

2012 Bridge Course Girls



Nisha



Priya



Brijanka



Ranju



Anita



Gunja



Nitu



Rani



Usha



Nitu



Nisha



Api



Saloni

For our interview with the junior girls we prepared the following questions:

1. What is your name?
2. What is your age?
3. What are your father's/mother's/brother's/sister's names?
4. What is the name of your village?
5. What is your teacher's name?
6. Do you like to study here?
7. Why do you like it?
8. What is your favorite subject?
9. What is your goal?

The main idea behind these questions was to have a little dialogue with each girl. The general responses were that they loved their teacher Sunita, the schoolwork, the discipline (regular hours which they don't get at home), and making new friends. Their goals were to be either a teacher, a doctor or a police inspector, reflecting occupations they are most familiar with from their village life.

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For the senior girls who had gone on to secondary education we asked the following:

1. What is your name?
2. What is the name of your village?
3. At which school are you now studying?
4. What is your favorite subject?
5. Do you believe the Bridge Course has changed your life?
6. Do you believe it is important for the girls in your village to have this chance?
7. How can you help your village?
8. If parents are unwilling to allow their girls to participate, how can you help to convince them?
9. How can you impress the parents that education is important?
10. What is your goal?

I regret to say that I did not take down their responses, which were translated for us from Hindi by Sr. Crescence. In general they found it very important to help their less-enlightened villagers by stressing the value of education. All of the girls wanted a career, and most emphatically did not want to be married and have babies until they were much older!



Interviewing Nisha Kumari



A mix of girls old and new up on the roof



Senior girls waiting to be interviewed



The older Bridge Course girls participated in a picture competition, in which each girl was given a poster and asked to describe not only what they saw but also what thoughts the images conjured up in their imaginations. Madhuri Kumari was the winner.

After the interviews, the older girls went into the classroom for the picture competition, after which the winner, Madhuri Kumari, was presented with a gift. Madhuri is now in the 8th class at Muktinath Secondary School, and according to Sr. Crescence is the top achiever of the senior Bridge Course girls.

By now all the Bettiah teachers had also arrived, and were seated in the hallway for



ABOVE and Below: Senior girls and FreeSchool teachers line the hall



Madhuri Kumari, the top achiever of all the senior girls, receives her gift





Sr. Crescence receives a gift from us



speeches and to receive their gifts, the clocks we had purchased the day before. We also presented Sr. Crescence with a gadget that she—practical as ever—had chosen herself (I cannot remember what it was!) and gave the junior girls their wall clock. Els and I received armloads of presents—difficult to take home with today's luggage restrictions but we packed them anyway.

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As this was our last evening, after supper in the dining room we were treated to a program of music by the novices (with Sr. Crescence playing conga drums!) and dance by the Bridge Course girls, organized and choreographed by Sunita, whose versatility amazed

us. In addition to all of her other duties, she sewed all of their costumes and applied their make-up!

The big highlight of the evening was when Sr. Crescence had Els and me dress as nuns. (She had been planning this surprise for days!) When the girls' program was over, she and Sr. Elise took us into their private quarters where they fashioned some extra habits over our clothes, and when we made our grand entrance into the dining room the laughter and applause was endless! Sr. Crescence laughed hardest of all, and the Bridge Course girls couldn't stop giggling. This experience really seemed to bond us all together, and made us feel that we were truly members of this little family of souls gathered in a remote convent in a well-nigh forgotten part of the world.



Bridge Course girls perform for us



Sr. Crescence on drums with the novices