smiled an impish smile, "OOH Bhagwan! what were you doing daughter?"

"I am fine Papa, I just slipped is all"

"yeah, from the roof you slipped, what were you doing there?"

"my teacher said that she would come to visit us and I was trying to see if I could see her"

"come on get up girl, heaven have mercy, it is one thing after another here, each thing coming so quick it is bumping into the backs of what has come before, dear Bhagwan above, are You really enjoying giving me such tension?"

"husband", Mary's mom sharply spoke, "The Gods have nothing to do with this so leave them out of your talking"

Mary's father winced to hear this and looked pain stricken upon Mary who was smiling broadly.

"Get in and show your mother you are okay, and keep that smile on when you do child"

Mary went inside through the kitchen and into the only other room where they all slept. Her mother was sitting up in her bed, a woolen shawl over her head and wrapped around her upper body.

"Hi mother, I am fine"

"Come sit with me Mary" Mary sat on the bed and felt her mother take her arm in her frail hand and squeeze it. "your mam is coming to see us, why is that sweetheart?"

"Ma, my mam wants to ask you if I can come to school all the time, she says I am a good learner and I love to learn Ma"

"Oh Mary, you have always been my curious one, your mind is always working isn't it? But Mary, who will take care of the goats, and work in the field if you are off learning things that have nothing to do with life here in Karanga?"





*Mary on the right, eight years ago on her first Saturday with us all.*

"I don't know Ma, no one I guess, but ma, maybe by learning I can find answers to questions like this"

"I am sorry sweetheart, you are only six, your sister seven, and who by the way doesn't ask to go to school, your time will come child, please have patience, your father and I need you, your sisters and brother need you, YOU need you Mary, things will be better soon."

The mother laid her head back on the pillow, her grip on Mary's arm lessened, her thumb still stroking back and forth like a slowing metronome, and then it stopped. Mary's mom closed her eyes to rest then. Mary adjusted the shawl and pulled the quilt higher to her mother's chin and walked outside.

Mary's mother died the following year, just as the days were growing short and a deep cold was settling in. One day she closed her eyes to rest and never opened them

again. In addition to the goats and cow, and work in the fields, she left Mary to help care for a two-year-old sister and a one-year old brother.

Mary never mentioned school again, she worked hard, and quiet. She watched her father struggle to keep food on the table, and she did her best to make the house easier for him.

When summer came, and the goats had to be taken some distance away to pasture land, Mary had her older sister watch over the little ones while she took the goats. She would herd the goats past the little school where she could hear other children reciting inside, but she walked on, determined to never consider school again, but instead to do anything she could to make her family's life easier.

One evening when Mary returned home with her goats she found her

Aunt cooking the dinner rice. She was so happy.

"What are you doing here Aunti?"

"I have come to see if I can maybe help out for a little while; you have grown so tall..... and thin Mary, your Father must be doing the cooking!" she laughed.

"Have you seen Papa Aunti, he is thinner than me, I think he is sad all the time, and scared too"

"I saw him in the field when I came, he smiled and said thank you, then turned back to his work, he used to love my dhal, I am making it for dinner, this will please him I think. Go wash up and then come back and help me, your sister is at the river bathing the kids, she should be back soon." "Mary,,,, oh well, go wash and we will talk when you return."

Mary went out to the hand pump with the bucket and some soap,

removed her kurta and sulwar and filled the bucket. The water is always cold. She learned long ago not to think or hesitate, just pour it over your head and get on with it. Mary did this and soaped up quickly then pumped the bucket full again and began rinsing, then she filled it once more and washed her short hair. Soon she was feeling really fresh and ran inside to change into her only other kurta then entered the kitchen to help her aunti.

Mary's aunt was looking out the kitchen window at her brother working the small field. She felt such love, and an equal amount of sadness while watching him. She would stay and try to find and return, the brother she remembered, back to the children, and to himself.

At dinner Mary's aunt was lifting the mood to her best ability, the children would laugh and speak animatedly with her and each other. Mary would glance at her father who ate in silence, but she could tell he was listening and amused by looking at the lines on the outside of his eyes broaden when he heard something he liked and contract when he didn't.

After dinner Mary carried the plates to the pump to wash them, her older sister cleaned up the babies and readied them for bed where they called to their Papa to come and tell them goodnight.

Mary's aunt came outside and filled a bucket with clean water to rinse the plates Mary had washed.

"You were quiet tonight at dinner Mary, are you all right?"

"I am happy you are here, I was watching Papa and he is happy also. How long will you stay?"

"I haven't any plans to leave Mary, if you would like me to stay then I will. I hope that I can help enough that you could maybe go to school."

"No, aunti, there isn't anything from school for me, I want to help Papa and my sisters and brother, I don't want to go.

"You might be able to help your family more by learning Mary, there are many ways to help and I can do your work for you. Did you know that your cousin brother is in Kathmandu going to school and he works and sends money back home to help us. School is important Mary. Let's wash up for bed now, leave these here to dry."

Mary remained outside washing up and brushing her teeth. As she brushed she thought about what her aunti had said about school, she really would like to learn, and maybe after school she could work hard and be able to still help her family. When Mary returned inside she went to her father to say goodnight, he was laying in his bed turned towards the wall.

"Papa" she shook his shoulder "Papa?" Then she kissed his cheek and started for her bed.

"Mary, come here little girl." Her father spoke soft and gently. "I heard you talking to your aunti about school."

"I don't want school Papa"

"Sweetheart, I only know what I do, there is so much more that I wish knew, my world is small but an educated persons world is endless, you are such a smart little girl, I want your world to be endless."

"I want to be here with you Papa, nothing more"

Mary's father smiled slightly and searched his daughters face, he reached his hand behind her head and pulled her close, kissed her forehead and said goodnight.

Nothing more was said about school during the next week. Mary's aunt did all the cooking, helped with the babies and on some mornings walked the goats to the pasture land with Mary.

The summer turned to fall, Mary's aunt remained, and a good routine was made that brought some ease to Mary's fathers face. The summer crops had been good and soon they would harvest together and store for the winter months. Most nights now, after eating rice, Mary's father would sit with everyone and tell stories that he made up, usually involving kind hearted mythological beast that were very clumsy, and people without an education doing silly things that caused everyone to laugh.

From the bus park it was a one-day hike through the mountains to Mary's village, and one evening a young man, Mary's cousin, arrived just before the greyness of evening turned deep cobalt blue. Mary was at the water pump washing away a day spent in the fields.

"hey little sister" he called out, dropping his back pack and stretching his sore arms and back.

Mary squealed to see him, her big cousin brother, the only person she knew to leave the village and go to Kathmandu.



Just then Mary's aunti came out from the kitchen and approached her son, who went down on his knees and touched his forehead to his mother's feet, then stood smiling at her.

"I hoped that you would come home for Dashain son, I prayed that I would live this moment, and my prayers have been answered. Wash up and then come in to eat"

As Mary's aunti moved back into the kitchen her son appraised Mary, "you are getting so tall and thin Mary, your arms have muscles now, and what about your mind, have you made it stronger too?"

"How do you make your mind strong Dhai?"

"By thinking Mary, by learning, a strong mind is worth much more than a strong body."

As they sat in a circle on the floor eating rice Mary's aunti quizzed her son about Kathmandu.

"there are buildings everywhere, and streets wide and buzzing with cars, and buses like they were honey bees working for the queen. I have a room in one building, I am on the third level and there is a small room where you can do your toilet on my level, inside, just down the hall from my room"

"A room inside the building for doing toilet?" exclaimed his mother, I can't imagine.

"Oh yes mother, things are much different there, for my work and school I have to take a large bus that is full of people, standing, sitting, no space between anyone"

"and where do you go to a field to take your vegetables?"

"No mother, on the street vegetable farmers sell their goods, you can buy sag for 10rs per bunch"

"10rs for a bunch of sag, how can anyone pay that?"

"but I earn 300rs each day mother"

"this Kathmandu is another world son, I am happy to live in my world, my imagination isn't happy to even go there"

The son fell silent for a few minutes and then clearing his throat said

"uncle"

When Mary's father looked up, surprised to be addressed in a conversation he would never be able to contribute to, his nephew continued.

"Uncle, Mary has grown lean and strong, she is like no other seven-year-old in Kathmandu"

"but what for are you comparing my Mary to young girls in Kathmandu?"

"well, I have spoken to an American man in Kathmandu who has an orphanage where all the children attend a private English school, I have told him everything about Mary and asked that he might have room for her"

At this Mary stopped eating, she glanced up to see her father's reaction. It was slow in coming and Mary softly finished chewing.

"Mary is not an orphan son"

"I explained that Uncle, this man has accepted over 100 girls who had been sold by their parents at the age of seven, same as Mary, many have parents but are now able to live life as children again, free, and all are getting educated in English."

"Mary has nothing in common with girls who have been sold"

"No Uncle, she doesn't have things in common with being sold, but she has in common being a young girl with potential that was unable to be exercised by circumstance, the other girls by slavery, Mary by how these mountains keep everyone inside them and others outside them"

"You have learned to share your new knowledge of the world outside these walls with conviction son, but I don't feel that this is anything we need to continue to speak about."

"yes uncle, let us leave this to digest in our hearts as easily as my mother's rice will in our stomachs." With this the son smiled at his mother.

Mary was stunned by the conversation and without enthusiasm or hunger squeezed together the last of her rice in the dhal and placed it in her mouth. Kathmandu she thought, doing toilet in a room near where you lived, schools, buses, people, girls who had been slaves, what is a slave? these images danced circles in her mind as if playing ring around the rosie with her.

That night there were no stories. Mary's father went for a walk after rice, she could see his darkened profile sitting at the base of what her Papa called his guide tree. It was there her father had always said he could go to find his path. This had confused Mary until her mother died but then she understood his "path" meant himself, it was where he felt himself put together again when events were pulling him apart.

After washing the plates and the cooking pots Mary brushed her teeth. She felt somehow different tonight while brushing, each stroke slower and more thoughtful, it was like she was brushing the teeth of someone no longer the Mary she was before rice. She felt suspended, like her path might now be not her own; to leave or not to leave, however this played out she was different now. If this is what opportunity brought she wasn't sure she liked the idea of opportunity, of choice, the ground seemed less stable under her feet, her certainty of tomorrow now felt like the shadows cast by early evening to eyes long trained by living in these mountains.

All Mary knew at that moment was her love for her father, his strength that she lived under brought her comfort, his face that she knew so well whose lines gave her his feelings, happy, sad, worried, could be read so clear but under which was always his deep love for her, the special place she had in his heart and eyes.

She laid down on her bed, feeling tonight the ropes supporting her hay mattress. Mary pulled the thin wool blanket over her head and missing her father's goodnight

closed her eyes. She had fallen asleep when later her father came.

"Mary" her father whispered, she felt then his hand resting on her forehead"

"Papa.?"

"Mary, I have been talking to your mother under my tree. She is feeling happy that I have come to her with my confusion, and she has cleared it; sweetheart, it is the easiest thing for a father who loves his daughter to keep her close by him, and maybe it is the best thing too, but best might be for him and not her."

She looked up at his face, his eyes investigated hers for a second and then looked down. He took her hand in both of his, kissed her closed fingers, his eyes welled with tears, and she knew then, without a doubt, she knew why she was feeling different. She began to cry, softly, quietly,

"No Papa, Please Papa"

"Shhhh child, shush now, please,"

Mary knew she could not protest any further, she knew to be silent and strong like her father always has been. Her Papa bent over, and she could feel his thin lips press against her forehead, then he quickly rose and left her without another word.

Mary pulled her blanket over her head again and felt alone in this dark space warmed with her breath. She knew everything was changed and she knew to accept it and to try and be strong so to take it in on her terms.

Mary's father went outside to sit. His sister feeling his pain rose from her bed and went out.

She found her brother staring into the bit of sky visible above the mountain.

"I came here brother to try and bring you peace, but I fear I have done taken what little I gave away and more now"

They sat in silence and then she rose to return to her bed.

"No, wait sister, wait please." She sat again and looked at his pained face. He turned to look into her eyes.

"You have given me much more than peace. Up there on the hill Mary's mother straightened me out, she said I have to let Mary go, this is what a good father would do. Up there on the hill I was given reason and purpose for my life, I was given the courage to do more than feed my children and pass the days, I was given the knowledge that the greatest gift a poor man locked into the mountains could ever give his daughter was to set her free. Mary is special, she is a strong fighter, she is the very best of her mother, Mary deserves to go outside and into a world as big as her spirit is. Watching Mary go will be one of the greatest challenges God has given me, but this time I will know He is smiling down upon me, with the love and care of a good father."

The next day was Dashami Puja. The family celebrated the movements by rote, the air was heavy. The following morning Mary rose before the sun and sat outside to see its earliest light slip down into the valley. She had her only other kurta



sulwar rolled into a bundle. Her head and shoulders wrapped in her shawl to ward off the October chill. Her cousin brother came outside, brushed his teeth at the pump and nodded to her. Mary went back inside and to the bed of her little brother and sister, she kissed them while they slept. Her older sister looked at her tenderly, she smiled a little and extracted a promise from Mary to never forget her.

Mary then went back outside where her Father and aunti stood talking to her cousin brother. They fell silent when she approached. Her aunti stepped forward and took

Mary into her arms, she hugged her close, Mary felt her warmth penetrate through their combined shawls, her aunti released her and stepped back with a gentle smile, then her composure crumbled, and she turned and walked away.

Mary stood looking at the ground, she felt shaky, uncertain, unattached.

"Mary" her father began, you are my princess, my dragon slayer. You ....." But nothing more came.

Mary stood trembling. Her cousin brother put his arm around her

shoulder and gently turned her to walk away. They walked a few feet away when Mary stopped and turned. She looked at her father, his back slightly bent, his face withered and taugth, his eyes glistening with the enormity of this moment, and she gave him all she had to give, Mary smiled and slashed her arm through the air as if severing the head of the dragon between them. She saw him smile then, and the tears role down his cheeks as she turned and kept her own tears a secret as her cousin brother gently guided her down the path, a path she had to make certain, for her father, and herself.

*Our incredible Mary today giving a talk on the importance of books, and still slaying Dragons*







# **PAPA'S HOUSE MAGAZINE**

**FIRST EDITION MARCH 2018**

**LAYOUT BY PAPA AND MANAGEMENT BY SAM ISHERWOOD**

