



# NEWSLETTER

ISSUED SUMMER 2023

## THOUGHTS ABOUT THIS YEAR'S CHRISTMAS

GOOD IS STRONGER THAN EVIL  
LOVE IS STRONGER THAN HATRED  
LIGHT IS STRONGER THAN DARKNESS  
LIFE IS STRONGER THAN DEATH.

*DESMOND TUTU*

IT IS DARK IN THE WORLD OUTSIDE - WE HAVE TO SHINE!  
YOU IN YOUR CORNER, I IN MINE.

*G. FREI*

...MAY KINDNESS AND FAITHFULNESS MEET;  
RIGHTEOUSNESS AND PEACE EMBRACE EACH OTHER;  
MAY FAITHFULNESS SPRING FORTH FROM THE EARTH  
AND RIGHTEOUSNESS LOOK DOWN FROM HEAVEN ...

*PSALM 85, 11 + 12*

## DEAR FRIENDS OF THE SHANTI-FAMILY,

Some days ago, I read something really inspiring written by Abbé Pierre, an impressive activist against poverty and homelessness who lived in France after the Second World War. He said: we have two eyes, one which must see the misery in our world - and the other its amazing beauty!

This is a vision I have totally integrated into my life. It would be nice if it could also help you to cope

with our present reality better - the cruelty of wars, natural disasters, hunger and evil minds, et cetera. Besides all these incredible facts full of terror, there will always be the beauty of a blue sky, with some little white clouds on a clear autumn day, the smell of red-cheeked apples, the giggling laugh of a child, the compassionate eyes of an elderly person, an embrace of a friend...

Abbé Pierre encourages me not to let the misery I see in Nepal every day get to me. I am writing this



letter to you from Nepal again, like the last one in the summer when I spent some time here. I think this is my way to involve you in the life as I see it in our Shanti family - very direct, better than after my return to Germany.

### DHASEIN AT SHANTI

Now is the time of the big festivities in Nepal, Dhasain and Tihar. The Hindus celebrate the victory of Good over Evil with these days. Families come together; the eldest chiefs bless all family members with a red tikka point on their foreheads. You can imagine what a pain it is for the Shanti children to remember their homes during these festivities - not only the 22 new children (since March!) whose mothers have passed away, but also some old women who were cast out of their families because they could not work any more for the family's earnings.

We wish to affirm all of them during these festive times that "they belong to the Shanti family now, they are not alone!" This is why we try to organise very embracing and beautiful parties for them during the celebrations.

One Hindu rite is an actually cruel one horrifying all children (and some adults, too): a goat's throat is cut according to the right rites, and the blood of the still living animal is splashed on to all the tyres of the cars. This means helping keep away the god of death from the vehicle. The goat's meat is eaten afterwards.

To my great pleasure, there is a new movement in Hinduism, our Project Manager Bijendra told me: they chop vegetables instead of sacrificing an animal, replacing the blood for the blessing of vehicles with flowers and red Tikka powder.

Heiko had a smart idea then: He ordered a goat

made of cardboard. Sweets were to be filled into its belly, the goat then slaughtered with a wooden sword. Our painters Nathuni, Kumar and Niranjan had so much fun with this plan, and fulfilled it with zest, the result being a mountain goat which looked very real and was as tall! The three painters proudly carried the animal into the courtyard of the clinic. The children waited there, excited to see what would happen.

Our eldest lady, the 91-year old grandma, blessed the goat. Under the dramatic ringing of our school bell, our gardener Lila took the wooden sword from the box of our drama props - with one hit, he killed the goat! Sweets packed in red and silver foil fell out of its belly, and the children cheered and ran to get some of them! What was more and made us very happy: none of the children threw the paper on the floor - everybody put it in the waste bin!

On the previous day, the children had performed a play with great effort (and with the patience of their teachers...) which presented the victory of the goddess Durga over Evil; they danced a lot of beautiful dances and sang with all their might. Grandma then blessed each child personally and was happily smiling when performing this honour. The children got all their red tikka dot on the centre of the forehead and a bundle of wheat saplings were placed behind their ears.

The courtyard was covered with tarpaulins on which plates and bowls made of the dry leaves of the sal tree (*shorea robusta*) were placed in long rows. Not long after that, the children sat with their friends, both boys and girls from the neighbouring slum and our chef served them the festive meal. Shanti has the purpose of sharing everything with the poorest of the poor from the neighbourhood like in a community - so we celebrate with them too!





SHANTI LEPROHILFE  
DORTMUND E.V.

### PURNA

It was in this situation that we read in the newspaper about the cry for help of a man who was only 22 years old, named Purna. He asked for help to pay the treatment of his bone cancer. He sadly said he did not even have the money to buy drinking water (in Nepal, you cannot drink from the tap, it is too dangerous).

We asked the newspaper editors for the name of the hospital in which he was. I immediately sent Bijendra to visit him there. The most important thing for Purna was someone who cared for him and the comforting certainty that he would get help. Bijendra gave him that closeness, fulfilled his wish for an apple and a plate of rice with curry. Then he took him to Shanti, because the hospital would throw him out if he did not pay.

To get a safe diagnosis, our nurse Kopital accompanied him to the cancer clinic. The doctors there told him, visibly full of pity, that Purna needed chemotherapy to heal his bone cancer. He was too weak, they told him, to undergo the therapy.

So we took our thin patient who was almost transparent, back to our hospice room. There he was able to lie back, packed in warm rugs, watching the children dance and sing. Afterwards, the children came to his room and caressed him. The next day he developed a temperature, and he said with composure: I am going to die - don't give me any medicine now! After a short time, he passed away in peace.

His body was wrapped in orange-coloured sheets and crowned with French marigold flowers according to Hindu rites. The bier stood in the courtyard of the clinic. Many of our people came from the workshops, and Bijendra addressed them all with a short speech: Purna lived with us only for a few

days, but he was sure to have become part of the big Shanti family. He had a quiet death feeling this certainty.

I am so grateful for such a natural warmth and care with which the poorest of the poor are embraced into our Shanti family! This makes us all who belong here think that they, too will be cared for when our time has come to die.

### EARTHQUAKES AGAIN

Another earthquake occurred in the western mountainous region of Nepal in the middle of October, where in March this year, a quake of a similar fortitude had raged. Houses were destroyed, cold nights were spent under tent tarpaulins, no warm clothing and no rugs for the night. These are the bitter results of the earthquake and the following aftershocks.

There were not many deaths, so the world at large took no notice of the disaster. But winter is coming, and the temperatures in the mountains have fallen to below zero degrees already. More than 16,000 families are affected, which means in Nepal around 100,000 people. They camp outside in the cold.

We are very worried about the slowness of the relief measures intended for them, and the quantities involved! The Nepalese Red Cross sends 770 rugs for 100,000 unprotected people, for example! And they say that "soon" 250 emergency accommodation is going to be built. What is meant by "soon"? A word which can be stretched...

### OUR RELIEF EFFORTS

Shanti is a small organisation, but we are willing to provide for the relatives of our new half-orphans. The children (22 since March!) come from the areas of Bajura and Bahjung where the earth shook. Heiko ordered 500 sleeping bags to be made - spacey



enough that the mothers could slip into them with their babies in order to warm each other. We had another 500 sleeping bags in our stores. We bring them regularly to the homeless people in Kathmandu in the winter when they are needy.

Tarpaulins for tents were ready in packages, too. Our knitting shop had some 500 woollen hats ready - we are going to take 300 of them with us. The package also includes 500 small hygiene bags with cotton sanitary pads made by our tailor shop.

All this will be transported free of charge by a relief convoy sent by the regional government. It was a struggle organising this - as always! To be sure that the things really reach those in need, Bijendra accompanies them, supervising the relief goods and their handing over.

### THE 3RD NOVEMBER EARTHQUAKE

While I am writing my letter to you, the next earthquake has struck the same region, this time killing more than 150 people. The media in Germany have reported the disaster this time. The region has no real roads, some of the villages cannot be reached by car as landslides make the roads impassable, and the earth is still quaking. We were not able to get the now 1,000 sleeping bags and the other things to Bajura and Bahjung, only the agreement for the transport was made.

Now, things moved very quickly - within one single day, the 1,000 sleeping bags and the tent tarpaulins were rerouted. The military police collected them from Dwarika's Hotel and took them to the waiting helicopters. These threw the relief goods out over the unreachable villages.

At the moment, we are working at sewing new sleeping bags, and also warm jackets, for the people suffering from the October earthquake. We

promised - and we cannot let them down now! Heiko bartered a good price with the manufacturer: one sleeping bag and a jacket cost 17 euros together.

It is important that we help the suffering because the government is going to coordinate all relief measures - but they did not even know how many people are involved, they say, something they would have to carefully check firstly ...

The Nepalese newspaper suspect another reason for the stopping of relief measures: It is only the Dalits, the untouchables, who are the objects to receive relief....

We do our best to make sure that at least the help Shanti gives reaches those affected as they are actually in fatal danger of freezing, in face of wintery temperatures (some people have actually died from frost in the meantime while I proofread these lines).

### THE BIG HOTELS ARE HELPING

At the moment when people are losing everything as their homes crash down, when they cannot go into their houses fearing that new quakes could bury them under new rubble, they need everything at once, above all clothing against the cold weather.

So I asked our friend Sangita Shrestha, the owner of the Dwarika's Hotel whether she could ask all their guests to donate clothing they did not need any more when they departed? She agreed immediately to my great pleasure, immediately. In our tailor shop, we manufacture big bags from rice sacks to be hung next to the elevators from a wooden shelf. The guests will find a paper in their rooms asking for remaining clothing - they can put all they wish to give into the big bags. All clothing is washed then in the hotel's big washing machines, and





SHANTI LEPRAHILFE  
DORTMUND E.V.

our Shanti seamstresses will make new children's clothes from them, if the sizes do not match for the Nepalese people.

Sangita will ask all the managers of other big hotels in Kathmandu, too, asking them to do the same and collect clothing.

Our electric-powered truck will be of much service! Petrol and fuel have become very expensive - one tank full costs ca. 80 euros. But the sun shines every day for the solar panels! After one hour in our courtyard, the car is full of energy for free!

A certain day is fixed for the hotel rounds of our drivers. So we can produce clothing for the very poor at Shanti without buying new fabric.

#### OUR BABIES

Last but not least I invite you to be happy with us: We have installed a babies' room above our hospice room. Our four smallest babies live with their carers. You remember well: the two smallest babies and the twins from Bajura whose mothers bled to death after their last births given to these babies as no blood units were available.

We were so happy that one of our friends, a female paediatrician from Switzerland was able to examine the babies and found that they had gained enough weight and are beautifully developing!

Dear friends - can you imagine how thankful we are that you are there? All that I have described in this letter once again - from the care we give to the smallest, to the care for the dying to the relief given to the most distant earthquake victims - all this is only possible because you care and support us with your loyal help.

From all my heart, I wish you all a Merry Christmas - and for the new year peace: peace within our small environment and peace in the present war regions where suffering is immense.

Stay protected - you and all those who you care for!

Your grateful  
Marianne Grosspietsch