

SPRING
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SHANTI LEPRAHILFE
DORTMUND E.V.

NEWSLETTER

ISSUED IN SPRING 2019

INCITING YOU TO THINK GOOD NEWS

NEWSPAPERS REPORT GOOD NEWS.
THE NEGOTIATOR REFUSES TO DECLARE WAR
NO FINGER CURBS AROUND THE RIFLE TRIGGER
ANGRY HANDS DO NOT FIND THE KNIFE
BOMBS FORGET HOW TO EXPLODE
GENERALS DECIDE TO PLAY GOLF
SLANDERING WORDS
REMAIN PRESSED BEHIND LIPS
DICTATORS OPEN THEIR PENAL COLONIES
PERSONS THINKING DIFFERENTLY ARE HELD IN ESTEEM
RACE IS NOTHING BUT
A DIFFERENCE OF SKIN COLOUR
BREAD IS BEING BAKED IN TORTURE CHAMBERS
GALLOWS AND THE EXECUTIONER'S AXE RETIRE TO MUSEUMS
TALKS ABOUT PEACE HAVE A PROSPECT OF SUCCESS
BORDERS ARE OPENED
ATTEMPTS TO RECONCILE ARE NOT ABANDONED
PEOPLE START TELLING THE TRUTH
ADVERSARIES CAN EXPRESS THEMSELVES
COMPROMISES ARE MADE
PEOPLE SMILE ABOUT THEMSELVES. A REAL BEGINNING...

Rudolf Otto Wiemer



DEAR FRIENDS OF THE SHANTI-FAMILY,

Every time I prepare myself to write to you I feel a big joy spreading in me – the joy of looking at all that we have done in combined action in order to relieve misery, ease heavy loads and awaken new powers for living together with you – and realising all the difficulties we have to overcome too.

I am feeling connected to you in a community of solidarity which is looking in the same direction as I do, acting confidently, close to real needs and with a proactive hand. It is your support which enables us to make positive changes in the first place, and every time I report our results to you, our powers will be strengthened, motivated and new ideas will be born.

A few days ago, I was aware of that fact when I heard a poem by Dylan Thomas on the radio: "The hand that signed". It told of the hand of a king signing a declaration of war, which means that a single stroke of a feather will lead to death, destruction and pain. I immediately imagined all those powerful rulers of our times who terminate contracts which had been reasonable for a long time, or impose hard sanctions thusly creating big misery for the people concerned - with their signatures.

Then again, I thought of all the signatures which led to the precise opposite - making reconstruction possible, bringing relief, creating both hope and confidence for the future - such as your signatures below your payment transfers! We did so many helpful things with them!

HEALTH CAMP

I think, for example, of a project in March which was created and completed by our medical team together with some volunteers full of enthusiasm. The mayor of a mountain village had asked us for

a health camp because his isolated place had no health care at all. We were on our way for three hours on rough roads, and we were confronted only with one single, poorly equipped room in a school for examinations or dental treatment. They did not even have a chair with a back for dental patients - they sat on a bench without something to lean on! I hardly image the discomfort the old gentleman on the photo had to challenge – plus the dentist treating him...

I was especially glad to call her on the phone and hear her enthusiastic report about how thankful the villagers were. And she told me a beautiful decision: "We from the team now plan to regularly hold such a camp once a month – because the people need our help!"

In Nepal, such a voluntary commitment is not a matter of course – not least because many powers have to be moved. But our team is aware of the health needs of those who live in the mountains. They are very poor and are afraid of the journeys to the big city where they could find medical help. They are illiterate, and they could not orient themselves in the jungle of the big town and find out where to go.

What is more: the patients would have to pay everything themselves. In case of a real emergency, the financial reserves of the family will have to be used up for treatment in a hospital. Or, worse: The families borrow money from a moneylender at exorbitant interest rates.

There is no health centre in this remote region. What a need for treatment is accumulating here! The volunteers have directly noticed the difference between our insured care for people falling ill and the needs of the poor who are completely left to themselves in a comparable case of illness.



Some time ago, I saw some figures from Nepal: In 2017, the average annual income was 724 dollars, which is 641 euros.

Another statistic tells us that 57.3% of the population are counted among the poor who do not have more than 2 dollars per day to spend.

AKRITI, PAKRITI AND SHAKRITI

We were deeply moved by the hard fate that a small family suffered. Dipika, our nurse brought her cousin from a village in the south of the country to us. Her husband, who was 36 years older than her, died of a brain tumour after some months after receiving unsuccessful medical treatment. The little money the family got was used up for the treatment.

The young mother now had no chance of sending her three little daughters to school. Village school fees are not too high, but she would have to pay for the school uniforms, schooling materials and food for the breaks. She called upon Shanti, and we have accepted the three children in our centre: Akriti, Prakriti and Shakriti. They will get healthy food and good schooling here. This is their only chance that they will not be among the very poorest who are unable to sustain themselves alone.

Dear donors, your support is the foundation on which we can count if such a spontaneous relief is necessary. So it is you who have opened up a future for these children in the first place: a future which may be bright and does not automatically lead to financial hopelessness.

We are grateful that the brave widow has committed herself to the fate of her children, coming to us in her misery. She is herself still traumatised that she still did not tell her daughters that their daddy is gone. So, I asked Dipika to help the mother to convey the bitter, but inevitable truth to the children –

for fear that they might hear it from others. They must not lose their trust in their mother!

BHIM BAHADUR

Not only children are brought to us - we are also entrusted with some elderly people. A friendly young man found a feeble old man who slept under the canopies of the temple and was in a neglected state. His own son had hit him and blinded one eye so that he could no longer work in his profession as a tailor.

After a hot shower, we gave him warm clothing and assured him: You have a home now! He happily sits on a bench in our inner yard now every day, enjoying the lively children.

It is true, our children are so creative in their play - such as I remember from our playing outdoors in the past: skipping the rope, hopping and ball games and many others. Youths will surely turn up their noses: kids' stuff. But they need other things which they can enjoy, apart from school and college

RAM

This is what Ram does for them. He lost an arm in an accident. But he practised Taekwondo with tough endurance - now he is even a member of Nepal's national team!

He joins the school children every morning to do fitness exercises with them and trains the young ones in self defence. At the same time, he is a warden on the boys' floor of our boarding school. Every evening, he assembles the big and small students in the large kindergarten room and helps them with their homework.

With such a male role model, we help the boys to find some orientation. They are normally taught by



female teachers. But many of them do not have a father or are outcast from their families. They need a male role model.

THE PAINTER

Another amazing idol is our dear friend, Amy Loewan. She is an artist, lives in Canada and has visited Shanti for the second time. When she came to us again, all Shanti members felt that it is a great honour. Nepalese society is still living in the belief that lower castes, untouchables and especially people who have handicaps are not worth to be counted among it.

This pain to be outcast is deeply rooted in the souls of the people. Amy has painted portraits of exactly those people who nobody wants to be around. She is able to convey to them: I am seen! I am special! Amy thinks I merit to be painted!

The fact that many, many people send others a selfie every day is evidence of the longing to be remarked by others, which is apparently very strong in everybody.

CALLS FOR HELP

I have just reported some things from everyday life in our centre above. But sometimes we receive calls for help from a totally different side. We are especially grateful that we can respond promptly and help in such cases, too.

For example, we got an emergency call from Sangita. Sangita Shresta – do you remember her? She is our cooperation partner from the Dwarika Foundation, for the reconstruction of the houses destroyed during the earthquake, together with her mother Ambika.

She asked us to supply them with mosquito nets for the people living in southern Nepal where an

alarming number of cases of Dengue fever have been registered. Dengue fever is often fatal, particularly for children; you can only protect yourself by not exposing yourself to the bites of tropical mosquitoes who transmit the virus.

Our own tailors are about to sew new school uniforms for the Shanti children. We have therefore ordered the mosquito nets from a facility employing poor women. They are now sewing 2,000 nets – at a price of 3,000 euros in total!

We received the next request after the terrible storm in southern Nepal, with a great death toll and the destruction of many houses. Here, we sent a big truck full of tent tarpaulins on its way to the south.

It may seem that our contribution is not big, in spite of such great misery. But many individuals are helped this way; they receive prompt and direct help. And we are happy that we are able to bundle our powers with those of the Dwarika Foundation in such a situation.

RECONSTRUCTION

The 25th of April is the 4th anniversary of the terrible earthquake in Nepal. In no other country has a quake left so much destruction and damage as in Nepal during the last few decades. For comparison: In Chile, in 1960 the most severe earthquake ever measured with 9.5 on the Richter scale occurred. As many as 1,655 people died. 58,622 buildings were destroyed according to official reports.

In Nepal, 8,786 people were killed, however. About 800,000 houses were destroyed, among them 5,000 schools - whereas the quake "only" went as high as 7.8 on the Richter scale.

You can see from this comparison how poor Nepal actually is: Although the Himalayans count among



the most endangered regions of the world, the houses have not been built safe against quakes, for this is much more expensive than the simple design of huts and houses, of course.

The fact that reconstruction only went on slowly is due to poverty and helplessness, among other causes. The first time after the quake was naturally marked by mourning and panic – panic because several hundred earthquakes occurred. Then, the stronger people and those financially better off started to rebuild their houses – whether expert opinions approved or denied such construction in their regions.

The poor, however, started to resign – the more reconstruction did not come under way. Financial support promised by government authorities did not come quickly, the geological expert opinions showing where reconstruction would be allowed did not come for months.

Another fact was that directly after the earthquake, the military helped most efficiently, but there was no large, more expensive equipment which could put to good use. The road network, which was not largely expanded, was also destroyed so that whole regions were isolated. How could any building material be transported there? We were almost unable to tell the authorities what kind of vision we had, the Dream Village in which high castes and untouchables, Hindus and Buddhists, healthy people and those with handicaps could live together in peace and harmony (we reported all of this in more detail in our autumn 2016 issue).

We were sometimes even threatened with a building stop, only the good contacts to officials by the two ladies from the Dwarika Foundation led to a compromise. And as soon as we get the written

confirmation that we were promised - we are going to continue building – earthquake-proof!

We need a very long breath to remain steady and not resign. Those who are suffering in a way we cannot imagine in their emergency huts need us - so we ask you, too, to help us further so that the people concerned do not lose their hopes. Sometimes – if I feel that I am getting impatient – I think of the Elbphilharmonie concert building in Hamburg or the new Berlin airport: how many troubles and obstacles, how many delays had and have to be endured, even in our highly-developed country!

BUDDHA AND BOCCIA

And last, but not least, I have very good news for you at the end of my letter to you: You saw Buddha above, writing his name to his portrait using his feet. He cannot use his arms or hands due to a birth problem, they are bent backwards. But he can skilfully use his feet – writing, painting, pottering, using a smartphone and even playing Boccia! He has been chosen to represent Nepal in February of 2020 in Japan during the Paralympic Games! Buddha is such a friendly, radiant boy that all of us from Shanti wish him all the best.

And finally we are grateful that the encouraging, inclusive type of education of our nursery teachers has awakened so much confidence and courage to face life in the boy. Only this has enabled him to develop himself and his skills in such an impressive way.

I would again like to thank you very warmly for all the help you lend us so reliably! Together with the entire Shanti family, I wish you much joy from the brilliantly blossoming nature. Stay all protected!

Yours – Marianne Grosspietsch