

Dear Friends,

I hope all is well with you and yours.

This last year has been a good year for the galleries with the ups and down we all expected. The Shangri La room is a Haven of Peace for those who come for treatments and for those who work there, the Coffee Shop is a raging success and Internet sales are up but best of all I have a vegetable patch that kept me and the Coffee Shop in fresh organic veg all season! Bliss.

Those who were "dreaming of a white Christmas" got it good! White it certainly was and in the sticks where we are everything looked truly magical.



Lucy our pristine white cat looked remarkably pink in the snow whilst the other 6 stayed in to hug the under-floor heating.

I have just spent two and half months working and running around in my beloved Nepal for new collections and have found beautiful things for the galleries that will reflect the rich and beautiful cultures of the Himalayas and show great craftsmanship as always.

It is such a pleasure working with these gentle and generous spirited people. I visited again sleepy Lumbini, Buddha's birthplace in southern Nepal. The gardeners tending the flower beds were surprised "a foreigner" would feel the urge to dead-head...

I am a Virgo...I just cant help myself !...so in return they gave me seeds from Marigolds and Calendulas that have been growing there for centuries if not millennia.

I had already collected some when showing this blissful place to Marilyn 2 years ago. These are the very same Marigolds and Calendulas I grow in the Buddha border at the galleries making it so breath-taking all summer. I hope these will help us gain some of the wisdom we all truly need and deserve!

As some of you are aware from the emails I sent, the last few months of the year have been very difficult for our lovely Nepalese Silversmith friend, Krishna, who produces a lot of the jewellery for the galleries. I was working in Nepal last autumn when his lovely wife Shanti had been diagnosed with Acute Leukaemia. Devastating news for the family and the many friends they have. The prospects did not look great but the doctors we consulted were hopeful. The horrible and cruel reality, as I expected it to be from my experience with



Sanish, our little Nepali boy's heart operation several years ago, is that unlike in the West, in Nepal a patient's survival is completely dependent on financing the treatment 100%. Cancer specialists in Delhi guaranteed figures well in excess of £9000.00 ...The real cost of someone's Life? ...

This information left our friends hopeless as for most people there this "minimum sum" is astronomical and would simply bankrupt them.

To the family it sounded like a death sentence.

I got all the money I could lay my hands on at the time and we booked her in straight away to start treatment. But, however good-hearted I might be, this was one crisis I was not able to bear alone without launching an Appeal. A letter to everyone through the post would have been slow and would have generated costs we could ill afford at that stage so we emailed the friends we have on our list.

The miracles of modern technology...We do not have everyone's email contacts (we wish we had) but the response was overwhelming even after finding out that out of all the emails sent only 40% got delivered, the other 60% having being blocked by the wonderful and perhaps too efficient "spam filters" we all use. How frustrating is this? It shows that we still need to check the "bin" from time to time! Nevertheless our Appeal touched many and we cannot thank those of you who

showed such generosity enough and sent such heart-felt messages. With your help we managed to wire funds to cover most of what was needed and Shanti was able to follow a course of aggressive Chemotherapy at the Cancer Research Hospital in Delhi.

Although extremely tired she was doing well right until she contracted a lung infection that her depleted immune system could not fight off. Very sadly Shanti passed away peacefully on Friday 7th January with Krishna by her side.

That very Friday was the day we were having "The Good Heart and Good Thoughts Ceremony" at the galleries, a Fund Raising event for my Charitable Projects in Nepal. How Life moves in strange ways...



It was a magical evening and so many people came to light candles and see paper lanterns soar in the dark sky carrying Good Wishes and messages of Love and Hope.

Shanti was well aware of all the support both mental and financial the family was able to receive through the galleries and was deeply touched and grateful for all this.

She was a beautiful and brave lady who loved children and was involved with local organisations in the Kathmandu valley.

For many years I had mentioned to my close friends in Nepal that I wanted to do more to help and try make a difference to other less fortunate than us. Perhaps opening or sponsoring a small centre we could manage between us... Shanti very much wanted to be part of this.

This dream looks like it might become a reality.

On one of my travels I went to stay with friends in a remote village well away from the capital with its noise, dust and crowds. I had been there before. It is idyllic, calm, clean and close to the forest where Lord Buddha stayed for several months in meditation over 2500 years ago.

Farming families grow what are considered the best potatoes in Nepal, there are orange groves everywhere and springs gush out fresh water. Kedar, my wonderful PA and one of my best friends, told me about a local school run by kind and generous people and suggested I should pay a visit. We did.

What I found was a most charming and heart-warming private enterprise. Perhaps few of you will be aware that Education provided by the Government of Nepal is very basic when not lacking in remote areas. It is also difficult to attract good teachers to stay on the side of a mountain on meagre wages. As a result many Private Schools have been set up for those who can afford it, leaving the vast majority very much behind. This is becoming a booming industry. Unfortunately many of these are run very much like businesses...



The two men I met who run the NAMO BUDDHA HIGHER SECONDARY SCHOOL are "local boys". Subarna Shrestha, the Principle (below) and Satya Narayan Shrestha, the Director co-founder are gentle, softly spoken and well educated married men with children and both have a strong desire to improve the conditions of their local community.



What these two gentlemen have achieved with the means at their disposal is baffling. Started in 1996 with very little, they converted a small building that had been a traditional dwelling with cattle downstairs and accommodation on two levels above. The land was farmland owned by their families so they had a financial advantage.

Today the school has grown with additional wings and stands radiant in its open countryside. There are 30 teachers (50% women which is unusual) looking after children from Nursery (run by 4 nannies/ayas) right until the age of 17. Today there are just under 500 students attending.

Most children are local and most walk from home whilst an increasing number need to be boarders as the good reputation and modest fees required appeal to more parents.

At the moment there are only 85 children staying as full boarders.

They showed me everywhere. There is a beautiful Flower Garden right in the centre of the school that the children of all ages help maintain.



I entered class rooms filled with open-eyed children, all with such happiness and eagerness on their faces. I spoke to some of the teachers, nannies, cooks and students and all feel the school is run like a family home.

I was very touched by the founders' outlook and views and believe that I might have found an existing project that I can help improve and nurture in a way Shanti would have agreed will make a real difference to those who need it. So I am starting slowly...

From next term I will be responsible for two more small sisters from a very poor family of the community. This is a commitment that, like with Sanish the little boy we look after, will be ongoing until they all fly off the nest...

There are many more children that need help and there are many small things that, with our support, the school can achieve.

A little help goes a long way in a country like Nepal and for a small school like NAMO BUDDHA HIGHER SECONDARY SCHOOL it would make a huge difference.

The Fund I have set up and the Fund Raising Events we plan to have will help support various projects. Sponsorships and all contributions will be going straight for these as there no administration fees of any kind.

I already pledged that during my next trip in the autumn I will be painting frescoes for the Nursery rooms and some of the class rooms.

Give me a brush and I'm off! I might make it to the Dining Room if time allows...

I will go and talk to (rather than "teach") the children as I have done many times in the past in other schools. This is very rewarding for both parties.



I see it as a privilege to represent my culture and to demystify some of the views people have of us. Honesty is the best I can offer.

You cannot forge an opinion of a country through TV serials and Football Stars. Some of you, individually or as a group, might feel like making a personal visit ?....
...Just ask.

At the moment there are building works going on for two spanking new Boys and Girls Dormitories with attached bathrooms and the new Dining Room and Kitchens (rat-free) will be ready in time for next term. Electricity supply in Nepal is an infuriating myth but is said that Necessity is the Mother of Invention...or something like that...It surely is the case here when a disembodied tractor's engine is made to rumble after 5pm to provide additional electricity for five computers in the Library. The founders have already installed a Bio-plant providing cooking gas for the Kitchens using the school waste.

There is a long "wish list" with the Principal as funds come in slowly.

There are many things I feel could benefit the school.

For example I was very happy to know that the very modest (in western terms) equivalent to £60 per year provides 2 sets of uniforms for a child, sport gear included.

Just under £500 guaranties studies for a "Day" student for a whole year, whilst it is only £650 for a "Boarder"... including all books, notebooks and pencils!

To completely repaint a class room in white costs only £45.

To buy the materials to build a school bench/desk for 4 students costs £55.

A set of "Bunk beds" for 2 borders including mattresses, pillows, 2 sets of linen and a blanket each costs just above £100.



Of course there are other items on the "wish list" like a proper boundary wall at £4000 instead of the existing bamboo and wire "rustic" fence...

A second-hand school bus at around £6000 would safely pick up and drop off children who walk sometimes 2 hours to get to school in all weathers ... an extra generator would light up most of the rooms...

Time will tell. I will do all I can to help.

If you are interested to assist this project in any way, I know the fantastic team at NAMO BUDDHA HIGHER SECONDARY SCHOOL and the local community would be incredibly touched.

Already, knowing that some souls the other side of the world are even interested in them makes a huge difference.

I welcome your suggestions, especially if you have experience in this field.

You can contact us if you would like more information on sponsorship at any level and should you feel touched by this project and willing to assist, you can send your donations by cheque or bank transfer to:

Alain Rouveure Nepal Relief Fund
Lloyds TSB 30 95 75 – Account 22238 668
IBAN GB43LOYD 3095 7522 238 668 – BIC/SWIFT LOYDGB 21385



And to remind you that if you like to hear from us, of the progress of the galleries and of special events we have, emails are always best and the easiest way is to simply email me at alain@alainrouveure.com and to give us your name as some email addresses do not always relate to individuals.

As always you can rest assured that your details are kept private as we do not share (and certainly would not sell) our contacts lists with anyone.

Maybe a last request... Check the "spam" bin from time to time... I know it is an ordeal to have to sieve through offers for replica watches and investments from Nigeria... but you never know who else is languishing there who should not be!

We wish you and yours all the very best.

The wonderful Team at the galleries and I hope to hear from you again soon.



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