

A big THANK YOU to all those who have given special gifts in the last couple months. For the first time in a long while, we actually have ALL the money to pay the February rent and salaries BEFORE the 1st of the month! What a pleasure!! If anyone else can give an extra gift between now and May, we would really appreciate it! We hope we can finish this school year in the black.

After the international attention India has received regarding its treatment of females (following the horrific gang rape and eventual death of a young woman on a bus in Delhi), I would like to say that we try very hard in our school to teach our boys to honor and respect women. After the rape incident, one of our teachers posted the following on Facebook. I especially like the comment posted by one of our students, Manish, at the bottom.

If you'd like to learn more about the shocking rates of female foeticide in India, check out [this video](#). It was put together by the Art for Change foundation which is headed by a personal acquaintance of mine, Stefan Eicher, an artist working for social change in India. Fair warning: this video is overwhelming and heartbreaking. But watching it may give you some idea of what we are up against in trying to raise up model citizens. And this is just ONE area of social concern. There are so many that are equally appalling. This is why we need your support!

I know I've included a lot of photos in this letter, but I personally just cannot get enough of them! If you'd like to see more of our students, check out Sarah Hivner's blogs [here](#) and [here](#). The first blog includes photos of some of the siblings that attend our school. The second link shows photos of really happy (silly?) students. Enjoy!

Thank you so much for your support. It's beautiful to see these children bloom and grow!

Wishing you all a wonderful 2013!

love,  
Connie



**Siddharth Singh**  
January 3

Do you promise to keep your hands to yourself? Do you promise to speak to a woman's eyes and not her breasts? Do you promise to allow her to speak in full sentences instead of interrupting? Do you promise to give your daughter as many chances as you would give your son? Do you promise to divide what you have between them equally? Do you promise not to demand a dowry? Do you promise not to ask your... wife to check the sex of the foetus before you allow it to be born? Do you promise to pay a woman as much as you would pay a man? Do you promise to let your sister or daughter make her own choices in matters of her own sexuality? Do you promise to respect a woman's right to say 'No' to you? Then you have the right to be on the road, protesting about the rape in Delhi. Otherwise, shut up, go home and clean up your own heart and mind of the sexism that allows these things to happen.  
~Jerry Pinto

Like · Comment

Prateek Maheshwari, Jessica Leigh Morwood and Bhaskar Bhuyan like this.

**Manish Kumar** i am promise sir  
January 3 at 5:20am · Like



If you'd like to see a few more photos of Wilbur's visit, click [here](#).

We are so happy to have Sarah Hivner teaching art in our school this year! Recently she has been teaching the children some traditional Indian art styles. Here is some of our own Warli folk art:



The girl holding her picture on the right, Ankita, has a speech impediment.

It can be very difficult to understand her! Sarah said that this project brought out the best in her; she was so proud of what she had created! For Ankita and a few others with speech difficulties, we have a volunteer, now on route to the school. Rachel Cooper, from California, will be working in the school from the end of this month through April. She is trained in speech pathology and has worked with children with other disabilities such as autism. We hope that she will be able to help some of our struggling students and possibly give some instruction to our existing teachers so that we can be more effective helping these special-needs children in the future.

Of course we like to report on special events that occur in the school, but there is always teaching going on! Our children are busy learning and progressing, gathering the knowledge they will need to make a better lives for themselves and their families!



January 2013

Dear Friends,

Asha Deep Vidyashram has made it through the second trimester of the current school year. We had our term exams just before Christmas with another couple of weeks of school before the District Magistrate declared all schools closed because of extreme cold. This happens every year when temperatures dip down to the forties. The forties may not sound so bad to you, but when students have to get up (many having never really gotten warm all night), take cold water bucket baths, come to school wearing a thin acrylic sweater, often wearing only flip-flops, it's cold. We've tried to help by purchasing sweaters in a range of sizes which the children can borrow for the winter season. But it doesn't help their bottoms and legs! At school we have thin mats which provide a slight cushion most of the year, but scant protection against the frigid cement floors this time of year. At these temperatures, in buildings that are designed to be cool (as you need most of the year), it really is hard just to hold on to a pencil and write. So, we are now on enforced vacation, one in which a primary goal is just to stay warm. During the day, after the fog burns off, we may get some sunny hours which help. In the evenings and mornings, every few feet you see people gathered (as in the photo below) around small wood fires for warmth.



School will probably re-open on the 16th, after which the weather will gradually warm up to tolerable by the first or second week of February. By the end of March, we'll be sweating again!

During the past term, we had some special events including Children's Day and a Christmas party! In India, Children's Day is celebrated on November 14th, Jawaharlal Nehru's birthday. Nehru was India's first prime minister, the man in charge when India was granted independence by the British in August 1947. A friend of Gandhi and well-respected for his leadership, Nehru is also famous for his love of children. One story is told about the time he was passing through south

India in a motorcade. He caught sight of a balloon vendor and ordered the procession to stop. Approaching the street-side hawker, Nehru bought all the balloons in stock and asked that they be distributed to the children in the crowd. To this day, Nehru is often referred to as "Chacha Nehru" or "Uncle Nehru" because of the love and care with which he ruled his people and because of his kindness to children.

On Children's Day, we try to do something special for our students. This year we celebrated by inviting Wilbur Sargunraj to our school. Born in south India, Wilbur is widely known as India's first YouTube sensation. His wacky videos have received over 5.5 million views.

A friend of close friends of the school, Wilbur agreed to come! With a mission of "making the common man extraordinary," Wilbur is no stranger to making children happy. You can follow this link to see a video of Wilbur at another school for underprivileged kids and learn more about Wilbur [here](#). Wilbur spoke to our children and (after some hesitation on the children's part), eventually got everyone dancing, including the teachers! It was a fun afternoon.

