



Rinchen Zangpo Society  
For Spiti Development

Educational Newsletter No. 23

Winter 2016 / 17

# Munsel-ling School Awarded Senior Secondary School Status



A fine sunny day at Munsel-ling Campus (foreground)

Munsel-ling School is now certified to educate young students of all ages, from kindergarten up to the end of their school careers, and all in one campus! It has won recognition by the Himachal Pradesh Education Board as a senior secondary school, so students can study all the way up to their final 12th grade examinations there; in India these are the 10+2 exams (age 18). A long-term effort to upgrade school infrastructure, to recruit teachers with the higher educational qualifications required and to finance their higher salaries has at last born fruit.

## V.I.P. Visits

Dr. Shyam Aggarwaal, Hon. Secretary of the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Government of India, paid a kind visit to Munsel-ling School during his official tour of Spiti valley. He made a very thorough inspection of the school campus and went to the classrooms to question the students thoroughly too. His later press release and his strong encouragement to the Rinchen Zangpo Society to look beyond senior secondary level and start a further education college in Spiti show how impressed he was by what he saw.



Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister, Virbhadra Singh, on his departure from Munsel-ling School



Dr. Shyam Aggarwaal (center) pays a visit to Munsel-ling School with Tsering Dorje (L) and Tashi Namgyal (R)

Himachal Pradesh's Chief Minister, Virbhadra Singh, also paid us another visit this year. We were able to thank him personally for securing funds for the refurbishment of our recreation hall, part of our oldest classroom building.

Another exceptional occasion for the school was a one-day teaching for the children and staff from Lochen Tulku, Upper Spiti's most honoured lama.

## Special Days

The school site received a thorough clean up from the pupils on 2nd October, 'Mission Clean India' day. Indian Independence Day and Children's Day were commemorated as usual. A novel occasion for the school was the marking of International Yoga Day, 21st June, with teachings and practice of India's unique system of mental and physical wellbeing.



Munsel-ling students practicing yoga in the Himalayan sun



Prepare for the worst, hope for the best. Students practicing what to do in the event of an earthquake

And yet another important day came when a team of police and other officials visited to give training and drills in Disaster Management. Earthquake is one type of disaster that it is necessary to prepare for in this district of young and still growing mountains.



## Building Work: Kaza Public School and More

A building spurt at our Kaza School site this year means the first floor of the new building is almost finished. At a critical juncture we received two very important donations from UK, £5,000 from Mr Pat Woodhouse and £10,000 from the Camellia Foundation. They enabled the first storey roof to go on. Then thanks to Ravi Thakur, Lahaul-Spiti MLA (member of the state legislative assembly), a grant from the tribal affairs budget was sanctioned for continuing on with the walls and roof of the first floor of this spacious building. Meanwhile the ground floor interior was finished and painted. The first function to be held in the main hall was a parents' meeting in October. Then in November came Kaza Public School's annual prize day. End of year examinations will be held there shortly. Classes proper will begin in March after the winter break.



The Kaza Public School, now in the final stages of completion



Ravi Thakur, MLA Lahaul-Spiti, receiving a traditional welcome from students at the Kaza Public School



Hello Sunshine! The plastic roof at Rewa Model School provides both light and protection from the elements

At Rewa Model School, Rongtong, where Tibethilfe Niederosterreich (Austria) has helped so much, we installed a clear plastic roof between the two long buildings. This will mean less snow clearing in winter and it makes a warm space on sunny days where children can sit and even take lessons.

With help from the University of British Columbia, and the Trans-Himalayan Aid Society (Canada), we built another new children's toilet block this year. It contains flush toilets for warmer weather and drop latrines for frozen winter, a combination pioneered in 2014 in order to improve health and hygiene.



The new multi-season toilets at Munsel-ling School are of utmost importance to our ever growing student population



## Special People

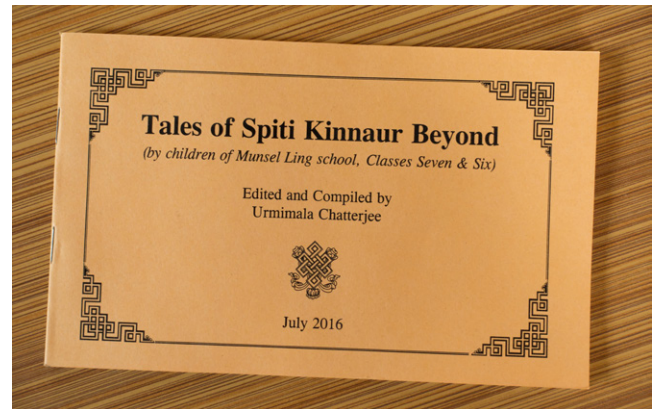
Urmimala Chatterjee was a volunteer who helped out in the education programme this year. A trained teacher of the visual arts from West Bengal, she also put her talents to use in helping class 6 and 7 make an (English language) book of Spiti folk tales. Now the best of these tales are preserved in printed form, which is a delight. Joe Amos was another teaching volunteer who made a great contribution and we were very pleased again to welcome David Kirkwood and his wife Kath for their third year in a row, not only for skilled Maths teaching and health work, but also for helping us to buy study materials, and televisions to entertain the children too.



Urmimala Chatterjee with her students at Munsel-ling...

## More Helping Hands

We must also thank the UBC Global Outreach Team again for their holistic health support. Though there are still specific health challenges, the incidence of anaemia amongst the children has gone down. Green vegetables should be helping there. They are grown in our own greenhouses and in open plots now cared for by a specially assigned gardener. Cleaner water and washing facilities have reduced the incidence of diarrhoea. The number of scabies cases has gone right down, thankfully. All children received a cup of locally purchased milk once a day while supplies were available.



... And a book of folk tales from Spiti and the surrounding area

We also thank the Khyentse Foundation for paying for new classroom furniture for Kaza Public



Students testing the new furniture at Kaza Public School

School and Gerome and friends from France for science materials for the laboratories at Munsel-ling. Dr Klauss from Germany and Renate were very generous as previously. From the UK we would especially like to mention Fiona McConnell's friends, the Upper Chapel India Education Fund, Fulwood Chapel, Geoff and Julie Nichols, Nantwich Buddhist Group and, for funding the purchase of a photocopier, the HART Trust. Apologies to anyone we have overlooked.



Tenzin Joyang (L) at the College of Veterinary and Animal Sciences in Mannuthy, Kerala, and Phunstok Dolma (R) at the College of Veterinary and Animal Sciences in Bihar

## Teachers and Students

We welcomed several new teachers at the beginning of the year. They include two Dharamsala trained monks, brought in to strengthen religious and ethical studies. We began the year with a two-day teachers' refresher course. Munsel-ling also welcomes its experienced new principal, Mr Subash Katosh, well known the Rinchen Zangpo Society from our connection back in the early days with Dhauladhar Public School in Yol, near Dharamsala. Before that his background was in the army.

Congratulations to two of our recent students, Puntsok Dolma and Tenzin Joyang, for gaining entrance to veterinary college. Entrance to veterinary studies is very competitive in India. Also we congratulate Lobsang Yeshay, another of our high fliers. He is the first Spiti person ever to be accepted for officer training in the Indian army. He enters the National Defence Academy at Dehra Dun and, all being well, will graduate as a lieutenant. The HP Education Board highlighted the five top all-round students in the 10th class (age 16+) exams in our Lahaul-Spiti District of Himachal Pradesh. Of those no less than three were from Munsel-ling School, the first, the second and the fourth.



Lobsang Yeshe at the National Defense Academy in Dehra Dun

## Wish-list of Essentials for the Upcoming Year

|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| New furniture for classrooms at Munsel-ling School | 3,75,000  |
| New bed sheets and pillows for Munsel-ling School  | 1,56,000  |
| Garbage management system at Munsel-ling           | 10,00,000 |

Your financial support for any or all items on this list would be greatly appreciated!

All costs are in Indian Rupees.



## Sidhbhari

At Sidhbhari we have been building a boundary wall and we have made refurbishments and renovations, improving the drinking water and converting a hall into more classrooms. These classrooms are for the 9th, 10th and 11th class students, seventy-two of them, who have again arrived on winter migration. They revise for their exams in a warmer clime and with help from the expert teachers more easily found in the more populated and developed district



A new boundary wall surrounds our hostel, offices and classrooms in Sidhbhari

of Kangra. Wide, verdant and mountain-fringed, Kangra Valley is one of India's fairest vales. This winter descent from Spiti has been a real benefit to the children's studies, so the 8th class will join them for a spell in the new year too.



Students now have easier access to fresh drinking water at our hostel in Sidhbhari

## Pupil Population Statistics

|                    |     |                                 |
|--------------------|-----|---------------------------------|
| Munsel-ling School | 446 | mixed boarders and day students |
| Kaza Public School | 244 | day students                    |
| Rewa Model School  | 100 | boarders                        |
| Sidhbhari Hostel   | 45  | boarders                        |
| Total              | 835 |                                 |

***Thanks to everyone who contributed to our education programme this year. Deep apologies to anyone we have forgotten to mention.***

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