



Rinchen Zangpo Society
For Spiti Development

Educational Newsletter No. 26

Winter 2019/20

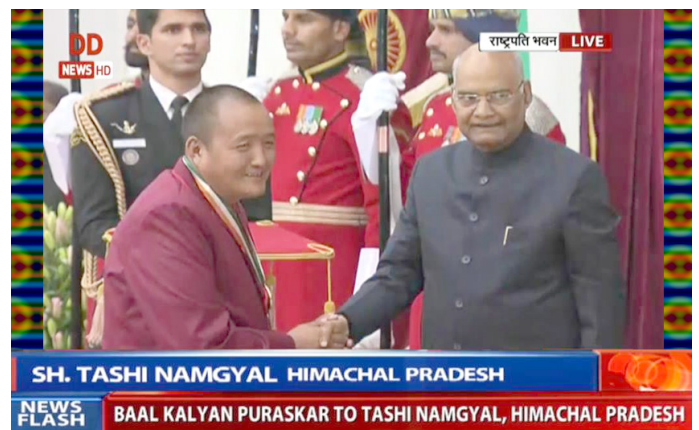
Tashi Namgyal Wins Annual National Child Welfare Award 2019



A community leader meets a nation's leader:
Ven. Tashi Namgyal is congratulated by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The event was telecast on national channels and shared widely on social media including tweets from the Prime Minister. All Rinchen Zangpo Society supporters can feel very pleased. It is always satisfying to back a winning horse!

On 22nd January 2019 Ven. Tashi Namgyal, founder and present General Secretary of the Rinchen Zangpo Society for Spiti Development, was invited to Rashtrapati Bhawan, official residence of the Honourable President of India, Shri Ram Nath Kovind, to be presented with a National Child Welfare Award. There were awards to twenty-six children and five adult individuals. Tashi Namgyal took first place in the latter category. On 24th January all the awardees gathered again to be congratulated by the Honourable Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi. A fitting recognition of Tashi Namgyal and his team's great accomplishments in working for the young people from his high-up-in-the-hills homeland.



Indian President Ram Nath Kovind (right) presents the National Child Welfare Award to Ven. Tashi Namgyal.

Miss Himachal 2019 Drops In -- for a Month!

Twenty-four year-old Miss Neetika Sharma, Miss Himachal 2019, along with her friend Miss Maheema Dutt visited Munsel-ling school to volunteer for a month. The Rinchen Zangpo Society was very pleased to welcome her and the students, no doubt the girls especially, received a great inspiration from her presence.

She is from Simla, so from the hills herself, very keen on education, books, teaching and connecting with children. Her comment on beauty:

“Makeup, camera tricks and photoshop can transform anyone today, but books, intelligence and a kind heart are needed more for a radiating persona that’s beautiful not just from the outside but from the very core, from the inside.”



Miss Neetika Sharma (center, seated in yellow) with enthusiastic students from Munsel-ling School.

Winter Classes at Sidhbari Hostel

The 8th, 9th and 10th classes from Munsel-ling School in Spiti left our home valley and shifted to our hostel at Sidhbari on winter migration in December as usual. At Sidhbari they experience the outside world and get extra tuition from skilled teachers instead of being stationed in their home villages in the cold with not much to do.



Students, staff and our precious teachers at Sidhbari Hostel during the winter session of classes.

When we recruit teachers, 80% of candidates turn down the opportunity of going to Spiti, knowing the

difficulties of working in the region. It is not at all so hard to recruit highly skilled teachers from nearby Dharamsala for our Sidhbari winter classes. Mr. Bharti, teaching Social Science, and Mr. Rakesh, teaching English, are two recent additions to teaching staff there.



Ven. Tashi Namgyal and the Sidhbari teaching team.

Buildings and Other Facilities



New examination hall at Munsel-ling.

Examination Hall: On top of the cultural hall there is now a newly finished and very spacious examination hall. Three hundred children can sit and take exams together! Funds to build this fine and useful addition to our infrastructure came from the local government.

Roof Renovation: From 23rd September 2018 four days of very heavy rain hit Spiti. Traditional Spiti house roofs are flat and made of mud and earth laid over a wooden support of rafters, beams, then twigs or strips of wood. This is an ideal roof for a desert climate. Snow that falls in winter can be brushed off before it melts. Heavy rain is a serious threat.



A warm and cozy night's sleep, courtesy of the Swiss government.

Classroom roofs, hostel roofs, staff quarters roofs all started leaking badly. The best solution found so far is to scrape off a layer of mud from the roof, lay down a sheet of waterproof plastic that is sufficiently strong and thick, and then

replace the top layer of mud. With emergency financial assistance from the Trans-Himalayan Aid Society of Canada we carried out these renovations this year for all our school and hostel buildings.

Improvements at Rewa Buddhist Model High School: The school now has a new computer lab with seven computers, and also this year, new bedding for the children. These improvements were arranged and financed by Tibethilfe Austria with contributions from the Government of Switzerland.

We are extremely grateful to GATE, Germany, who donated money for a solar water heating system for the Sidhbari Hostel and for toilet renovations for the girls at Sidhbari Hostel. Last year GATE and Dr. Klauss also financed the installation of a hand pump well at Sidhbari Hostel and also a washing station and a water tank. Now the senior students from our school in Spiti who move to Sidhbari for extra classes in winter are not facing a shortage of water. Thanks to GATE GERMANY and Dr Klauss!!



Workers applying a weatherproof layer to earthen roofs.



From GATE and Dr. Klauss we received a new water tank and washing station which are presently used many, many times a day.

Student Successes



Sonam Tsomo

Matriculation: Until last year our top scorer in the Himachal Pradesh State Examination Board matriculation examination (age 16 GCSE equivalent) was Tenzin Chhonzom with 93.7%. This year Sonam Tsomo broke that record by securing an amazing 95.2%.

Assistant Professor: Dr. Thuktan Negi, a former student of ours at Yol who went on to complete his Ph.D. in Buddhist Studies at Delhi University, has recently been employed as Assistant Professor in the Department of History and Culture, Himachal Pradesh Central University, at Shahpur, Kangra District.



Dr. Thuktan Negi

Assistant Engineer: Munsel-ling ex-student Tsering Wangchuk went on to study electrical engineering at the National Institute of Technology, Hamirpur. He has recently been appointed assistant engineer with the Himachal Pradesh Power Corporation Limited, an H.P. state-owned enterprise. Congratulations to these three!



Tsering Wangchuk

Celebrations and Events

H. H. Dalai Lama's birthday celebration: As the years add up and as life on earth heads into new zones of unpredictability, the presence of His Holiness with us in this world seems ever more precious. On his birthday, 6th July, staff, management and students of Munsel-ling School gathered to celebrate and to wish him many happy returns, for the inspiration that he is and the words of compassion he has to share with the world.

Run to Breathe: Run to Breathe was a marathon organized by the Tribal Development Department of the Govt. of Himachal Pradesh in collaboration with Rayon Company and All India Radio, Shimla. Our



Contestants in the Run to Breathe marathon.

student Tenzin Yonten stood in 1st position and Tenzin Rangdol stood in 3rd position in the 5 km race.

At Munsel-ling we remembered India's Independence Day (15th August) with three days of sports and cultural activities. Chief guest on day one was Lati Rinpoche's reincarnation. At our hostel on Rakkar Road, Sidhbari, we held a rally on World Environment Day, 5th June.



Indian Independence Day with traditional dancing at Munsel-ling.

Other Visits

Dr. K. P. Krishnan Honourable Secretary, Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, Government of India, paid a kind visit to Jan Shikshan Sansthan Lahaul & Spiti. Jan Shikshan Sansthan is the government department that supervises and funds the Rinchen Zangpo Society for Spiti Development's adult education and vocational training efforts. It has recently been transferred to his ministry. In his interactions with staff and trainees he emphasized focusing on local traditional craft items in view of local demand for these.



Dr. K. P. Krishnan (center) is given a tour of Munsel-ling School by Tsering Dorje and Ven. Tashi Namgyal.

Mr. Raffael Sterkel, representative of Tibethilfe Austria, the charitable organization that provides full backing for the Rewa Buddhist Model School at Rongtong, Spiti, could not come to Spiti this year but paid us a warm and convivial visit at our Sidhbari Hostel during his time in Dharamsala.

The University of British Columbia, Canada, health outreach organization, as usual every summer, recruited a group of medical and other students who visited us and did all they could to monitor and improve our children's standards of health and hygiene. We are very grateful for their enthusiastic help.



Tsering Dorje, Dr. Marko and Ven. Tashi Namgyal (left to right) at our Munsel-ling School.



Mr. Raffael Sterkel (left) paid us a visit to our Sidhbari Hostel in late 2019. He and his travelling partners also had the great opportunity to meet with H. H. the Dalai Lama in McLeod Ganj.

Dr. Marko from Sweden, who donated Euro 500 towards medical costs last year, paid a kind visit to Munsel-ling school this summer along with his friend Navneet who is a filmmaker. This year Dr. Marko paid for four washing machines and a water sintex.

More donors and helpers who deserve our greatest thanks...

TRAS also for student sponsorship, Canada
Aid for Himalayan Education, UK
Michel & friends, France
Jaqueline & friends, France
Diya & Shaun, UK
Benti & friends, Holland
Joe Amos & friends, UK
Alliance Turquoise, France
Upper Chapel, Sheffield, UK
Fulwood Old Chapel, Sheffield, UK
Dr. Nasko and Raffael Sterkl, Tibethilfe, Austria
GATE Germany and Dr. Klaus
Reifenberg Trust, UK
Nantwich Buddhist Group, UK
GATE and Dr Klauss, Germany
Gerome and friends, France

School Student Statistics, 2019

Munsel-ling School, Rangrik 525 mixed boarders and day students
Kaza Public School, Kaza 278 day students
Rewa Model School, Rongtong 106 boarders
Sidhbari Hostel, Sidhbari 54 boarders

Total 963

Thanks to everyone who contributed to our education programme this year. Great apologies to anyone forgotten.

RINCHEN ZANGPO SOCIETY FOR SPITI DEVELOPMENT

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