

SPRING
2023



SHANTI LEPAHILFE
DORTMUND E.V.

NEWSLETTER

ISSUED SPRING 2023

HOPE ...

THE SUN IS UP. IT IS NEVER TIRING
GOING UP EVERY DAY AGAIN.
MEN GET UP
THEY BELIEVE IN A NEW DAY.
MEN SEE THE SUN GOING UP
FEELING THE WARMTH OF ITS RAYS.
AND THEY BELIEVE IN LIGHT AGAIN.

THERE IS HOPE.
THERE ARE STILL CHILDREN WITH LAUGHING EYES.
THERE ARE A LOT OF PEOPLE
WITH A HEART BEATING UNDER THEIR SKINS.
EVERY GOOD MAN ON EARTH
MAKES A SUN OF HOPE GO UP.

GIVING EACH OTHER HOPE IS FOR:
ENCOURAGE ANOTHER, GIVING LIFE TO ANOTHER.
WE CANNOT CHANGE A DESERT IN ONE SINGLE STEP.
BUT WE CAN START WITH A SMALL OASIS.
WHERE A FLOWER CAN BLOOM AGAIN
ONE DAY A THOUSAND FLOWERS WILL OPEN.

PHILS BOSMANS (1922-2012)



DEAR FRIENDS OF THE SHANTI-FAMILY,

I am writing the first of my circulars to you from a light, springtime Kathmandu. Flowers are blooming in our courtyard, sparrows are happily chirping and the Shanti children are playing all those old children's games: hiding, catching, jumping ropes and others.

Every springtime has its dark, rainy, grey thunderstorm days, however - just as in our lives. I will tell you about some of those.

EARTHQUAKE IN BAJURA

A bad "thunderstorm" happened on 24 January: Bajura District was victim to an earthquake of 5.9 on the Richter scale (in 2009, a 5.8 Richter quake largely damaged L'Aquila in Italy). But the world at large did not seem to notice it much, and then the big earthquake of Syria and Turkey overshadowed our disaster. Not much of relief aid got to us from other countries.

Not even the Nepalese government and the Nepalese Red Cross would help - they had no budget for this, they argued officially, and: no tourists were affected (they would have been covered by their insurances...) - what a shame! They did not tell it in these words, but we clearly see: only the dalits have suffered, the people not belonging to a caste! Bajura is the poorest region in Nepal, and most of the population are dalits, the untouchables.

Caste discrimination has been abolished since 1963 by law in Nepal, but in the heads of the people it still exists, throwing its shadow over the dalits in a painful way. We see it more and more that their bitter fate will only be relieved by loving compassion.

In Bajura, about 500 houses are destroyed so much as to have become uninhabitable. People continue to "live" in their rubble houses or they camp below tarpaulins - on the moist ground which is still frozen during the final days of January and February.

We are so thankful that you, dear friends of Shanti, have supported us so that we can directly and specifically help those people. The Shanti organisation was able to send 50 tents with rubber floors to Bajura, including 200 sleeping bags, warm clothing for children and adults (our tailors and seamstresses made 180 cord suits in overtime) and several hundred kilograms of our nourishing litho mush.

Our reliable consultant Uttam-Ji went by plane to Bajura himself to oversee the distribution there because the local authorities did not feel responsible at all. He got back all disillusioned - he was shocked by the misery he had seen there.

SAROJ

He was especially shattered by the fate of a small six-year old boy. Saroj had been gone to cut feed for the goats with his mother and uncle. The earthquake let loose a piece of rock which fell on his mother. She was dead at once - and her small son stood right next to her. The uncle took the distraught child to Shanti. Even after a fortnight of the disaster, his small face was still painfully rigid.

Today Saroj attends kindergarten, and he by and by learns to smile again - a little timidly initially. But the children try to comfort him with all their compassion as most of them having suffered similar fates. If they notice that one of them is very sad, they do not let them alone in their pain.



Yesterday, Uttam-Ji took Saroj on his knees and called the boy's father on the phone. Everybody witnessing this scene in the office was deeply touched by the happy smile of the little one during the call. The father promised to come to see his child in two months. The fact that this simple man makes the journey to the huge capital Kathmandu shows us how much he is connected to his single child.

This father is one of a million of young Nepalese working abroad to make a living for their families. He works as a porter in India, earning 100 euros per month. Shanti is going to pay for the coach travel of many days for him, for sure!

SHANTI LAXMI

Another person's fate out of Bajura has deeply moved us. Prakash Singh, a journalist who has often brought people to us from the area, sent us an urgent call for help. The situation: There are five emergency stations in Bajura, but nobody seems to be responsible for the maintenance. None of it is functioning. The consequence:

A 16-year old girl was raped and is pregnant with twins. She gave birth to the children, and two men carried her and the two babies over the mountains for five long hours to the next health station as she was heavily bleeding. When they arrived she was dead from blood loss, and the second baby had died too. The first one lived, with a weight of 1,500 grams at birth.

The parents of the young mother are dalits, as those of the father. Milk for the newborn is very expensive in Nepal, the family could never have afforded it. No chance of living for the remaining baby - „only“ a girl and not an essential child in the eyes of the relatives. And moreover the product

of a rape. The police have opened investigations. The staff of the health station was deeply worried about the child's chance of surviving - they called upon Prakash Singh who in turn told Shanti.

Heiko, with Uttam-Ji, immediately planned to transport the baby to Shanti, which was a very difficult task. Nobody were to suspect that we had illegally kidnapped the child. So the Nepalese family ministry had to be involved, as well as the district authorities, the police and the health official of the district.

Heiko and Uttam-Ji insisted in the necessary proceedings, never tiring. After many phone calls to and fro, we provided our nurse Kopita with all the things a baby would need, and she flew to Bajura together with Bijendra. The latter is our highly active project coordinator, and a networking wizard! They both arrived in Bajura and received the baby from the health official in the presence of the local police.

The way back by car was very arduous. Dangerous roads had to be overcome. The driver was smart and took them only to the next big village where they stayed overnight. After two more days on the road with a tiny baby in the car, over many huge potholes, they arrived at Shanti, fully exhausted.

Heiko had overhauled the thermal bed, safeguarding its electric supply. A dear friend had once given us the little bed for another premature baby. The baby was welcome after the hard journey in the station with much joy. She did not even need the thermal bed at first: on the first day in her new family, she was tenderly cradled in the arms of Heiko and of our volunteers! The seamstresses had made tiny baby clothes, and a volunteer said that the doll jumper she had just knit was exactly the



size of the little one! Others helped to knit small socks and hoods.

The baby was baptized Shanti Laxmi. Laxmi was the name of her dead mother. The Shanti family carried out the name giving with a small ceremony as it is the custom in Nepal on the 10th day after birth.

She is premature but she breathing regularly and drinking well. She has a healthy skin and sleeps quietly and deeply between the meals. We have reason to hope that we can raise her in good health, give her an education and see her grow into a confident young woman. She is going to know where she comes from, but she will have experienced that loving compassion may overcome the worst obstacles.

And this is what you, dear friends, are enabling by your loyalty and support! The money you have given us has been trustfully used and converted to such specific help given to people like Shanti Laxmi.

LAXMI

You will have noticed by now that my stay at Shanti has been marked by touching human fates this time. I must tell you about a woman who stayed with us for a fortnight.

It was a chilly, dark evening when two men found a deadly ill woman in the street and dragged her to our clinic by her arms and feet. My (German) family doctor had been on a visit to us for three weeks, in the company of a colleague. They inspected her and found that the 38-year old Laxmi is dying, suffering from liver cirrhosis destroying her body. We were shocked by Laxmi's story:

She had worked as a child carer in Arabia for four and a half years, having had to suffer bad things from her employer. She sent the money she earned back to her husband and the three children. Coming back to Nepal she saw that her husband had spent the money with another woman with whom he was now living. He cast Laxmi out, who was now homeless and met false friends who gave her alcohol, for her to abuse. That helped a bit, but destroyed her tender body.

In our hospital room for the dying, our nurses, especially our compassionate male nurse Ram, cared for her day and night. Ram has no relatives at all - he has considered Shanti to be his family, since 21 years! No mother could have been more caring for a dying person than he did!

Laxmi passed away in peace finally after some painful, hard days - right on the day when Shanti Laxmi arrived under our roof! We had invited her children to come, and the 19-year old daughter is going to stay at Shanti after the mourning days. She currently works in a pizza chain for 12 hours daily for 110 euros a month, sustaining her siblings. We wish to provide her with both an education and more leisure time.

DANCING COURSES AT SHANTI

She will be able to take part in classical dancing courses - if she so wishes, as we now have a new dance instructor at Shanti: Bimala is a Shanti child who was brought to Shanti as a toddler by her brother Saroj, her widowed mother being unable to earn enough food for her and her sisters. Bimala went to our kindergarten, then she attended our school and the musical and dance school. Her wonderful talent was soon noticed, and we agreed to finance her dream: We paid for her training to



become a classical dance teacher. She is now giving courses at Shanti in classical dance for everyone who likes to participate - most of them do!

Bimala has learned to act socially in the community so that she promotes the children as she herself has been promoted as a child at Shanti. She has the wish to involve our elderly and handicapped people, as wheelchair dancing is one of her great pleasures.

OUR HELPING CHILDREN

The most touching for us is the compassionate readiness to help even shown by the small children. In the evening when 270 meals (right now, tendency upward ...) must be distributed among the hungry children in the nearby slum, Anuschka is a great one to help, although she is only six years old. She comes from the slum right beside Shanti.

With her skilful fingers, she folds down the cover on the meal containers. Unfortunately, they are made of aluminium, but the police do not allow other containers. Similarly helpful are the older children when the cars for our medical camps have to be packed.

The most recent camp was really hard work. The entire medical team, including the two doctors from Germany and four volunteers, took the medical equipment, warm clothing and several hundred packs of our nourishing mush Litho to a brick factory, some 90 minutes away from Kathmandu.

She came back in deep shock - they had never seen a misery so bitter. A 13-year old was already a mother; a 14-year old girl already had two children. And all of these ragged people were so grateful for the medical help and mainly for the litho food!

One of our volunteers got blisters on her hands from the pumping action during blood pressure measuring, until another staff helped her. 700 times blood pressure measuring - that must have had some effect on the measurer!

Twenty of the patients suffered from severe physical damage. One woman has cancer, and some of the children have heart issues. We are going to take them to Kathmandu and have them treated in clinics here as nobody can afford any medical treatment.

The question of a volunteer what they would do if they fell ill, was answered with "We hope that the gods will help."

Dear supporters of Shanti, if you were not by our side, none of these persons could have any hope of specific improvement of their many pains. This is why we are deeply grateful to you, and may there always be new hope shining up in your lives and may friendly help reach you when dark clouds are shadowing your days sometimes!

Stay protected everyone!
Your Marianne Grosspietsch