



NEWSLETTER

ISSUED IN CHRISTMAS 2017

WHAT I WOULD WISH

THE ENDURANCE OF A MOCKINGBIRD
WHEN DUSK COMES TO RENEW HER SONG,
THE COURAGE OF GRASS
TO GREEN AFTER SO MUCH WINTERTIME
THE PATIENCE OF A SPIDER
WHO NEVER COUNTS A DESTRUCTION OF HER WEB
THE POWER IN THE NUTHATCH'S NECK
THE UNCHANGING WORDS OF THE CROWS
THE SILENCE OF THE FISH YESTERDAY.
THE HARD WORK OF THE HORNTAILS
THE LOW WEIGHT OF THEIR COMBS
THE INCORRUPTNESS OF THE MIRROR
THE VIGILANCE OF THE CLOCK.
THE SLEEP OF THE LARVA IN THE FIELD
THE HAPPINESS OF A SALAMANDER AT A FIRE.
THE HARDNESS OF IRON RESISTING THE COLD
BUT MELTING IN THE MARCH LIGHT OF LOVE.
THE BLAZE OF WOOD WHEN IT BURNS.
THE POVERTY OF THE WIND
THE PURITY OF ASHES, REMAINING.

by Rudolf Otto Wiemer



DEAR FRIENDS OF THE SHANTI-FAMILY,

I would like to write our Christmas letter to you as a diary again. I have now been in Nepal for almost two weeks and the joyful anticipation for the great celebration increases day by day: The Shanti family shall be celebrating its 25th anniversary here on November 24th, and today is

NOVEMBER 11th

We already celebrated in Dortmund in July: we expressed our thanks to God in a wonderful church service – thanks for so much that has been preserved for all the years! But also thanks to all of you who have supported us and have made our work possible!

We would especially like to thank around 350 people from all parts of Germany, from Portugal and from Switzerland, Holland and France. Many of you are now happily wearing your quartz bracelet that our wheelchair users made for you. This Sunday still has lingering effects on us!

We are now preparing ourselves for the celebrations in Nepal – with all of the people for whom Shanti is there or who form the togetherness of the large Shanti family. Our patients have painted gold elephants on red paper, before sending these invitations to Embassies, hotel owners and many other people of distinction in Nepal.

Try imagining that: former beggars are sending such invitations! We are pleased that many of those who were invited have accepted the invitation. This celebration with all of the patients and the many children should obviously also have the stamp of gratitude placed on it.

There is something that we feel very strongly about, however: We want to use this celebration to have

the Shanti spirit illuminated publicly. Our patients, our children, our aged – that are all looked upon as being inferior within the Hindu caste society, they therefore being seen to be people who nobody needs to pay attention to as most of them belong to a caste of untouchables.

Such a view clouds the look at the value and the dignity of the people. It especially prevents one from perceiving the skills and talents that slumber in them. We wish to wake up these skills and talents and promote them in our rehabilitation workshop.

Our wonderfully motivated volunteers have taken up this approach with great enthusiasm and they have also assisted with giving it a specific form – in a colourful and varied exhibition. Each of the departments of the protecting workshops shall be having their own stand in the inner yard of our clinic at the celebration and the artisans shall be presenting their work:

The tailors shall be piling stacks of the new school uniforms on their table, these being in Nepalese style and made of robust corduroy, not forgetting the baby garments for our smallest ones and bed linen for the clinic.

Gora Singh is already looking forward to presenting his baby shoes that he has made of leather residue and Singha San is proud of his bags made of car inner tubes and textile residues! The painters Nathuni, Jogendra, Reika and Jagat shall be explaining their dreamlike paintings on the subject of “The Gate to Hope”.

Devi and Prem shall be impressing the guests with the patience and care they apply to the turning of narrow newspaper strips into a firm fabric that Bal Krishna then develops into wonderful folders with rubber bands.



Kumar and Suresh shall be presenting upcycle jewellery made of broken porcelain and glass, these being set in sterling silver. Phul Maya shall be sitting at her loom, providing a demonstration of how she weaves very fine patters in soft silk scarves using the traditional Dhaka technique.

Tulasar attracts great astonishment when she uses here great dexterity to turn minute pearls from garnet, peridot, quartz or amethyst into artistic bracelets and chains. Sunita shall be persuading the visitors to touch the soft scarves that she and the women from Sindhoupalchowk have knitted.

The group in the briquette factory shall be explaining the manufacturing process behind this eco fuel that is so important for our soup kitchen. The gardeners shall have decorated their table with the bio vegetables that they cultivate in our field office in Sundharjal.

The carpenters invite you to take a seat on the benches and chairs that they have carpented, they especially presenting the school furniture that they have made. The impressive Bahadur, who is paraplegic, as is our silversmith Kumar also, is radiant and proud about his furniture that is made of the split ends of bamboo that is then reinforced with rubber from bicycle inner tubes.

Grandma Mina and Grandma Champa weave their patchwork rug squares on small weaving frames that are made from wooden strips. The doll seamstresses shall be presenting their small angels, fairies and dolls made of jersey and old bed linen.

The Shanti children also have their own stand with the headbands, calf warmers and wristlets that they have knitted themselves.

I am writing all of this to you in the early hours of the morning, i.e. 2.30 a.m. I am unable to sleep to-days: the Sai-Baba disciples are celebrating the birthday of the guru who they honour so greatly. Their temple is located directly underneath my bedroom window and the community has been singing, drumming and beating the cymbal without interruption since 5.30 a.m. yesterday. Our request that they at least switch the excessively loud and tinny microphone off so that we could get some sleep was listened to with a mild smile – our request did not bear fruit however ... I am grateful that our baby Pari can sleep nevertheless!

This walk to the temple provided me with the friendly opportunity of being able to speak to Hari, my favourite security guard. He guards the house with the numerous flats that we live in for security reasons.

He told me that he has a young daughter in Gorkha who is two months younger than Pari. Heiko immediately packed baby things for the small girl. it is very cold in Gorkha after all. The house that belongs to the parents of the security guard and where his young wife and the baby also live, was the victim of the earthquake, together with the cattle and the entire harvest. They all now live in a makeshift manner now, i.e. it is draughty and even colder than normal at this time of the year.

Heiko therefore also gave him Pari's cot as a gift. Pari now sleeps in our largest suitcase until our carpenter had made her a new cot – and she is obviously enjoying it.

NOVEMBER 16th

A number of days have now passed. We have survived the leaden tiredness, a severe cold and the sleepless nights resulting from the permanent singing of the Sai-Baba disciples. We know from



experience: on Sai baba's birthday and on similar occasions, singing often takes place and music is played day and night for up to a week!

The preparations for our celebrations are in full swing. A marquee and 1,000 chairs have been ordered. We shall also be bringing our benches with us. The place where we shall be celebrating is very close to our station: it is the car park from the neighbouring eye clinic.

I could not believe my ears when I heard the time schedule yesterday: the marquee was to have been erected exactly one hour before the celebrations start! And that with the Nepalese idea of punctuality and a traffic situation in which we often need two and a half hours for the 7 kilometres drive between the station and our home so that the journey time cannot be calculated!

I was so appalled at this tight time schedule and made this so clear that Bijendra immediately contacted the renter of the marquee by telephone and demanded that the marquee was to be erected and all of the chairs placed in position on the evening before!

In order to ensure that no mischief could be carried out with the marquee, the college students shall be watching over it during the night.

It is fun to see how they all try to help! Sudep the painter decided to paint over all of the areas that he believed needed repair for example. He has great difficulties with his hands due to the leprosy, but he can still hold a paintbrush.

Then: It is almost never the case that something unexpected that one certainly can do without does not happen when preparing a celebration.

This was the case yesterday: The sewer pipe is blocked a total of 25: in words: twenty-five lavatories, are blocked!!! The yard has now been broken up and there is a bad smell on the entire site and in the houses. We certainly hope that the plumber shall be able to complete the repairs by next week. Another challenge that challenges us to keep smiling...

I am grateful and happy that the beggars at the temple trust us now to a greater extent: a desperate mothers brought both of her children to us. They are both so young that we can prevent malnutrition damage by giving them our special weight-gaining nutrition.

Sarita, the head of the music school told us that there are a couple of dozen neglected children in the temple area. I now have great hopes that we shall be able to take care of some of these little one at Shanti.

Shriti, a small child I found two weeks ago, is able to stand on her own in the meantime. The weight-gaining nutrition obviously appears to be working. Her mother is a very friendly lady. She touchingly cares for the disabled children in our clinic. I am certain that she shall be able to remain with us after the probationary period that all new employees have to complete. This means that both of us shall then be helped.

Shriti shall be able to switch from the kindergarten to our Waldorf school, thereby breaking through the vicious circle of poverty, a lack of education and the recurring poverty and sickness that frequently follows.

Dear donors, I am so grateful that you support us and that we can provide ongoing assistance!

I absolutely wish to share the following with you: For the first time I have been working in Nepal, I saw a newspaper article of a high-ranking entrepreneur yesterday, in which he regrets that during the main festival days in October, such as Dashain and Tihar,



the Gods will be given rich offerings, but the poor are not bestowed with any pity. He complained about the egotistical interest of the wealthier people in their own good lives – meaning that there is a deal: large gift = larger benefits = comfortable lives. And you know: all religions are full of such human calculations...

I wrote the author and invited him to our festival. He might be likely to motivate the people in Nepal to stand by our side! You alone are our supporters, and paying donors so far. We cannot expect to receive any help in Nepal for the needy people we care for.

NOVEMBER 18th

I just spoke with Sunita, our needlework teacher. She told me about her aunt, Sushila Banja, living in Humla, who is the sister of Gora Singh who tailors the adorable baby shoes and purses made of bicycle tires and old pieces of embroidery.

When he caught leper, she, as his sister, had to earn the living for the family. She was married to a man at 15, worked on the fields of other people or washed their linen, gave birth to three children, and when she was 27 years old her husband died of hepatitis. She managed to care for her children with hard work.

She has herself a liver damage today, probably caused by worm infestation. Her children are living elsewhere, she is now afraid to live alone in the mountains in her hut – because of the wild animals, and also because she is being despised as a widow in Nepal.

She is learning how to knit from Sunita. We have already decided to keep her under our roof. We can treat her medially, and she can earn some money

without having to toil away and get sick again or to live fearfully in her hut.

NOVEMBER 20th

So much can happen without even planning before such fixed appointments like our party: This morning we received a message that the only son of Mao leader and former Prime Minister Dahal has died. As our centre is located just opposite the burning sites at the Pashupati temple, this means that we had to get home quickly in time before the body would be transported. Otherwise rigorous street blocks would have cut us off. We packed the baby and „accessories“ and everything we needed into the car, returning home on secondary roads.

We were confronted with ear-splitting music again, when we were at home. The Sai Baba supporters were partying again! I am grateful that I am capable of turning off well; I went about the task of making work schedules for the knitters. We have to conceive the knitting project in a new way, as we are unable to cooperate with the fashion designer, as we had hoped. Our idea of fair prices is not compatible with her idea, unfortunately.

But we will maintain our original vision: to employ the amazingly hard-working knitting artists permanently, and enabling them to earn their living und that of their families, thusly contributing to the rebuilding of their destroyed houses.

Perhaps one or the other of you may help us selling and distributing the wonderfully soft knitwear made of pure natural fibres? The women are totally enthusiastic about having discovered the apaca wool of which I told you in our last letter!

In the morning today, I heard another story of those brave women who survived the earthquake. It has touched me so much that I wish to tell you about it:



SHANTI LEPRAHILFE
DORTMUND E.V.

Shershang is 34 years old. As a baby of six months, she crept into the fire, burning the fingers of her left hand. This is a thing that often happens in Nepal, for many mothers just lay down their sleeping babies near the open hearth in the winter, then they leave the house to work on the fields.

We have three children at Shanti who were burnt in this way: Sudhip – he lost a lower leg and the fingers of his right hand; Asmita – her foot is heavily crippled, and Umesh who lost all his toes of the right foot.

When Shershang's house collapsed during the quake, she flew from her village, like so many others, reaching Kathmandu where she lives in the Camp Hope tent camp and where Heiko erected the Creative Tent. She did not dare go in, however – she thought her crippled hand would not allow her to do some needlework. But our Sunita, patient as ever, encouraged her to come, picked up at the tent and instructed her in knitting.

You simply have to see how carefully and fast Shershang knits – you would be as deeply moved and impressed as I am! She is still hoping to see the day when she will have her own roof above her head.

The planning is completed now. The bridge to Sindhoupalchowk where all houses collapsed in the quake - has been repaired. The task is now to bring all the building materials to the place and excavate out the basement.

But – a bitterly cold winter is waiting for the people who are living under tarpaulins and in makeshift huts or stables for the livestock. We therefore plan to buy many sleeping bags which we will bring them, as there is a great risk of them suffering of dangerous illnesses such as pneumonia.

I realize again and again, and in all its severity: Such a disaster which only lasts for seconds (the quake in April 2015 only lasted 52 seconds) has a catastrophic long-term effect on the people suffering from it; it is necessary to support the strength, the courage and the thing which we receive from you, dear friends: You lend us financial support, and the latter is wrapped in the blessed gift of „hope“. The hope that all families will have their own home soon again.

The long months of waiting – 31 to date! – render a number of villagers resigned and without hope. It is our optimism that will lift them up; our visions and our loving approach to the needs of the people.

We have agreed with the general contractor that – initially – we will build a Health Station. The huge building project - 224 houses with workers who have still to be instructed – is liable to leave some of them with injuries and working accidents. We will provide the Health Station with medicaments offered by „action medeor“, and we'll send a medical assistant there.

Many, many years ago, we constructed our first Health Station in Buddhanilkantha (the quake did not destroy it in - no cracks at all!). My plans I have made at the time are impeccable and feasible – so I asked our competent construction engineer, Mr Prabhin, to convert them to accurate drawings and post them on the Internet. All villagers will so be able to use them for the health stations in their villages. This is Shanti's gift for our Anniversary to them!

NOVEMBER 21st

The preparations for our festival are in full fledge. And even the wastewater pipe is repaired! But there is one thing troubling us: A rigorous general strike is going to be imposed exactly on the day we are having our festival – while the elections for Parliament are being prepared, and the preparations are



getting more and more aggressive. A general strike – that means: no vehicle is allowed to be moved in the streets, otherwise they might be set to fire. Only some tourists and ambulance cars will get an exceptional permit. It is true: We could walk the 7 kilometres to the Centre. With the baby, it will be a bit exhausting, but it is possible.

So – Plan B for our festival is the following: The night before we are going to install a huge dormitory in the tent for those who come from farther away. On the day proper we will do the cooking. Some very hard-working vegetable cutters are going to clean and cut mountains of vegetables ...

I am full of optimism that we can overcome the difficulties and have a great party – as a proof that we have jumped over so many hurdles during the last almost 25 years!

NOVEMBER 24th

Today is the day of our festival. Last night, we called the security forces: The planned, aggressive general strike has been annulled! And now that it is over - I realize that I was very, very worried...

We had to attend a very important festival for one of our severely handicapped patients: her nine-year old daughter was ritually married to the Sun God.

This Hindu rite is rather helpful, as widows were burnt to death in some ethnicities when their husbands died. But if a woman is married to the Sun God, they will never become a widow and not be burned together with the husband. This rite is still being celebrated.

The girl's parents were very honoured to welcome all of us Germans as guests! Our volunteers even danced with the little bride in the end.

We are now driving to the station to help the children getting dressed. As a last-minute measure, I have had five capes made from an old, pink sari with gold print, they are for five severely handicapped children in wheelchairs. One of our volunteers will perform a wheelchair dance with them afterwards.

We have prepared 1,400 portions of food in small cardboard boxes: samosas (pastry stuffed with vegetables) and sweet dumplings, 62 cents per box. I would like them all to be so very happy ...

DAY AFTER THE FESTIVAL

It was such an amazing festival yesterday! We were sucked up in a lively, bubbly bustle in the Centre.

The first thing we saw was that the tables for the exhibition of the products of each of the workshops for the needy and protected were still sticky – they had painted them the night before! We had to look for other tables from the classrooms ... The children ran around excitedly, the dogs started to bite one another and had to be separated with much power.

Everything had come to a certain order around noon, and we were pleased to see the happy faces of each of the craftsmen and craftswomen. They had waited for a long time to present their art. They proudly sat behind the tables, showing their small and big bags made from car tyres and ancient pieces of embroidery, little baby shoes made from leather residues, eco-briquettes made of paper scraps mixed with sawdust, folders made of woven paper stripes and much, much more.

The tables with their loads of colourful products were distributed over the entire clinic, and the inner courtyard was hung with the brilliantly painted Maithili pictures under the motto: "Gate of Hope".



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We were very happy that the new Ambassador to Germany in Kathmandu arrived, too, Roland Schäfer, with two of his assistants. They looked at all the products at the stands with much interest and appreciation, and we felt true empathy when the Ambassador spoke with the patients.

When his round was finished, we went to the tent erected nearby in his company. In the presence of Princess Dilasha Rajaya Laxmi Rana (from the Nepalese royal family) some of our children let twelve white doves fly into the sky as a symbol of peace ("Shanti" translates to "Peace"!).

We celebrated a minute of silence then, for all the Shanti family members who had died in all the years we enjoyed their company. Among them Granny Sushila, who was loved by all, who passed away last week.

The Ambassador's speech that followed was very humane and heart-warming. He told us he had also worked as a volunteer in a facility for people with handicaps. We could feel how he reached out to the hearts of all who heard him speaking.

The school classes each performed something for the many guests, dancing, a drama on stage and singing, to their great pleasure.

Everybody was so moved when the kindergarten children sang - all had on the new cord suits! Little Alok, frontman, held the microphone quite confidently, never forgetting any of his lines!

When the wheelchair children did their dance, waving their little hands, and glittering gold particles flew through the air in a turbulent motion. Tears could be seen in some faces.

So this was our year – and we are grateful for it deep from our hearts. Shanti has been joined by many people as misery is becoming worse in Nepal. This year has seen the consequences of the terrible monsoon – houses collapsed, crops destroyed, food prices rising exorbitantly due to this.

Your loyalty helps us anew every day to provide for the increasing group of people in need. We have been able to protect them from falling into resignation and despair – thanks to you!

People in southern Germany say the following phrase when they wish to thank somebody: „May God pay it back!“

Allow me to make use of this phrase now, wishing you all a blessed Christmas and protection and help for 2018!

Yours
Marianne Grosspietsch