



STICHTING STIEFKINDEREN VAN MOEDER INDIA

STEPCHILDREN OF MOTHER INDIA FOUNDATION

Established 10-06-2001 KvK Haaglanden 27243778

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Dearest friends of Karm Marg,

My last visit to Karm Marg was in November 2019 - more than two years ago. Due to COVID and the restrictions of the pandemic it was impossible to visit India until April 2022. February 7, 2022 was Karm Marg's 25th anniversary. The celebration was an intimate gathering remembering and commemorating Paul Bakker, the founder of SCOMI and loyal friend and supporter of Karm Marg, who died in January 2022. They postponed the festive celebration of their 25th anniversary until April so that Steve and I could attend. We were humbled and honoured by this gesture.

On the 4th of April we flew from Amsterdam to Delhi along with Anaël, Inez, and Rolinda, three colleagues from the Dutch company Studio Roof. Each year Studio Roof donates a percentage of the sales of their Christmas items to Karm Marg. The three were curious to actually experience Karm Marg and see if they could personally contribute something. Together Anaël, Inez and the children painted a huge tree while Rolinda took beautiful pictures of the children and helped them make their own photos of each other.

Days filled with activities – painting, taking pictures, eating together, conversing, days surrounded by jumping and frolicking children. And many, many hugs! It took some getting used to after two years of distancing. It was, as usual, a delightful Karm Marg visit.

Thank you from the bottom of our hearts to Veena for her incredible hospitality, to Anaël and Inez for their inspiration and perseverance, and a special thanks to Rolinda for her fantastic photos.

Read and look with pleasure!

Warm regards,

Deborah Pepper

Veena's House

The biggest change at Karm Marg since our last visit does not concern Karm Marg itself, but the fact that Veena has built a house on the property next to Karm Marg. This ecologically sustainable house is situated at the back of a large garden that daily supplies fresh vegetables to Karm Marg. The house, surrounded by fruit trees, has been constructed from locally made bricks and mud. Virtually everything has been taken into consideration. The windows are positioned so that the house is warmed by the winter sun and the sun is kept out in the summer keeping the house cool. The shutters can be opened to create breeze. Kitchen and shower waste water flows directly to the fruit trees. A "dry" toilet provides compost for the garden without spreading nasty odours throughout the house. Despite temperatures in the 30's, we were extremely comfortable in this fantastic home.



Veena's house



Veena with her dog Snowy

Twenty-five years Karm Marg

After a short sleep in a hotel near the airport we were fetched by Veena, Pooja, and Islamuddin for the two-hour journey to Karm Marg. Pooja, the right hand woman of Veena, grew up at Karm Marg. Islamuddin has worked for many years at Karm Marg and is a jack of all trades who can do anything from repairing a recalcitrant car to consoling an distressed child.



Pooja gets a hug from Durga



Islamuddin

It was only Tuesday afternoon, but the preparations for the Saturday celebration were in full swing. Deepak, who grew up at Karm Marg and is now an artist, returned home to help decorate the campus. His first task was to smear a mixture of mud and cow dung onto the walls of the bathrooms. Inez and Steve immediately joined in – much to the entertainment of the children, some of whom found it disgusting to dip their hands into the brown gunk.



Inez and Deepak



Steve and Inez

Then there was a discussion about what Anaël, Inez, and Rolinda would create with the kids. Veena suggested making a new wall painting at the entrance to the office and workshops. It became a great tree. The children created the leaves by dipping their hands into paint and pressing their palms on the wall leaving multi-coloured leaf imprints. It was a totally fun free-for-all.



Rehana with colorful hands



The tree is almost ready

In the meantime Rolinda took out a camera so the children could take pictures. It reminded me again of not only how curious these children are, but also how willing they are to share . As soon as Rolinda had explained how the camera worked, the information was passed on to the other children. Absolutely everyone had a chance to take some pictures.



Neeraj learns to photograph



Neeraj takes a picture

In order to make portraits of the kids by the kids, fabrics were cut into feathers and pasted on the wall creating a pair of wings. All of the children and adults posed between the wings while other children took a snapshot. It is an impressive series of photographs.



Neha and Jyoti with wings



Veena with wings

The celebration evening arrived. Everything was beautifully painted and decorated. The stage was ready for the theatre and dance performances. The children had showered and donned their “Sunday best.” The guests began to trickle in. We were treated to a militant play about injustice and seven dazzling dances choreographed by ex-Karm Marger Anish. On to the next five years!



The audience is ready



A dance performance

The continuing story of Karm Marg

It is a tremendous advantage to stay with Veena as there are many opportunities to have a relaxed conversation away from all of the bustle of Karm Marg: at morning tea, before going to bed, etc. Corona certainly had consequences for Karm Marg. Part of their income disappeared as they were unable to sell their products and the children had to adjust to not being able to go to school. About twenty children and several staff members were infected with the virus, Fortunately everyone has recovered. All of the children above the age of twelve and the entire staff have been vaccinated.

Despite all of the deprivations and hardships caused by the pandemic, there were positive repercussions as well. A tight knit group of teenage boys has emerged. As they couldn't attend school, they had to rely on each other and this group has had a very positive effect on Karm Marg. According to Veena it has been years since there was such a fine group of teenage boys at Karm Marg.



The boys prepare



The boys dance

During the pandemic there was a large offer of online lessons: not only tutorials for children who need remedial help, but also enrichment lessons for children with special interests and talents. Now, as things normalize and the children return to school, Veena wants the children to continue taking advantage of these online lessons. She wants to purchase new computers and build a new computer classroom. In this way the children should be better prepared for the world in which they will have to live and work.

The staff of Karm Marg is also closer and more dedicated than ever. A special moment before the celebration was the distribution of bonuses to the staff members. We talked, we laughed, we cried. Afterwards we took a group picture. Here is the fantastic staff of Karm Marg including honorary members Rolinda (in the middle in the white blouse), Inez, Anaël and Deborah (bottom right) and Steve (top right next to Islammudin).



Despite the insecurities of the pandemic Karm Marg remains a safe harbour for underprivileged children. Karm Marg remains positive and takes advantage of the opportunities they encounter.

Your donation helps Karm Marg to accommodate these children and offers them the opportunity to grow up and become strong, independent adults.

Heartfelt thanks to all of the loyal and new donors who have contributed in 2021.

Please take a look at our website

www.scomi.org

And, if you want to contribute in 2022, our bank account is:

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