

# Friends of Taktse *UPDATE*

June 2010



## Echoes of Bonse Aba

by Umesh Pradhan

*Umesh Pradhan is a computer teacher at Taktse International School in Sikkim.*

*He is also a talented musician. Hear Taktse students singing “Bonse Aba” at:*

*[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ehRip\\_VmEZE](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ehRip_VmEZE).*

### Contents

Bonse Aba .....	1
Two Essays.....	2
Reading at Taktse .....	2
Book Fair.....	3
Construction.....	4
Photo Gallery .....	6

This past winter, as one of four Taktse faculty members on a professional development tour in the USA, I visited the Waring School in Beverly, Massachusetts, where our Principal, Mr. Lauenstein, had been a student many years ago. I immediately felt a connection between Waring and Taktse. Both schools promote learning based on shared inquiry as opposed to traditional rote memorization prevalent in Sikkim. During the course of my visit, I saw many similarities between the two schools in terms of teaching strategies, ethics, and love of learning.

Waring’s music caught my attention. I heard rolling keyboard patterns and wondered who was playing the piano so beautifully. Eventually I got an opportunity to observe one of their music classes. They were practicing a Zambian song called “Bonse Aba,” which I had never heard before. When I heard them singing the song, I felt like singing along with them, and once I learned it, I just couldn’t stop singing it. I was mesmerized by its eloquent tone and contagious rhythm.

I wanted to share this song with my colleagues and students back at Taktse. I convinced the music teacher, Kristina Martin, to teach me how to teach it to others back home in the Himalayas. She helped me get the spirit and the rhythm, gave me the lyrics and recorded the song for me, so I could practice it any time. Singing it lifted my spirits. I kept singing it even at the house where we were staying in Beverly. My colleagues must have gotten tired of listening to me sing, “*Bonse aba, mu-po-ke-le-la-ba-li-pe-le-ma-ka-aku-ba-ba-na.*” over and over.

When I returned to Sikkim, I shared this song with the Taktse community. The kids at Taktse loved it. Bonse Aba spread around the school community like fire, and now I hear almost everyone singing “[bonse aba, bonse aba](#).” I keep smiling with the joy of accomplishing my goal. It’s amazing how the sounds of Zambia, through the Waring School, are now echoing in the Himalayas.



## Two Essays

by Shagun Limboo, 9<sup>th</sup> grader

### 1. My Hopes and Dreams

I am really interested in English Language and English Literature. I hope to become a great author and poet. My parents, especially my dad, want me to take science

and become a doctor, but honestly, science is not my cup of tea. I am in a dilemma. I want to make my dad proud but I want to follow my dreams too.

### 2. Water

I've felt a special connection with one of the four elements: water. Last year, I went to the beach. I breathed in the sweet salty smell of the ocean and kept taking deep breaths. I couldn't get enough of it. The ocean was crystal blue, and stretched, never ending, over the horizon. My feet sank into the wet sand, and waves kept crashing on them, inviting me to join them further, deeper. I lay on the wet sand and the ocean hugged me protectively. It felt as if everyone around me had disappeared, leaving only the ocean and me. My head was calm, and as the waves crashed on me, I felt wanted and relaxed. It was as if the ocean had the power to soothe my inner soul.

*Shagun Limboo is 14. She has been studying at Taktse for four years.*

## Camcorders and Digital Cameras Needed

Taktse student members of the Publications Club need camcorders and digital cameras. If you have extra equipment, please consider donating it to Taktse.

Camcorders and digital cameras for Taktse can be sent to:

Taktse International School  
c/o Aka Denjongpa  
19 Stone Street  
Beverly, MA 01915



## Reading at Taktse

by Linda Tobin

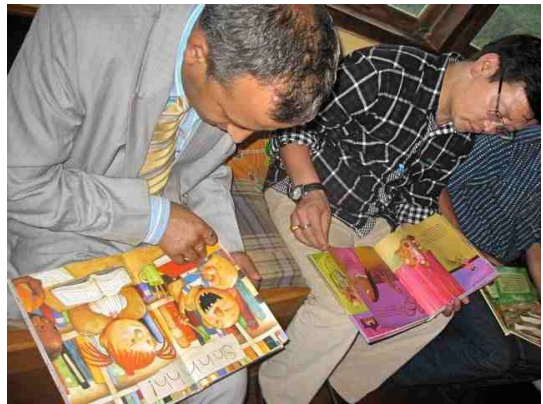


I first visited Taktse in 2008 with my husband and son, who knew Taktse's principal, Mr. Pintso Lauenstein, at the University of Chicago. Upon arrival, I was delighted to see reproductions of the art of famous painters and book illustrations decorating the halls. It seemed like a place where children would become engaged in a positive way with reading and learning. So when Mr. Lauenstein invited me to return as a reading tutor, I decided to visit for a couple weeks to tutor individual children, and meet with parents and

teachers to share my enthusiasm and love of books and learning. It has been a wonderful experience for me to come back again and see the progress that the children have made during the past year! It is also fun to get to know some of the teachers, and see how devoted they are to helping their students expand their horizons.

The Parents' Workshop held in April 2010 was a most enjoyable experience for me. I was delighted to see many parents whom I had met at a parents' workshop last year, and meet many more new parents. It was a pleasure to work with the experienced and professional Taktse teachers; Ms. Sandya, Ms. Dingsa, and Ms. Rai Guru-ama. After an engaging 'ice breaker' we introduced the goal of the workshop: to model enjoyable reading with a child, and give parents ideas and tools to support pleasurable reading at home. We encourage parents to start by finding "a comfortable space, and a cozy place" at a regular time each evening. We teach them that when a child wants to read the same book more than once, to just go along. We emphasize that when reading at home, it is important that a child has the parent's undivided attention. Parents can give their child positive reinforcement, with a pat on the back, and by saying things like "Good job!" or "I like the way you corrected yourself." They shouldn't worry about correcting every mistake the child makes.

Children should be provided with books that are fun to read at the end of a busy day. For kindergarten children who are just beginning to read, illustrated stories will help them learn to tell the story themselves. We also gave parents children's books to examine and asked them to notice the font. It should be simple and easy to read, and the subject should be of particular interest to the child. Reading for pleasure becomes the foundation for all learning and the basis for a lifetime of continuing education.



*Linda Tobin has visited Taktse School three times. Her background is in social work, planning and administration. She has taken courses in children's literature, phonics and English as a second language. Several years ago she began tutoring in public schools, and realized the value to children of reading for pleasure.*



## **The Gangtok Book Fair**

*by Dawa Yolmo*

*Recently, instructor Dawa Yolmo took seventh and eighth graders to a book fair in Gangtok to scout for good books.*

Twenty hands were waving at us as we approached our rendezvous point, excited faces eager to take this field trip to the book fair. Then the enthusiasm subsided as we realized that the book fair would not start for another hour. We were early!

So we walked to the nearby Rachna Book Store, lest we lose some of our students in the throng gathering near the book fair. I rang the doorbell, hoping the tiny bookstore was open as I could think of nowhere else to pass the hour. Finally, the door opened



and Mr. Raman invited us in. I apologized for bringing so many people. As soon as we entered, the students started browsing the narrow aisles, some asking Mr. Raman about their favorite authors and genres. I went upstairs and saw three of our students already sitting in different corners, enjoying some independent reading time. "What a relief! What a success!" I thought to myself. I knew I shouldn't be so stressed, but I couldn't help it.

I bought myself a book I had been dying to read, My Name is Red. At the checkout I overheard excited voices saying things like, "Let's buy this, the first page is really good." We were on a shopping spree for books. I loved it!

After an hour, we left the bookstore and headed to the book fair through crowded streets and warm air. My anxiety returned. As we entered, the sight of religious banners confused me. Were we at the right place? When I saw two students, Gawa and Anoushka, shout simultaneously, "The Last Song by Nicholas Sparks!" I knew we were at the right place. The crowds made me want to leave, but our avid students shopping for books they love convinced me to stay.



The sports fans in our group were disappointed that there weren't more books on sports. Ingsa finally found "World Cup 2010," a book he really wanted. He bargained hard for it, and he got it!

After choosing more books for the school, I looked around and saw the familiar faces of our Taktse students, flushed, fatigued and satisfied.

As the day students walked home and the boarders got on the bus to return to Taktse, I reflected that the day had been a success. It was a day devoted to the pursuit of books we might cherish. Only a few students found books they really wanted at this particular Book Fair, but they had been challenged: a book you will love to read is out there somewhere. FIND IT!



## **New Building Under Construction at Taktse**

*by Sonam Paljor Denjongpa*

Thanks to your generous contributions, Taltse currently has about half the funds needed for construction of a new building. We plan to construct it in two phases. The first phase will have a footprint of 35 feet wide by 80 feet long, with five floors and five rooms on each floor.

The first phase will accommodate near-term growth of the school while we raise the balance of the funds needed to complete the building.

The second phase will double the length of the building to 160 feet, and allow Taktse's

student body to increase from the current 140 students to about 240 students. We plan to incorporate teachers' quarters on one floor and a boys' hostel on another floor. A science lab, a music room, an art room, and a computer room will be shared by several grades. An indoor game room will be available for rainy days. A rock slab walkway will connect the new building to the original building.

The architectural drawing and contour map are done. We prepared the land for the foundation by removing a large quantity of loose landfill, and started excavating the foundation with a borrowed backhoe.



### **Matching Challenge**

Two generous donors to Taktse's Capital Campaign have pledged to match donations.

One of the donors has offered to match up to three gifts of \$5,000 (a total match of \$15,000).

The other donor will match gifts of any size once total gifts following January 1, 2010 reach \$10,000.

Please help us meet these challenges. Mail your tax-deductible contribution to:

Taktse Capital Campaign  
c/o Marion Institute  
202 Spring Street  
Marion, MA 02738

or contribute at the Taktse page of the [Marion Institute web site](#).

For more information, please contact Aka Denjongpa at 978-473-1527 or [oneaka@gmail.com](mailto:oneaka@gmail.com).

***Thank you for your generous support!***

When the monsoon ends, the river will subside and we can get gravel from the riverbed for making concrete. We will get steel reinforcing rod from Siliguri. The monastery has cement mixers and other construction equipment, which they will lend us at little or no cost.

Local laborers will construct the foundation. For the upper floors, we will bring in experienced construction workers from West Bengal who worked on the original building. We are hopeful that the first phase of the new building will be completed in time for the start of the school year next February.

We are extremely grateful for your contributions, which are making our dream a reality.





# Photo Gallery

