Hello to all of you!

Sunday, 19th March.... the children are up a bit earlier than usual because we will go on a school outing today!! Once a year we try to go on a trip by bus....a few years ago we went to Darjeeling to visit the ZOO. Last year we went to see His Holiness the Dalai Lama who visited Sikkim and this time we will go to Samduptse. This is a place on a mountain where a huge statue of Guru Rinpoche is being built. Guru Rinpoche is by many Sikkimes people regarded as the second Buddha. In the year 747 he brought Buddhism from India into Sikkim and Tibet for the first time. During his visit to Sikkim he consecrated may places, left a footprint on a rock, meditated in several caves and left several holy scriptures in hidden places. The presence of Guru Rinpoche in Sikkim is still very tangible!!

The children are of course very excited and are running around with joyful faces. We rented 2 busses thaht arrive the day before because we want to leave early. On the outside of each bus we attach our schoolflag so the whole of Sikkim can see that we are on the road!

Palla and uncle already got up at 3 O'clock this morning to prepare our picnic lunch and to make breakfast with the help of some senior students. All younger children go in one bus together with their teachers, some elder children and lots of towels, jerrycans with water en old newspapers because on these windy roads the kids are susceptible to vomitting.... All other studnts in the second bus.

It takes 2,5 hrs to get there....it is a beautiful day and nature is in full bloom.

We arrive....the statue is very impressive. It is made of copper, is 135 feet high and on 2 levels one can do circumambulations. This is a Buddhist custom: to circle clockwise around a holy place or holy object to pay respect and to receive the blessings. First we do three prostrations, then we recite some prayers to Guru Rinpoche and then we circumambulate the statue several times while reciting the mantra of Guru Rinpoche: Om Ah Hung Vajra Guru Padme Siddhi Hung.

Then back to the bus fo find a nice spot for our picnic. We arrive at a rock garden with playground for the children with swings, see-saw, slides, climbing things etc.

We bring round backed bread, vegetables, boiled eggs, bananas, sweets, biscuits, a stove to make tea etc. The children are utterly happy and run around with red, hot, smily faces. They don't visit a playground very often and they can't get enough of it!!

After our picnic it is already mid afternoon and time to go back. In the bus the children are singing all their Nepali and Englsih songs...few are lying down with white faces....sick....

Now in the meantime i have left Sikkim because my Indian visa came to an end. For me it is always a matter of coming and going. In the early morning of the 21st of March all hostel children and staff waved me goodbey since i had to take an early jeep. The night before in the hostel was like a little party. "Miss, we want to do some songs and dances for you".....soooooo sweet!!

And so i left....happy on the one hand because the first weeks of the schoolyear had been so good....but also with some pain in my heart to leave behind all these happy faces, the warmth and unity of our SHA family and everything about this unique little spot in this neck of the woods.....
35 Big hugs...."Bey miss, have a safe journey!!"

I hear the sound of their clear voices and have the imprint of their contented faces on my mind for a long time while the beautiful landscape rushes by outside the jeep. I am planning to be back in the school for 2 months from mid September onwards. I have arrived in Kathmandu (nepal) where i will stay in town only for a few days. Then I'll pack my rucksack, some prayer books and some other buddhist items to head off to a remote and high place somewhere in the mountains with a little monastry, some buddha's and lots of silence. I like to stay there for a few months to do a very extensive buddhist preliminary practise which is given to me by a buddhist lama (monk and teacher). Mountains, space, nature and especially a lot of simplicity is then very conducive and isnpiring to walk this inner journey intensively. From around the 28th March onwards i won't be on the net for a few months.

May you all be well and happy!

till next time, with love!
Hedwig