



APRIL 2009

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INTRODUCTION

by *Sonnia J. Karlsson*

Dear Friends,

Namaste!

It gives us great pleasure to present the premier issue of BMKF trimester newsletter. Featured in this issue are personal stories, articles, event updates and photographs of our girls and what they are doing. It fills us with pride that all five of our 2008 scholarship recipients have completed their first year of university studies, have gone through their final exams, and are now awaiting the results. All five girls are expected to pass to the next grade level and are busy re-applying for their second Bo M. Karlsson Foundation scholarship.

We would like to announce our next fundraising event which will take place in the beautiful Six and Seven Lounge at the Edgewater Hotel in Seattle on April 26th. This event comes on the eve of our deadline for receiving applications for our 2009 scholarships. The next few months will have us processing and selecting the 2009 BMKF scholarship recipients, as well as devoting many hours to various fund-raising activities.

During these trying economic times, it has become even more challenging than ever to keep awareness top of mind. Non-profits like ours are suffering tremendously from the lack of donations, which are badly needed to continue our work. Despite the obstacles we face, it takes so little to provide a range of opportunities these young women would not have without our support. For example, \$500.00 is the average a young woman wishing to become a teacher needs to pay for one year of university—which includes tuition and exam fees, books and supplies, boarding, transportation, and uniform. Please keep this in mind when wishing to make a donation but hesitating, believing that there's not enough money to go around. A few dollars can truly make a difference in these women's lives.

To all of our volunteers who have donated their talent, time and hard work on the design and development of this newsletter we would like to say thank you. Our deepest appreciation goes to Rossana de la Noval and Ellen Moos and her multi-talented Silver Fox Productions design team.

Thank you for reading the newsletter. We hope you will find it interesting and source of inspiration in our continued efforts to provide educational opportunities for the young women of Nepal. Your comments are always welcome and appreciated. ■

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NAMASTE NIGHT AT THE EDGEWATER

A BENEFIT FOR THE
BO M. KARLSSON
FOUNDATION

Sunday, April 26th,
7-10 p.m. at the
Six Seven Lounge in
the Edgewater Hotel,
Seattle, Washington

Featuring the music of

- Trevor Larkin
- Mark Thomas
- Jake Grahn

Our Mission:

Fund higher education for underprivileged Nepali women so that they may become self-reliant, confident, and productive citizens in their own country.

**NAMASTE ॐ NIGHT
AT THE EDGEWATER**

Sunday, April 26, 2009
7-10pm

Six Seven Lounge • The Edgewater Hotel
2411 Alaskan Way, Pier 67 • Seattle, Washington 98121

**A benefit for the
Bo M. Karlsson Foundation**

Wrap up your weekend listening to the music of:
Trevor Larkin – singer, songwriter, guitarist – “melodic acoustic folk alternative”
Mark Thomas – singer, songwriter – “blues rock”
Jake Grahn – singer, songwriter – “a flair for the dramatic”

Suggested donation at the door \$20

**BO M. KARLSSON
FOUNDATION**

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Our Mission:
Fund higher education for underprivileged Nepali women so that they may become self-reliant, confident, and productive citizens in their own country.

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SHARADA

by Jennifer L. Bennett

While I was in Nepal this past December and January, I took a domestic flight on Buddha Air to the city of Nepalgunj to visit one of our scholarship recipients, Sharada KC. Nepalgunj is a city in the southwestern part of the Terai (the flat, moist, food-growing region of Nepal).

While it seems like everyone from the hills has moved to Kathmandu in the past 20 years, there has been a large migration to the Terai as well. The main east-west highway, well the only one in the nation, runs from either end of the Terai. Since much of the food is grown in this region (or coming south from India), it's a busy thoroughfare as people carry the nation's breadbasket on any wheeled vehicle, twenty-four hours a day. Few tourists come to the Terai other than to visit the National Parks of Chitwan or Bardia, so once you find yourself off the highway and on the local streets, the charm of old-world travel (bicycles, bicycle rickshaws, and horse drawn carriages) lures you into a different rhythm than the circular, chaotic-but-clogged congestion that is now Kathmandu. Here I was reminded of the old Nepal, the one so rapidly being usurped by the locomotive, polluted, digital/industrial world we have made the world believe is a better lifestyle choice.

Sharada KC was in the midst of her first year of medical exams at Nepalgunj Medical College, the Tribhuvan-affiliated University there, which actually is some 60 kilometers outside of town in the middle of the jungle (they literally hear jackals at night). I had planned to visit and stay on campus, but since it was exam time, and the examiner needed the guesthouse, I did not get to stay or visit the university. Sharada took a bus to town and then arrived at my hotel via bicycle rickshaw. She was dressed in tight jeans and a black t-shirt, the typical fashion statement for young Nepali college girls these days (minus the impractical shoes). Her mind was completely wrapped up in exams and getting her to do anything else off-task for an hour was challenging (and necessary it seemed, for her mind was almost at unrest). Not wanting to be too bad of an influence, I discovered her weakness, riding bicycle rickshaws, so we did a lot of that which enabled us to talk, sightsee, and be seen by the locals.

Sharada, who I have known for eight years, is one of the hardest working and most motivated people I have ever met. Given that the culture she comes from is often at odds with her persistence, focus, and unrelenting drive, she is an anomaly. For instance, she is already thinking about the post she would like to have after completing medical school. Rather than taking a cushy job in a clinic in the city, she would like to obtain the post of head doctor for the military (there is one seat and it has never been held by a woman). She was hatching her plan on how she was going to master that goal at a 2 a.m. study break from the vascular system. *Continued on next page.*

“Sharada is one of the hardest working and most motivated people I have ever met.”





SHARADA

by Jennifer L. Bennett

Continued from previous page.

After some rest for me and her head in the books all night, we visited the teaching hospital in town where she will work next year, and met her dear friend and mentor, Lila. As I probed about the social medical school experience, the answers to many of my questions confirmed that it was not too different than it is here in the U.S. Many of these students come from wealthy families and have been kept under a tight academic leash that led them to this point in life (many to fulfill the fantasy of their parent's that their child become a doctor) so when they do arrive at some semblance of freedom, which is living in a dormitory, they tend to go a little crazy. There are parties, a whole lot of phone calls, and the having of boyfriends and girlfriends. Given that this nation was Hindu until just under three years ago and without television until the 1980s, it is culturally quite conservative by U.S. standards. Coming of age in college there is a tamer experience; probably what my generation experimented with in junior-high/high-school would be equivalent. Sharada, of course, is not interested in having a boyfriend, drinking alcohol, or any other detrimental vice. Eating fried food is about the worst thing she confessed to me. She says she sees medical school as just another "world to adapt to temporarily" much as she has adjusted to growing up in an orphanage with thirty-five sisters and brothers; much as she adjusted to being the only daughter living on a farm in rural Nepal before that. This experience, she says of her time at school, is just another place to learn about human behavior and the world. Apart from wanting the head doctor military post and starting a clinic in her hometown of Pyuthan, she also longs to visit Ethiopia and work as a physician there one day. When I asked why Ethiopia, she said that she hears some parts are worse off than Nepal, and in addition to wanting to experience a different culture, she feels a kinship to a nation as poor as hers. I think to myself that she is already far wiser than me at half my age, and will do more for others in her lifetime than most. A feeling of being blessed to know someone like this overcomes me, and I am momentarily stunned by her radiance.

A month after returning home, Sharada called me to tell me that the results of her exams had been posted, and that she did very well. When pressed to talk about it in detail, she said she was upset because in the post-exam game day celebration, she lost her badminton tournament—something that had not happened before!

I smiled and chuckled to myself thinking, she is human, and only nineteen years old. ■

“Apart from wanting the head doctor military post and starting a clinic in her hometown of Pyuthan, she also longs to visit Ethiopia and work as a physician there one day.”





SUDEEP

by Jennifer L. Bennett

Meet Sudeep Manandhar, one of the volunteer advisors in Nepal for the Bo M. Karlsson Foundation. Sudeep is an only child of two political activist parents. Since he was a child, his folks have been members of Nepal's Communist Party, passionately working for women's and worker's rights among many other issues. Sudeep's father travels extensively for his work and has regaled Sudeep with stories of life in other countries. Sudeep talks so sophisticatedly about the state of Nepal and the world, it is as if he has lived many lives, in many places, but he is only nineteen years old! Currently he is earning his bachelor's degree in Information Management and will graduate with what is called a BIM, Bachelors in Information Management.

Sudeep's involvement with us comes from his roots as a child of activists. He says, "our country is a patri-hierarchical society that gives emphasis to males, so, girls getting an education is only good when either the family is rich or educated. The education level (for girls) is so low, that their (families) don't send them if they don't have to."

"Another major problem is that they think their daughters have to be married and sent off to other's homes, so they would rather not waste their money educating them. They think daughters are as property, to send off to another's home."

"The third major problem is the dowry system. We have a culture that if a girl is highly educated, they are to be married to someone who is also highly educated, and that means a lot of dowry."

One of Sudeep's roles in our organization is to help find girls in need of our award. The other work he does is really crucial in helping us determine from overseas how to award the scholarships. He meets with the applicants, helps them fill out and acquire the forms, and makes home visits to screen families to determine who is most in need and most committed. He works in tandem with our other young advisor, Poonam Karki.

To earn a living, while still living with his folks, he repairs computers. In his free time, in addition to volunteering with us, he helps out at Parichaya Samaj, the only organization in Nepal at the moment that does outreach with the gay, lesbian, transgender and bisexual community.

We are truly fortunate to have found such a wonderful volunteer! ■

"Sudeep talks so sophisticatedly about the state of Nepal and the world, it is as if he has lived many lives, in many places, but he is only nineteen years old!"





GRISHMA

by Jennifer L. Bennett

While in Nepal, I had a chance to meet with Grishma, one of our 2008 scholarship recipients, when she came to pick up her trimester check for supplies from Ama Ghar (Motherly Home to 39 children). Bhesh Nepali, who is the business manager of the home, is our volunteer accountant. He tracks the girls' expenses on QuickBooks and pays tuition to the universities.



Grishma is one of 5 girls in a class of 48 mechanical engineering students at the distinguished Tribhuvan University School of Engineering in Patan. In addition to working very hard to maintain her grades and earn respect on a male-dominated science campus, she is also studying CAD in what little free time she has. Many of her peers came into the program knowing this program, so she is catching up as best as she can. She tells me things are going well for her, she loves the challenges. Grishma is fascinated by how engineering can solve the most basic problems. She still wants to pursue alternative renewable energy sources as her main field. It is her dream to help the people of rural Nepal live a sustainable life without having to sacrifice their lifestyle. ■



JUICE REVIEW

by Jackie Garces

JUICE is a one of a kind dance party in Seattle with a twist. DJ Darek Mazzone (KEXP-Wo'Pop) and DJ Rhythma (WNYE-Mo'Glo) spin the freshest tracks from around the world to promote global modern music and to help others around the world in need. The DJs donate their time, the venue donates the space and their extraordinary friend Rebecca Campeau coordinates the event. The proceeds from the \$10 per person cover charge are donated to a different global/international charity chosen by the JUICE team.



The Bo M. Karlsson Foundation was one of four charities, including our partner the Ama Foundation, to benefit from the January 24th JUICE dance party held at the Lo-Fi Gallery in Seattle. BMKF received a whopping \$600! Some of our board members, volunteers and friends attended the party along with over 300 others who were out to have fun burning up the dance floor while benefiting a good cause.

Visit www.myspace.com/juiceinseattle or on Facebook under JUICE in Seattle, to learn more about JUICE. The next JUICE event is on April 25, 2009 and will benefit Giant Magnet (www.giantmagnet.org formerly Seattle International Children's Festival). ■

