

GONPA GAZETTE

Monsoon is upon us, oh yes! Clear, sunny, blue skies and 38C/100F when I returned two months ago...now cloudy, windy, rainy and 24C/70F; and decreasing daily!

Time to get out my heavy tsen (shaw) in the day and close the window, put on my long johns and socks, and hop into my sleeping bag at night.



Green, greener, greenest!

This time of year I feel I am living in the Emerald City on the Emerald Isle. Almost overnight the landscape goes from barren and muted to fertile and vibrant.

Tractors working 24/7 (yes, tractors with headlights) turning over the soil, before the bulls plow, before the Indian labourers

plant. The main occupation in the settlement is agriculture, and the main crops are maize (corn), ginger root and 'silver' trees.



Too cute...except when they're not!

Oh those minky, monkey monklettes...always keeping me on my toes. Will I ever manage to stay one step ahead of them all? Praise and positive feedback work, criticism and negativity do not...humour and playfulness work, seriousness and authoritarian do not...too many monks not washing hair on Saturday, up the reward to two stickers on Sunday if they also wash on Saturday...

Anirudh is such a delight to work with, and such a wonderful teacher for me: accepting, patient, kind, generous. He visits Chauari weekly, making a point to talk with villagers, listen to their requests, and incorporate them into the project plans.

Each winter I visit Chauari and witness the mutual respect between him and villagers, and school and clinic staff.



Anirudh's style is supportive and encouraging.

In the past, children from neighboring villages have repeatedly vandalized the landscaping in front of the school; and grazing cattle didn't help either. Once the wall is finished the school roof and doors can be safely repaired, and the free-standing, self-contained kindergarten classroom can be securely built once we have the funds.

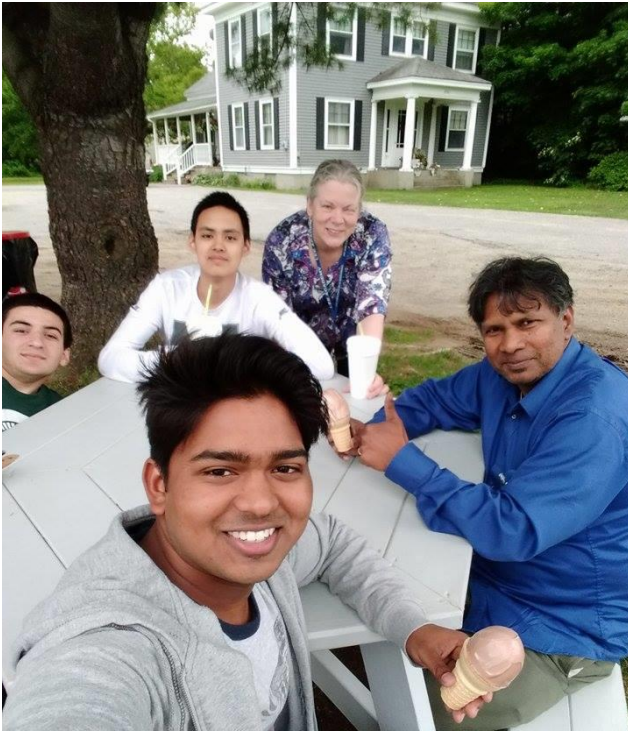


An admired and respected visionary.

The top of Anirudh's 2016 wish-list is constructing a boundary wall around Sunrise Public School (the school he started in 1997) and Chauari Clinic. It is typical in this part of the world to build a boundary wall around every building: house, shop, office. I assume this is to keep two-legged *and* four-legged intruders out.



Let the construction begin!



Ashish with part of his 'American' families

Immense thanks to everyone who contributed to Ashish's travel expenses to visit his family this summer. He navigated his first solo intercontinental trip extremely well, confidently solving some unexpected problems (as we all know there can be). As a result, he feels much more empowered.

Since reaching Delhi mid-month Ashish has visited his younger brother (who now goes to school in Delhi), his grandmother and extended family in Chauari; and immediate family and friends in Bodhgaya.

When Ashish left India for America almost two years ago, both his mother and grandmother tearfully asked me to treat him as my own. I have done my best, although far from perfect. Before leaving school this year, Ashish decided he would call me 'Granny' since he loves his grandmother very much...and well, she and I think we are the same age.

Recently I asked Ashish: "What is it like living in the US all year with hot water, washers, dryers, vacuums, etc. and returning to India without any of those conveniences?"

"Ani, I have my *mother!*"

Of course, how silly of me not to remember that...and she is also his microwave, toaster oven... Knowing Kiran Devi as I do, she truly enjoys being all that she is to Anirudh, Ashish and Ayush, his brother.

Ashish ended his junior year on a high note with a 89.4 GPA. Before he even left the US he proudly told me, "NOW, I am a senior!" So true, and NOW I must start finding sponsors so his parents and brother can attend his graduation June 2017. So many Indians dream of visiting America, but so few are able to.

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