

Record-Breaking heat

North India has been suffering under record-breaking heat for the last couple of months. April was the third hottest month recorded over the past 122 years, since 1901 to 2022 and March was the hottest ever recorded. In April, *New Delhi* saw several consecutive days over 40 degrees Celsius, three degrees above the average temperature for the month of April.

The new pre-primary building of *St-Anthony school Dugawar* has tin sheet roof. Though we had in mind to do the ceiling eventually, the heat wave made us act briskly. It was impossible for children to stay under this roof. Luckily we could get the materials and labours needed and get the work done in few days time! It was a big relief for all !

In spite of this scorching heat, the rush for admission continued. By mid May, at the time of the summer vacation, we crossed 300 new admissions in *St-Anthony school Dugawar* and 85 in *Rahrai St-Anthony's school*. Many more children may join when the school reopens in July. This year, due to Covid Pandemic, Board exams were scheduled in May-June instead of March. So class 10 students who used to join class 11 in April have lost many working days. The summer vacation started on 15th May as scheduled and children will be back to school on July 1. Special classes are arranged by local teachers in the school from 7 am to 10 am for the newly joined children who need to improve their knowledge in English and main subjects to catch up with our standard.

The wedding feast saved !

The ex-village leader of *Rahrai (Pradhanji)*, where our second school is situated has been in contact with us from 2014. Though he is no more the village leader, he continues to support our project and to be there at our call. His second daughter's wedding was in the first week of May and the venue was ready for the reception party on the day. Few hours before the program, a big thunderstorm blew away the tent. *Pradhanji* turned to us for res-

cue and we were happy to help him out. In two hours time, the school campus became the venue for the wedding party. There were hundreds of villagers from the area and hopefully this incident was an opportunity to see the school and its campus and hopefully they will think of bringing their children/grandchildren to our school.

Marriages in India are very traditional and reflect more than hundreds of years of the heritage. Most of the time it is the parents who decide the future partner. Criteria



The board insulation keeps the class room cool in the summer and warm in the winter.

for the match are many, such as the candidate should belong to same religion, same or compatible caste and subcaste. The cultural background of the two families is also taken into consideration. Traditionnal families do not prefer to initiate alliances with families who seem permissive and open-minded and vice versa. Educational background and moral backgrounds are also scrutinised. Matching the horoscope of both the candidates are indispensable part of the arranged marriage. The higher the professional stature of the boy is, the more in demand (dowry) he enjoys in the marriage field. Fair-skinned girls are always preferred over dark-skinned girls. Height, weight and other physical aspects are also scrutinised. Apart from physical appearance, the girl is also judged based upon her efficiency in domestic chores such as cooking, stitching, and cleaning. While the physical appearance of the boy is important to some extent, not much stress is placed on the concept as long as he is not suffering from

any serious problem and has a good financial background. Though dowry is prohibited in India, most of the marriages are arranged after fixing the dowry.

Success rate of the arranged marriage is still high and the divorce rate remains very low. The tradition is built more in terms of commitment and duty rather than love and passion. So, despite much judgement from all of modern world, arranged marriage seems to be still successful !

Indu's surprising visit

Students starting from 12 years old had Covid vaccination in *St-Anthony's school Dugawar*. Medical team from *Asmoli Primary Health Centre* was in charge of this vaccination. To our surprise, we had one of our alumni as a member of this team. *Indu* is one of our sponsored girls and I personally monitored her studies throughout her school years. I knew that she had joined a nursing

course but never knew that she already started to work. She is a perfect example of our accomplishment in bringing up the underprivileged children, empowering them through education and bringing changes into the society. I am really proud to present her to you !

I remember, back in 2006, sitting in a cot (*charpai*) in the house of *Indu* and talking to her parents. It was during a visit to monitor the work being done by the field staff in *Bela* village. After my meetings, I used to visit the families of our students to understand their family background.

Indu's father recalls that there was a talk in the village that *Anthony's Bread (Gramin Manav Vikas Samiti)* was supporting the education of children from the poor economic background. He took this chance and got *Indu* admitted in *St-Anthony's School*. *Indu* recollects that period, she went to get informations from a child who was already in our school, to be able to prepare for her admission's interview. After *Indu* joined the school, her mother joined the SHG (*Self Help Group*) and since then, they have benefitted from our programs.



Pradhanji had just enough time to make the school campus his reception hall. In few hours time, the campus was crowded with villagers from near and far.





Though the school fee was free, *Indu* had to reach the school on her own. Cycling 5 km to school didn't seem to be a difficult task for this little girl of 7. She was one of the very few girls coming to school by cycle at that time. *Indu* was a good example to promote the use of bicycles among the girls and eventually, as the years passed, many more followed her example. *Indu* had already her style, unlike most of the girls, she wore a pant and shirt like boys, comfortable to ride on a bicycle and having a short hair cut, which she says didn't consume time in combing and caring ! However, as she entered higher class, she had to follow the uniform of girls. I was told back then that *Indu* was teaching her parents to read and write! She grew up as an average student, working hard to pass the exams. Her parents taught her the importance of hard work and perseverance.

After her schooling, she pursued two years of *Auxiliary Nursing and Midwife (ANM)* diploma and worked privately for a while. Last year, due to the Covid Pandemic, the *Uttar Pradesh government* recruited more nurses/



April 2022, *Indu* was happy to be back in the school for the vaccination of our students.



After *Indu* joined the school, her mother was active in the women's group. (Here 2007).



Indu with her parents and her two brothers and one sister. (2007).

a good sum and the second brother has just completed his diploma and is looking for a job. Her sister *Gyan Bharati* will soon be joining the nursing course. Last 17 years has completely changed this family and many other families !

Molly Sebastian

ANMs and it was the right time for *Indu*. She secured

a government job which many dreams, at the age of 21 ! She was so lucky to get her first posting near her village, in *Asmoli Primary Health Centre* itself. Her work is based in the villages. She is monitoring the health care of pregnant women during pregnancy and after childbirth and follows up the health care of mother and child. She is also monitoring the management of vaccination services, disease control services, etc. She has two villages under her supervision, with a population of around 10.000 and has a team of grassroot workers to help her with. Health care is very poor in the villages and the entry of *Indu* will certainly make a difference. It is her promise

that she will never let us down ! Most of the villagers send their daughters in marriage as

soon as they reach 18 or even before. I was curious to know if *Indu's* family is in a hurry to do so. She was happy to tell me that her parents are not talking about it and she prefers to wait until she gets a good alliance, a person who has a job and will let her continue her job ! *Indu* is proud to say that she is the first girl from her village going out to work and that also on a motorbike !

Indu's younger sister also studied in *St-Anthony's school* under sponsorship. Her two brothers did a diploma course in our ITI (*Technical school*) under government sponsorship. After the completion of the ITI, the older brother has secured a good job and is earning

My school life was a rich learning experience and I don't have enough words to explain it. St.Anthony's School is a treasure that gave me invaluable joy in life. The memory of my school life is filled with various events. All of them are not equally important, enjoyable and memorable. Either small or big, important or less important, these are memorable days and they remain evergreen in my heart. My first day at school was a Friday in the month of July 2005. I felt very excited that day and could not think of anything else. When I stepped inside the school compound with my father, I was kind of afraid. I saw many students in the school campus. Some were playing, some were talking to each other in the classrooms. Being in there, in the new environment, my heart began to beat faster. At first my father took me to the principal's room for the interview. I cannot explain how happy I was when I came out of that room, knowing that I have passed the interview and that I can join the school. Since then, I continued my studies in St-Anthony's school. I didn't have any tuition outside the school, but had the opportunity to stay overnight in the school hostel for supervised study for the exams. Those teachers who helped me out were extra kind to me. I was really lucky to have them and I miss them all a lot. I got this bright future because of Mollymam and all the people who directly or indirectly worked to help me. After St-Anthony's School, I joined nursing study and was lucky to get a government job nearby my house. I am placed in the Asmoli Health Centre and have a good salary. I am happy now that I can take care of me and my close family. I was so excited to be part of the vaccination team for the St-Anthony's school and look forward to contributing my best to serve the people in the villages.

Indu

