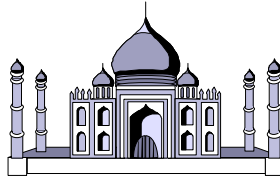




Patron: Robert Evans, former Member of the European Parliament

Newsletter



BABY BLESSINGS!

In the spring of 2009, Ernest and Patty Aguayo, pvs from February 2007, became parents for the first time when their beautiful baby son, Pablo, was born.

On Saturday, 15th August 2009, a lovely baby boy, William James Varun Snow, was born to Shobhana (IVCS trustee and daughter of Mukat and Jyoti) and Julian.

On Monday, 24th August 2009, a gorgeous baby girl, Eesha Rose Singh, was born to Sarah (nee Voaden, PV from October 2006) and Manoj.

PROJECT VISITORS 2009

In September, three pvs arrived at APK. They included a science teacher from the U.K., a nurse from the U.S.A. and a computer expert from Canada.

October saw the arrival of two L.S.E. graduates from the Asian Foundation for Philanthropy's volunteering programme. Their specific project was to carry out practical research into the pollution.

In November, another L.S.E. graduate arrived, courtesy of AFP. His task was to investigate the finances and financial viability of the computer centre.

Three pvs from the U.K. also arrived in November and were joined by Toby Whitfeld, PV from November 2006, and John, secretary of *Villages-ESPOIR*, the charity Toby set up on his return to France. Toby and John came especially to see the eye camp which *Villages-ESPOIR* was sponsoring.

A GLORIOUS RECEPTION

On Sunday 1st November, Mukat and Jyoti hosted an amazing reception in the beautiful grounds of the Gramodaya Degree College, Amarpurkashi.

The reception was to mark the marriage of their older daughter, Tarini, to Stephen Critchley which had taken place in London on 25th July. This was Stephen's first visit to India. His sister, brother-in-law and sister's friend also came from the UK while Jyoti's sister and niece came from Australia and Jyoti's son, Rajit arrived with Erika, a friend from Tokyo, Japan. It was a truly

international gathering and, as the quotations below indicate, one that everyone thoroughly enjoyed.

'A delightfully unique experience for me. So much more relaxing than an English wedding where the bride and groom have many duties to attend to. Wonderful food!' (Stephen from London)

'The whole day was an amazing experience, full of colour and laughter.' (Susie from Staines, Stephen's sister)

'Thank you for providing such a wonderful spectacle. It will stay with me always.' (Andrew, Susie's husband)

"Watching the school yard transformed into such a beautiful place was amazing. We were all made to feel very welcome and very honoured guests.' (Vicky from St Albans)



'Coming to India was one of my dreams since I was a teenager. I am fully satisfied with my experience this time and I am sure I will come back to India again! Thank you for your hospitality.' (Erika from Tokyo, Japan)

'A stunning day filled with warm hospitality, amazing colours, fabulous food and the friendliest of people. Certainly a day to be remembered.' (Kate from Sydney, Australia)

'A wonderful example of Indian hospitality in an atmosphere of colour, joy and incredible food.' (Cindy from Sydney, Australia)

FILM FAME!

- Steve Ostrowski, PV from January 2008, had an unexpected experience after he left APK.

"On my first trip to India, I spent two weeks in Mumbai and was scouted by a guy looking for westerners for extras in commercials and general TV work so I went along twice. My first stint was as an extra in a film where I had to play a delegate in an audience for an unknown film. A few days later, I took part as a crowd extra in an Indian soap.

If you stay in the popular tourist hostels such as Red Shield house in Colaba, you will often be asked to participate in these ventures. It makes for a multi-cultural film set. You get paid roughly 500 to 600 rupees a day plus meals on set and the experience of having worked within the industry. In terms of money, that can pay your board for two days in Mumbai. You could choose to do it every day but it can be a long day on set.

My second trip to India was the most rewarding. I went to film city with a scout and this time I got a talking action part in an Indian comedy film called "De Dena Dan". It was the scene of a wedding reception and I had to have an altercation with a man at the bar who mistook me for someone else. I met some great people on the set and was paid a little more this time. I also have some great video footage of the set and three actresses I worked with. On the strength of this, an agent offered me a month's work on location in Rajasthan but I couldn't go because I had to meet Paul Bradley in Delhi a few days later for our second visit to APK. However, I have kept the agent's card and next time in India.....who knows?

The nice thing is that a few Indian friends in the UK have come up to me and said "I saw you in that film "De Dena Dan".....fame at last!!"

- Greg Parker, PV from February 2006, had a very different experience in film.

"Several years ago, I was in APK at the time of Diwali festival. Babuji introduced me to Pawan Chauhan, a young TV producer working in Delhi but coming from Akroli, a village not far from APK. It was wonderful to spend time with Pawan, talking about many things but especially his lifelong dream of making a documentary on Gandhi's childhood.

To my amazement, he asked me to play the part of Mr Giles, the British education inspector who went to Mohandas Gandhi's school to inspect it. I felt very honoured and said I would love to play this role. Then I realised that the film would be in Hindi!! However, fortunately, after my first visit to APK where Rajni introduced me to Hindi, I did further studies through an Australian university so I was able to translate the script and understand the role before I returned to India.

The scene I was involved in is described at the beginning of Gandhi's autobiography. Mr Giles, the education inspector, arrives at the school where Gandhi is a pupil and gives the class a spelling test. The teacher sees that Gandhi is the only one who has spelt the word 'kettle' wrongly and tries to get him to copy it from another student without the inspector seeing. However, Gandhi refuses. Thus, from a very early age, we see Gandhi's honesty and courage.

In August 2009, I arrived in Delhi where filming was due to begin. Pawan arranged for me to be measured for my costume and I went to the National School of Drama in Delhi for rehearsals. I was very nervous but the cast were extremely supportive and helpful, especially with my Hindi pronunciation and phrasing.

Pawan even took me to lunch with the Deputy Speaker of Parliament who was

supporting the project and also playing a part.

When filming began at the end of August, I was royally accommodated in a luxurious resort in a fort built around 1750. The actually filming took about three hours and luckily, there weren't many retakes, just takes from different angles. Then I was taken by car to the airport to catch my flight back to Australia. Only when I was in my seat in the plane did I realise that I still had all my make-up on!!"

HEALTH NEWS

On the 8th November 2009, a free eye camp was held at APK in the new health centre. An eye specialist came from the government eye hospital in Moradabad and examined 190 men and 120 women from APK and neighbouring villages. 31 patients were identified for cataract operations and with the help of staff and volunteers from APK, they were taken to the community hospital in Bilari for the successful removal of their cataracts.



On the 10th and 26th December, free health camps were also held in the health centre. Doctors, including general physicians, eye specialists and dentists, came from the Kothiwal Dental and Medical College, Moradabad and examined a total of 227 patients (106 women and 121 men).

TWITTER!

If you haven't heard of the website "Twitter" by now, you probably don't watch television, listen to the radio or read the news! Since its launch in March 2006 the website

www.twitter.com has seen incredible success through its unique way of delivering a real-time "short messaging service" to internet users all over the globe.

It now has more than 120 employees and over 10 million members, including all manner of celebrities, politicians, media and commercial organisations.

The IVCS Executive Committee has decided that in keeping with its forthcoming name change and website refresh, we should be one of the very first charities to launch themselves on Twitter this year.

We would therefore like to invite you all to create your own account on Twitter and follow our account *IVCSCharity* for news and activities. We will endeavour to keep it as interesting as possible, so please send me articles, quotes or video clips that I can share.

Mukat and Jyoti are now "tweeting", so if you would like to follow them, just search using *Mukat Singh* and *jan_singh2002*.

Shobhana Singh
(ms.shobhana.singh@gmail.com)

BUY A BRICK!

We've all received gifts that have then languished in cupboards or been sold on at car boot sales. And let's be honest, we've probably given some too. So why not give something a little different for birthdays and anniversaries?

Many of you will have visited Jafarpur Junior High School when you were at APK so you will know how badly the school needs new classrooms. The local villagers are very keen for the school to expand and become an officially recognised high school and eventually, an inter college (which means it has a sixth form as well). However, government rules and regulations require a minimum number of classrooms of a specified size.

So we are focusing this year's fund-raising efforts on building two more classrooms at

Jafarpur. We have nearly enough for one. Now we need your support for the other. Please visit our website at www.ivcs.org.uk and go to the brick scheme to see how to donate. Or just send a cheque, made out to IVCS, to the South Harrow office.

NAME CHANGE!

At the meeting of the Executive Committee on 31st May, 2009, members voted to change the name of IVCS to "***Volunteers for Rural India***" which was generally felt to be much more indicative of what we do and what we are.

An EGM (Extraordinary General Meeting) was held on 13th September where members ratified the name change.

Since then, we have been working on updating our website, choosing a new logo and more modern colours for the site and investigating all the steps that need to be taken to change the name.

Our new website will be www.vri-online.org.uk

The launch date will be announced in the summer newsletter. All being well, it should be in June.

COMING EVENTS

- The next meeting of the Executive Committee will be held at the IVCS office on Sunday, 23rd May, 2010 at 2 pm. All members are welcome, especially those interested in becoming trustees.
- The Twenty-Ninth A.G.M. (Annual General Meeting) of IVCS will be held at the IVCS office on Sunday, 1st August, 2010 at 12 noon. All members are welcome. Lunch will be provided.

