



# Winter 2020 Updates on the Work

## **SARASWATI SHISHU MANDIR SCHOOL (the Jain School)**

In Khajuraho, The India Group is paying all the school expenses for the nine school-age children from our families. Four of them attend Saraswati Shishu Mandir School: Milli (age 14) and Krishna (age 11), the daughter and son of Baba and Ramkuiya; and Muskan (age 12) and Chaya (age 9), two daughters of Laxmi and Khalabati.

The school is located in the village where our families live and is one of the first schools TIG partnered with in the early days of our project. Saraswati Shishu Mandir School is a Hindu language and cultural school, though students also learn English. The school has a number of students who do well on the government exams required for university and has the added advantage of going to grade twelve when many India schools only offer classes to grade ten.



TIG makes a concerted effort to assure that all the schools we work with treat our children with respect and dignity. In our early days this was particularly important as the children are lower caste had never attended school and were academically behind their classmates. Our first partnership was with another school in Khajuraho which was less understanding about the background of our children and their parents. While it was more prestigious and better equipped, the emotional wellbeing of our students and the comfort of their parents interacting with school staff was critical to the success of our educational efforts. We ultimately moved our students from that school to the more supportive Saraswati Shishu Mandir School where Milli, Krishna, Muskan and Chaya were able to catch up academically, are doing well and their parents are accepted. All of our students receive tutoring to supplement their classes so we are paying one of the school's teachers to provide after-school tutoring for them.

As our families have more children, we now enroll them in preschool on their earliest possible enrollment date. We interviewed and use two smaller Khajuraho schools for preschool and, for stability, are keeping the enrolled preschool children in those schools for their elementary grades. As they progress beyond elementary school, we'll be consulting with our students and their parents about the best fit for their secondary education.



# SPOTLIGHT

## Art Lessons in Khajuraho



Milli,  
TIG's first  
art student

Five years ago we discovered that one of our Khajuraho students, Milli, was a budding, self-taught artist at nine-years old with a real desire to learn more. Two members of TIG's operating group volunteered to pay for private art lessons with well-known Khajuraho artist and gallery owner, Raj Kumar Jatoliya. Every Sunday Milli heads to his gallery studio for art lessons and each year both Milli and Raj's artwork are featured in our annual TIG auction. Three years ago, Milli's female cousins (who are also part of the TIG program) asked to take art lessons and three additional members of TIG's operating group stepped up to privately pay for their lessons. While they live about 45 minutes from Raj's art studio, twice a month the girls and their mother make the roundtrip by bus into town for lessons.

Khajuraho has a centuries-long history as a city of artists & their work, an example shown here in this detail from one of its many temples.



Art students  
Sakshi &  
Jyoti with  
their mother,  
Chanda



The garden  
entrance to  
the studio



Artist Raj Kumar Jatoliya in his studio with TIG members





While TIG's primary focus is to insure all of the children receive an education to grade twelve, as the children (in particular the girls in our families) have entered their early teens, we're also considering how to best support and supplement their developing interests with an eye on skills that might provide employment opportunities once they graduate. This privately supported initiative doesn't use TIG donated funds that pay for tuition, uniforms and books for general education, but, because of the extra support from a few members of TIG's operating group, we now have an opportunity to explore extra-curricular education.

Here are a few samples of the beautiful artworks produced by our students for you to enjoy!

