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# NEWSLETTER

ISSUED CHRISTMAS 2021

LET US DREAM OF A WORLD  
WHERE WAR IS UNKNOWN,  
WHERE PEOPLE OF OTHER COUNTRIES  
ARE WELCOMED AS FRIENDS,  
WHERE BREAD IS SHARED  
WITH EVERY CHILD,  
WHERE THE LAST DICTATORS  
ARE CIRCUS HORSE RIDERS.  
LET US DREAM OF A WORLD,  
WHERE YOU SING AND LAUGH,  
WHERE THE DISTRESS OF OTHERS  
MAKES US SAD, TOO.  
WHERE THE CHALLENGE OF OTHER LANGUAGES  
WILL BE OVERCOME BY UNDERSTANDING,  
SO THAT WE CAN WALK  
ALL HARD PATHS TOGETHER.  
LET US DREAM OF A WORLD,  
WHERE PLANTS, ANIMALS, AIR AND WATER  
ARE CARED FOR LIKE A GARDEN WOULD BE.  
WHERE LOVING LETTERS ARE WRITTEN  
ALL AROUND THE WORLD,  
AND LET US BEGIN RIGHT NOW  
SO THAT THE DREAM IS NO LONGER A DREAM.

*Song written by Gerhard Schöne*



## DEAR FRIENDS OF THE SHANTI-FAMILY,

It is November, the weather is rather gray, the general mood is depressed and no good news coming from anywhere. Against such a dark background, sparkling spots of light are seen especially well! And I can see many such sparkles – a lot of success for Shanti, highlighted in the last few weeks. Again and again, it is you, our dear friends, who have made a big difference with your help in a spirit of solidarity – so much good has been possible with your support for some people who have bitterly needed it. And we like to thank you for this deeply. And I wish to tell you more about it so that our joy is reflected on you.

## DHASAIN

In our culture, Christmas is coming soon, a big festival where we give presents to each other and all families come together, if possible – whether they are of Christian belief or not. In Nepal, October is the month of the festivities, the biggest being Dhasain – the feast of victory of Good over Evil. The parties go on for 10 days, people enjoying delicious meals among their relatives, giving each other presents and staying with their families having a cosy time.

But what about all the people, normally gaining their living as labourers? Most of their income will come from tourism, and Covid-19 has finished with that for months and months and has not restarted yet in real. All sources of money have therefore gone dry, and many of the labourers have lost their rented space and are famined. Those people will have no joy of partying at all.

Heiko, our son, who lives in Nepal as Shanti's Technical Director, has remembered that in our country,

too, there are homeless people. Church communities and other groups will invite them to enjoy a festive meal at Christmas. What could be learned from this for Dhasain?

He consulted with our Junior Manager, Bijendra, who talked to the young men who had taken over the café in the summer (the café being a great success, by the way!).

The men went for it immediately. They prepared 400 meals each evening of the long October month, which they packed carefully, decorated lovingly and put them in cases on their motorcycles. I was really glad to hear during our daily (free!) telephone calls that they returned without injuries... They saw much misery and listened to some bitter stories told by the people. They asked Bijendra to go along with them in order to get the gist of it himself.

He was deeply touched by the fate of one special man whom he met. The man did not look like the other men, women and children, he had good trousers on and real shoes on his feet. Bijendra asked him in astonishment how he got there? He told him then that he actually wanted to visit his parents and siblings at Dhasain. Nobody there knew that he lived in misery, and he did not wish them to know! So he took all the money he could beg from others and bought proper clothes so that they would not know.

When Bijendra tried to find him again the other day – no luck. He knows his name, however, so that he hopes to see him again – trying to get him some paid job. But he took some hundred sleeping bags from among our supplies and gave them to the needy. Our young people brought them to the



sleeping niches, and the people given them were happy - as the nights are really growing cold now. We have to order some more, for sure - at a wholesale price of Euro 12,50.

We asked Bijendra today: What about the hungry people, after Dhasain? His reply enthused me: "We are going to bring them some food regularly until they can earn their own living again - we cannot actually let them starve now, can we?"

#### WINTER CLOTHING AND SCHOOL UNIFORMS

The young people also distributed some – really new shoes! Which is the present of a friend of mine: She had ask some money for Shanti for her birthday. Bijendra negotiated a deal with the owner of a local shoe factory - and imagine: four euros cost a pair of robust sports shoes on average. We were able to buy 1,200 pairs of these shoes! It was similar to last Dhasain when we got a large batch of shoes remaining on the shelves. All children were given some of the real new shoes, in their cardboard boxes: the Shanti children, the children from the surrounding slums, and the children at the Balsarati school for the poor. No more shoes got second-hand from another child! It warms my heart whenever I see the picture of the happy girl from the neighbouring slum, and I am equally pleased!

This is something Dhasain also brings with it, as in Nepal it is (a sensible) tradition to give each other warm clothes for the coming wintertime at the festivities.

But - how would the poor be able to get such warm clothes, for themselves and then for others to give them to? They can't even afford the food for themselves. So our tailors and seamstresses got to work at full steam, sewing the traditional Nepalese suits, consisting of jackets with a stand-up collar and the

bows to tie them under the arms, along with long trousers.

Here again, we think of all our children: those of Shanti, of the slums and at the school for the poor. The latter are especially important as many parents will not have the means to finance the mandatory school uniform. Such a uniform, consisting of a set of dark trousers, light-coloured shirt with a tie and a blazer according to US standard, costs up to 50 Euros. Plus the uncomfortable, black leather shoes, making full equipment for a student swallow about the monthly salary of a labourer.

This is followed by the children often abandoning school when they have grown out of their old school uniform and the parents not affording to buy a new one. Or they cannot start going to school in the first place. Bijendra is going to talk to the school teachers at Balsarati, convincing them that the Nepalese variant, the cheaper one, is more reasonable so that no child will have to experience to be inhibited from entering the classroom because he or she has no uniform.

Our tailors are hard at it to sew these Nepalese uniforms, and Shanti gives them to the children for free. It is exactly the children of the poor ones who need regular school attendance - not only to really learn something, but because they are regularly fed at school, with a healthy meal each time. This is the only meal some of the children will actually get. When our physician noticed in the health camps that many children acutely suffer from malnutrition, they will now also get the rich litho mash which spares them the bad consequences of malnutrition. This is how we have cared for the little ones in several ways, the food also coming from Shanti.

The battle against hunger will require many forces, much imagination and resilience: according to the



world famine relief organisation, the positive development of many years has been destroyed by the pandemic.

### OFFICIAL OPENING OF HOUSES IN THE EARTHQUAKE REGION

In my memory, it is one special day which stands out, the 11th of October. When that day is recalled, our team is still happy and grateful. This was the day when the houses could finally be given over to the people who had lost everything during the severe earthquake of April 2015. I told you about all the problems with the authorities who had stopped the reconstruction again and again. While we froze the funds which many of you had entrusted us with for the sole purpose of rebuilding the houses after the 2015 quake.

On 11 October, a small group of us went by car to Sindhupalchowk, into the region of the epicentre: our friend, Ms Sangita Shresta from the Dwarikas Foundation, with whom we managed the whole project; our manager, Ms Apsara, Bijendra and Sunita, our textile work teacher. Finally, 90 houses were ready, in four villages. The festively attired ladies and gentlemen were handed over the keys, the property documents for their new houses and some little presents.

The official ceremony started with a puja, a religious rite - asking for blessings and expressing thankfulness! After six long years living in makeshift cabins, cattle sheds and tents, the people now finally have a roof over their heads before the cold winter begins.

Those four villages have something in common: all houses have the same size, 50 square metres for a family. The parcels of land on which they are built have also a standard size, 200 square metres.

One group of people are especially happy about this, the Bahuns which belong to the caste of the Untouchables. They find it almost unbelievable that they have houses and land of the same size as people of the higher castes!

When the houses were handed over, Heiko recalled how in Germany we give some bread and salt to people moving into their new house. As all families are poor in the same way, which means that nobody can farm a larger property any more, Heiko converted the German tradition to this special occasion: He had the food for one month stored in the entrance of the house, as a surprise for the new inhabitants, our children having painted wonderful folding cards with a written blessing.

Along with the luggage went some bags full of sheep wool so that the women were able to knit during the times to come. Sunita had gone there, too - she had taught the ladies to knit after the earthquake. No room will be there for vegetables and goats any more on the 200 sqm land - so much land was washed down the mountain during the quake.

The knitters now make warm jackets and caps for the children from the slums and the school for the poor. They will be able to fund the school for their own children from the proceeds of that work.

Once the planting season has started, we are going to distribute larger fruit trees to all so that the families will have the necessary fruit for their food. In Nepal, fruit is so expensive that a poor person is unable to buy it. A nice donator has given us the money destined and needed for the fruit trees.

Another story I remember is the fate of the lady who moved house four weeks earlier. She suffered from a severe cancer illness and had asked us to



allow her to move into her new house even before the official handover date - as she would like to die in her own house, she said. Nobody had anything against that. She moved in with her family, and a fortnight later she died peacefully - in her own house, her family around her.

The villagers believe now that her good spirit hovers above the houses, and all four villages have been blessed by her!

#### EXCURSION OF OUR CHILDREN

Our children had a special reason for joy during the last few weeks. Can you remember that I told you several times that we are wishing them to root in their own culture and tradition, guarding and preserving it. Most of them are orphans, they have no parents who could teach them something or with whom they could live together in a home. We are therefore very glad that they are all being educated in music and dancing, taught by some exceptionally talented teachers at a musical school.

Two years ago, our dancing ensemble was invited to perform some religious dances at the very important large Pashupatinat temple. The event was so beautiful that everybody talked about it, with the result that Sarita Mishra, the Musical School Director, made a special invitation: Our children would present their dances in one of the holy temples of Buddha's birth village, Lumbini in the Nepalese south! What a great honour!

I would have liked to have all of you take part in the joyful reaction of them imagining a journey! We indeed found a rather cheap, safe way to bring the children to Lumbini: Our school bus was filled with loads of disinfectants, sleeping bags, huge pots and bags with rice and lentils. Our friend Sher, a travel organizer, made the accommodation available, as

Lumbini is approx. 200 km away from Kathmandu, a coach travel time of seven to eight hours...

Once in the south, we would have been happy for the children to have the pleasure to see the big animals in the National Park of Chitwan. After all the restrictions of place during the lockdown and a boring time without school and classes, the children would be happy to experience something joyful.

We in Dortmund could definitely see their joy and excitement, from photos and audio-recordings. Faces full of pleasure, and the performance was a full success!

The excursion cost 25 euros per child, which was donated by a friend of mine; the carers and children enjoyed the journey through the country, experiencing new things.

But then, alas, the trip had to be cancelled abruptly, as the Monsoon had returned. A large part of the rice harvest was destroyed by 48 hours of heavy rain, for the rice lay there ready to be dried on the fields. Landslides did the rest and washed much farmland and many houses down the mountains and into the river.

Bijendra and Heiko were very concerned in view of the reports from the travel attendants, fearing more landslides which could tear down the roads, the coach not being equipped with four-wheel drive. The two men had to decide, with heavy hearts, to call the entire group back to Kathmandu. On their way, in safe regions, they had the opportunity to look at some sights. But the relief was sensible when they returned tired, but happy and healthy to Shanti.

Full of empathy and horror, they told us about the poor people who had lost everything by the



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flooding, however. The idea was born that we had to help them, as all the victims belong to the caste of the Untouchables. The higher castes would not give much support, of course - nor the government which is made up by members of the higher castes (just think of the reactions on the flooding in July in Germany!).

Again, many sleeping bags, tent tarpaulins, bags with food and other relief goods were sent on the hour-long journey - in a truck funded by the village concerned, the idea being that they should contribute something to the relief campaign, too.

The nicest thing about the transport was that it brought some caps for the children knitted by our Shanti children with their own hands!

Dear friends, I am quite sure that these gifts were like a light at the end of the dark tunnel, a light of hope for many of the victims. My warmest thanks that you have made so much sparkling light and hope possible with your loyalty and generosity!

I wish you, too, such a sparkling light - a shimmer of hope so that we all stay protected - especially during these difficult times of the pandemics and protected in everything which might make our lives a challenge. I hope with you from all my heart that we are going to be able to enjoy some merry Christmas days together with our loved ones.

In the name of the entire Shanti family, I wish you a blessed Christmas and a happy new year 2022. Stay protected – outside and inside!

Your  
Marianne Grosspietsch

**Please note:**

**We are going to (hopefully) celebrate the 30th anniversary of Shanti on 17 July 2022. Which is why we warmly invite you today to come to the service of Thanksgiving in Saint Reinoldi Church of in Dortmund at 11:30 a.m., followed by a colourful offer of foods and cultural performances. We are looking forward to seeing you!**