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# NEWSLETTER

ISSUED ADVENT 2022

HOPE ...

NOW GO ALL OF YOU WHO DO HOPE  
AND CARRY THE HOPE  
INTO THE WORLD:

HOPE, MEANING:  
FEELING THE NEW TOMORROW  
IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT  
AND DARING TO HOPE  
DESPITE ALL UNCERTAINTY

HOPE, MEANING:  
NEVERTHELESS SOWING SOME SEEDS  
INTO THE DYING SOIL  
AND PRODUCING CHILDREN  
IN THE FACE OF UN-FUTURE

HOPE, MEANING.  
DRYING TEARS  
IN THE MIDDLE OF PAIN  
AND SENDING PEACE DOVES TO  
THE BATTLEFIELDS –

GO: ALL OF YOU WHO STILL CAN HOPE  
AND CARRY THE HOPE  
INTO THE WORLD.

WILMA KLEIVINGHAUS



**DEAR FRIENDS OF THE SHANTI-FAMILY,**

while I am writing this I am in Nepal again. A strange feeling overcomes me, thinking that wintertime is coming soon in Germany in November when I am back there. The dark outside - a dark that may even spread to your soul! Whenever you see what the media offer you in ever shriller colours and screaming sounds...

One year ago, nobody would have imagined that a raging war would split the world into friends and enemies so soon! The consequences that would have - the media not refraining from drawing our thoughts and feelings into fears of all sorts - and we have still not gotten over the Covid-19 pandemic yet.

But what I notice in me is that I will not be subjected to being drawn into the darkness, into resignation. I wish to hold on to hope, especially now that we are haunted by so much darkness threatening us.

You may be surprised if I tell you: It is our work in Nepal that gives me so much good things and generates so much hope in me, right then when it seems to extinguish.

So let me show you all the things that trigger hope, because you are the people who nourish hope again and again: Our work is only possible with your financial support! I would love to let you see for yourselves how hopeless, gloomy faces become lively again or gradually change, how they start to shine!

I think Wilma Klevinghaus must have experienced similar feelings when she writes:

*... carry the hope  
into the world ...  
Hope, meaning:  
Drying tears  
In the middle of pain  
And sending peace doves to  
The battlefields.*

We had to dry so many tears during the last few weeks because the situation got even less hopeful for the people looking for help from Shanti.

**BALKESH AND HIS FAMILY**

First of all, I would like to tell you about a family whose fate touched all of us in the station during the last few weeks. The family's origin is in Bajura, the Nepalese poor house in the western region, about 50 hours away by car.

Balkesh, the father, was 38 years old and had a renal disease. His wife Kurri was convinced that a treatment in Kathmandu would help. She was even ready to give him one of her own kidneys; so we paid for the outpatient treatment and brought him and his family to Shanti. He was transferred to a special clinic, but they sent him away rather soon - it was too late for successful surgery on him. Then he arrived on our doorstep - with his desperate wife and four of his five children, who are between 5 and 16 years old. Elisha, 16 years old, is still in their village.

Dialysis did not have much success, either. Every day we thought he would die. He said he wanted to die at home in his village. We would have paid for the transport, but he was too weak for such a long journey.

Nepal was in the midst of the Tihar festival, five day of lights. Laxmi, the goddess of good luck, is





honoured with sacrifices, many colourful lights, and mandalas. For these, she is expected to give happiness and wellness to the people, and everybody has a party with fruit and good meals – for all of the five days. This is a really good party for the rich!

At Shanti, we have the poor ones, but they are also able to party with infecting joy! The children had rehearsed some beautiful dances, and they were excited to perform them before an audience. They had even made a wonderful mandala from coloured powders, encircling it with oil lamps.

Just as the planned performance was about to start, Balkesh passed away. I had visited him the night before, saying my goodbyes. His death interrupted the entire program, as a dead person has to be cremated immediately in Nepal. So the children had to wait – until Balkesh had been prepared for cremation.

Some relatives came first. They are working in Kathmandu as day labourers, so they were there quickly. But they wanted him to be burned on a wooden fire – which is absolutely a no-go for us: We only allow our bodies to be cremated electrically, with energy from renewable sources, from waterpower or solar energy – our goal being ecological responsibility. Two entire trees would have been used for a pile of wood. Such a procedure would be fatal for a country so frequented by terrible landslides. As the relatives are as poor as Balkesh's family, they were willing and accepted – not having the money to pay for another type of cremation.

It was high time to sew white clothes for the wife, which she is going to wear for 13 days. The children had been provided with new, warm suits by our tailors and seamstresses for Tihar as they did not have anything, coming to us without any luggage.

I was deeply touched by the widow's desperation and the children's painful crying. It was good to see how the eldest son consoled his five-year old brother Arjun.

When everything seemed to be ready for cremation, the relatives realized that some rites and songs had to be performed. They consulted each other, not being sure what exactly had to be done and when. So the ceremony had to be postponed again and again – until we went to see our children, leaving the family with friends alone.

In the meantime, the children had waited for exactly three hours to be able to perform their dances, with so much patience. We were happy about their dancing as we have some really good talents among the solo dancers. They are going to be supported by our dancing teacher, training them to be dancing teachers themselves.

Kurri is really happy now that she can stay with us with her children – where should they go otherwise? The mother would not earn enough to give them food in her village.

Another thing: our Shanti children are able to comfort each other whenever they notice that somebody is sad - they all share the same experience. This is a thing I am so happy about whenever I see it.

### TRAINING FOR THE GIRLS

We wanted to let Elisha come to us, too – because she will be married off soon if she stays in her village. Marrying children is a great problem in Nepal although it is officially prohibited. We have some 16-year old girls who have already had a baby. This is why we thought Elisha would be safe here and wanted to accept her. We give advice to our girls



and give them the means to learn a profession, which will spare them an early marriage. And we are happy about any Shanti child, especially the girls, who wishes to start training – although this costs us a lot of money.

Our school provides good basics for such training. We have a highly committed staff of teachers who are reliably accompanied by a talented and hard-working trainer. She calls the teachers every morning before lessons start and makes them follow her yoga moves online to put them in the right mood for lessons. They are well acquainted with the new equipment and technology due to the pandemic.

In our school, there is a totally different atmosphere than that in the public schools in Nepal – for the children's well-being. Only facts are learned there by heart (I have written about this a lot, as you may remember). Pupils who ask something are deemed to be stupid and are punished.

A reason may be that a teacher may not be able to answer a question, and this would be a shame on him or her, the teacher will lose authority – they think! Children asking questions are hit, they have to remain stand-ing in a corner or other punishments.

Social orphans and the orphans are staying in our boarding school. Anita, the girls' house mother, is a loving person! Her husband is in prison, her eldest son is being brought up by some relatives, and she sublimes and overcomes her sadness by caring for the girls with touching love.

Our children, especially the girls, like to work in jobs they could use for Shanti: our nurses, lab assistants, the health assistant, the dental hygienist – they have

all grown up with Shanti. They know the people here – and what is very important for us – they treat everybody with respect, even those from the lowest castes.

I was so grateful and happy when we were encouraged in our way by a confirmation we got some days ago: A couple of doctors who are married to each other who we know have joined us for a fortnight, helping us. They are impressed by the competence and professional work of our medical staff.

It is really comforting to know that our patients are in good hands when they are treated by our medical team – even according to the strict German standards!

Investment in the training (5,000 euros for a nurse) bears fruit so to speak, and I will always be thankful to you, who have enabled us to provide such training in the first place! I was more than happy when a girl graduating from school showed us her good certificate proudly and happily. She wishes to become a nurse, too, and she and her mother beamed with joy when we congratulated her on her decision and promised to pay for the training!

This is an important thing for her mother who lost her leg many years ago when a raging elephant broke out from the jungle and went whiplashing with his trunk. She was harvesting some vegetables. She was cared for in our clinic, got prosthetics there and learned how to knit.

Any woman with such a handicap will often be out-cast in Nepal. Mother and daughter stayed with us at Shanti. The daughter is now learning a profession with which she will be an accepted member of the Nepalese society.





### THE DENGUE FEVER

We are happy about every new nurse because Shanti has to offer more and more medical relief. Currently not only Covid but also the horrible dengue fever is heavily prevailing with a terrific outbreak as the tiger mosquito has settled in Kathmandu, too, due to the climate change. It transfers the dangerous "bone breaking fever" as the disease is also called with its sting.

We also treat some severely ill people from the slums in our clinic as they do not have the money for another treatment. One of our German volunteers has also fallen ill. The disease brings about a high fever and comprehensive weakness, sometimes accompanied by severe headaches and rheumatic pains.

We dispense ethereal oil smelling strongly of citronella and eucalyptus in order to repel the mosquitoes. We cannot give out this oil to all people at risk, of course. But we gave out about one thousand mosquito nets which were gratefully accepted. Each time we go to the health camps we take with us hundreds of these mosquito nets. We have to pay the wholesaler 2.10 euros a piece.

### VOLUNTEER'S FLAT

One of the constructive news we are happy about: Before the pandemic, we had a house for volunteers. When due to Covid no volunteers could come, we cancelled the rental agreement for the house, which was too expensive, and rented some individual rooms in a simple hotel for those who dared come - one night for ten euros per person.

Now, we have found a flat for our volunteers right next to Shanti. We had used the flat before for Covid patients in order to quarantine them from our station. A company rented the flat as an office

in between. And when it was vacant again, we were very happy to use it. Our carpenters built beds and shelves from wooden pallets, our old ladies wove patchwork rugs, and our tailors and seamstresses sewed the curtains, cushions, and bed linen. Our masons broke through a wall and built a stairway, which makes the flat a comfortable housing for our volunteers. Sonam and Futsche, our two dogs, are responsible for keeping the flat free from rats - they are good hunters!

Five people can live in the flat, which costs 400 euros a month, which is much cheaper than the hotel rooms.

Dear friends, Christmas time is coming soon in Germany, and many pleas will reach your ears this year: How painfully times have changed compared to the last year, how helpless we are in face of the restrictions "big politics" have created and still creates for us as private people ... Will you - in view of this - please remember what good things you have done as an individual during the past year. Everything you have given to the Shanti family has nourished children, made clothes for them, and enabled them to be educated, freed sick people of fears and sometimes healed them, has dried tears and comforted people. And above all, it has awakened hope! The entire Shanti family thanks you from all our hearts! As a sign of our gratefulness we send you a peace dove mandala perfectly made by hard-working hands during the last few weeks - from upcycled bags and packaging for sweets.

Now I wish you and us a peace which will hopefully come soon, and the hope and joy of living - not only at Christmas, but for the entire year 2023 which comes after that.

Stay protected - you and all the people you love!  
Your Marianne Grosspietsch