



Winter 2017-18 Updates on the Work

Two of our members, Paul Ramsey and Richard Coburn, visited with our families in September. For good or for bad, we have a very hands-on approach with our Indian families, so we try to visit them 3 or 4 times a year. (N.B. All travel is covered by the individuals going. None of your donations cover individual travel expenses.) We really are trying to build community with our families rather than build a charity. We try to embody a tag line we use about “Building bridges of friendship.” What follows are some of the “bridges” built and discovered during our September trip.

Mansi Illness

We found that our newest entrant to school, Mansi, 4 years old, was not feeling well. We suggested to her mother, Kapure, that she take her to Jivodaya Hospital where TIG maintains an account so that our Delhi families can see a doctor and get basic healthcare on demand. It was determined that Mansi had a blockage in her kidney and needed surgery immediately, so she was transferred to a better-equipped hospital, Kesar. The doctor who saw her at Kesar said he suspected she was born with the blockage and had it not been detected when it was, her kidney would have been permanently damaged. Mansi successfully underwent surgery and is recovering.



Mansi

It was evident at hospital why people from the same village area and caste live in close proximity when they move to the city: Support. All the neighbors were at the hospital to support Mansi’s family.

Dr. Choudhary

TIG was able to arrange for one of the young women in our program, Annu, to have plastic surgery earlier this year. She was badly burned as a child. She married in July. Her doctor wanted her to have additional laser treatments, which should smooth her skin out more, but the new bride declined, saying she might consider having them at some point in the future. She found the treatments painful and in some ways her goal of finding a husband had been met.

NOW WAGONG

Bablu, Chanda, and Family

One of our mothers, Chanda, has been ailing for quite some time. She had lost a lot of weight and was clearly not herself. After several visits to the local hospital, she was referred to a major hospital in a town 5 hours from her home where TIG paid for her to have a hysterectomy.

Bablu said he would continue to take photographs and send them to TIG for updates to our newsletter, web site, & social media accounts. He still had not been able to find enough work to support his family, which remained a concern for everyone.



Chanda, Deepak, Sakshi, Jyoti, & Bablu

KHAJURAHO

The level of violence in what seems like the sleepy town of Khajuraho remained concerning. Last year, a young boy had been kidnapped and his body was found in a well between Khajuraho and Nowgong. A relative had gotten the boys to get on his motorcycle and then that relative and several others took him away and killed him. A few months ago, two public high school students got in a fight over a girl. One boy stabbed the other and killed him. Most disturbing is that the week after we were in Khajuraho, a boy from the Jain school went missing. His mutilated body was discovered in a field, decapitated.

Baba, Ramqueeya, & Family

The best news was that Baba quit drinking and had been sober for more than four months. Several people commented on his sobriety in the village and even at the hotel in Delhi. He put on a significant amount of weight and was not happy about that at all. We told him that his stopping drinking was a great example to his children, especially his sons. He was now a father they could be proud of and Baba agreed. A victory like this made everyone happy.

Milli's growth and demeanor shocked us all. She became so tall and wore very vivid-colored Indian dresses. Baba said she loves make-up and always powders her face. We also met with Milli's art teacher, Raj, who continued to be impressed with her work.



Milli, Ramqueeya, Baba, Hemant, & Krishna

The boys, Krishna and Hemant, seemed fine. Hemant had turned five. The Jain school was closed, but the tutor for the four children, Baba's and Laxmi's, who attend the Jain school, said the children were learning.

Krishna's hand was bitten by something like a bee and the bite became infected, causing his hand to swell and hurt for at least two years. Dr. Khare recommended surgery, and Krishna's hand has been healing after the operation.

Baba's part of the family won the dispute over the farm land, so they retained the property and the right to farm it.



Mr. & Mrs. Hanote, Zion, & their oldest son

The Hanotes and Mt. Zion School

We paid tuition for Poornima (Lower Kindergarten), Laxmi's youngest daughter. Mrs. Hanote's school, Mt. Zion, gives a good education, but the school only goes to Grade 8. Mrs. Hanote reported that Poornima did well and liked school.

Mrs. Hanote's youngest son, Zion, who attends Kidzee School, had been skipped to Grade 1. Baba's son, Hemant, who attends Mt. Zion, performed much better in school than before.

Ajay

Mrs. Hanote reported that Ajay (Grade 3 but 14 years old) had also done well in school. We asked whether it would be better for Ajay, in light of his age, to move into some kind of vocational program since he'll be 19 before he finishes 8th grade, and Mrs. Hanote mentioned skipping him since Ajay is also in her intensive tutoring program. Mrs. Hanote felt that with support Ajay could also do Grade 4 work this year and if successful, Grades 5 and 6 next. If he could do two grades each year, he would be "only" 17 when he finishes grade 8. We wanted to talk to Ajay and

his father about, but the tourist business has been so bad in Khajuraho that Ajay's father couldn't make enough money as a tuk-tuk driver, so he and his wife moved to Kashmir to find work. He left Ajay with his uncle so he could continue his schooling. Mrs. Hanote implied that life was rough for Ajay. We wanted to see Ajay but because school was out and his father gone, he wasn't in Khajuraho but out in the farm area where he lives.

Aju, Rajkumar, and Family



Aju had grown up a lot since their marriage in 2015, and had lost his boyish thinness. His wife was pregnant again, but since they wanted no more children after this one, Rajkumar plans to have her tubes tied. Dr. Khare reported that she had received good pre-natal care so far. Their 1-year-old daughter, Nandene, had a bout with malaria earlier, but recovered.



Rajkumar, Aju, & Nandene

Their baby boy was born on January 12, 2018. Happily, both baby and mother had no complications. They named the baby Om, as in the chant for the Lord Shiva. According to Hinduism, "Om" is the universal sound, existing within every word, being and thing and has been associated with concepts of the "cosmic sound," a "mystical syllable," an "affirmation to something divine," or as a symbol for abstract spiritual concepts in the Upanishads.

Annu

Looking lovely in a beautiful yellow sari, the traditional attire for a married woman, Annu said she liked her new husband and looked forward to living with him after Diwali. In rural communities, the girls marry, stay with their husbands for a few days, and then return home for at least a few months. Annu and Neelu married in July and went to live with their respective husbands at the end of October 2017.

After some investigation by TIG and coordination with Dr. Choudhary, Annu decided to continue her laser treatments to improve her face more post-burn surgery and to prevent keloid formation. The Children's Burn Foundation budget included these treatments.



Annu & her new husband

Dr. Khare

The system TIG set up with Dr. Khare to treat the families in Khajuraho seemed to be working well. A few complaints surfaced about Dr. Khare's irregular office hours or trips out of town, but overall the arrangement had been effective.

The Economy

Hope of finding work in Khajuraho dwindled as tourism continued to drop off. Also, the summer crop, lentils and mustard seed, largely failed. Though there was not a huge monsoon in Khajuraho, enough rain fell to grow crops, but a bug destroyed much of the harvest. Once what could be harvested was, more rain came and mildew destroyed much of what had been saved. News reported on how high the price of food was likely to be. The newly-implemented Goods and Services Tax (GST)—which taxed everything including food—increased costs at around 20%. Winter was rough for our families.

VARANASI



Ramnagar Festival

Govinda wasn't around as much as he usually is because he was in the middle of what he called "Ramnager," (named for the palace where it takes place, but a more traditional name is "Ramlila" [<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ramlila>]), a month-long reenactment of the story of Rama and Sita as told in the epic poem Ramayana. This play is held every year preceding Diwali across the Ganges from Varanasi near Ramnagar Fort. Every night for a month Govinda and his family had a bit of business ferrying the faithful and curious to see an episode of the story. Similar to medieval Biblical Mystery Plays, both of these cycle plays serve as a way of teaching

a largely illiterate populace the stories of their faith. The Miracle Plays and Ramnagar were/are not solemn affairs. There were/are comic characters and villains to boo, plenty of audience response, with vendors selling food, religious, and secular wares. The average night performance runs around 4 hours.

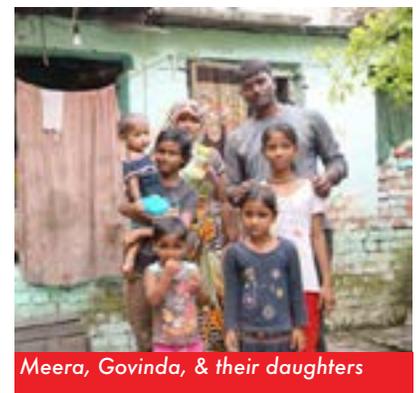
Imperial School

We visited the school and met with the Madam (principal), though as elsewhere school was closed for the Durga Festival. She smiled when we mentioned Priya's and Gungun's (Govinda's niece's) names, because both girls were literally at the top of their respective classes.

Govinda, Meera, and Family

Kusum (grade 4), the oldest daughter, continued to improve but remained quite shy. Ragini (grade 3), Vasundhara or Kallu (Lower Kindergarten), and Sunaini or Nepali (Nursery) weren't stellar students, but all had passing marks. Their youngest daughter, Babu or Rajnandini, was only 1, and not in school yet

Govinda had a noticeable bald spot on the left back side of his head and went to see a doctor who prescribed a salve, saying it was by no means serious, but could reoccur.



Meera, Govinda, & their daughters



Vinood, Gungun, Preetam, & Sanita

Vinood, Sanita, and Family

Gungun (grade 3), an excellent student, displayed her first-in-class trophy and last year's final report card. Preetam (grade 5), also did well and prospered after transferring into Imperial School.

Murat, Poonam, and Family

Priya (Grade 5) showed us her award for being first in her class. She and Pammy are in the same grade because Priya was put back a grade when she entered Imperial School. Pammy did well and ranked seventh in their class. Priya still has

trouble with one of her eyes, and we planned to follow up on this situation in February 2018.

Money Transfer

The money situation improved a bit since the demonetization began, but was by no means ideal. There are ₹2000 notes that it is very hard to get change for. There are no ₹1000 notes anymore. The jump is from ₹2000 to ₹500 bills and then to ₹100. Finding change (and a working ATM) remained a challenge.



Deepak, Priya, Poonam, Pammy, & Sandeep

SPRING

INDIA

TRIP

A group of seven traveled to India
from February 22—March 9, 2018

with highlights including:

Delhi, Agra, Khajuraho, Chhatarpur,
Nowgong, Varanasi, Rajasthan,
& the Festival of Colors, Holi!