

SUMMER
2021



SHANTI LEPAHILFE
DORTMUND E.V.

NEWSLETTER

ISSUED IN SUMMER 2021

THE POETRY OF DOING

IT IS BEAUTIFUL
TO FEED A HUNGRY CHILD,
TO DRY THEIR NOSE,
TO CLEAN THEIR NOSE.
IT IS BEAUTIFUL TO HEAL A SICK PERSON.
A FIELD OF AESTHETICS
WE HAVE NOT DISCOVERED SO FAR
IS THE BEAUTY OF JUSTICE.
THE BEAUTY OF THE FINE ARTS
OF A PERSON, OF NATURE
IS MAINLY ACCEPTED BY EVERYBODY.
BUT - RIGHTS AND JUSTICE
ARE ALSO BEAUTIFUL,
AND THEY SHOW THEIR POETRY
WHENEVER THEY ARE PERFORMED.

*Heinrich Boell
(1984 - About Rupert Neudeck's life work)*



DEAR FRIENDS OF THE SHANTI-FAMILY,

When I read the lines written by Heinrich Boell, I knew immediately: I wanted to share them with you! Feed a hungry child, dry their tears, clean their noses, help a sick person get well again - this is what we are doing every day at Shanti - with your help and support! You and we all are the ones creating a little bit of justice together.

But - a connection between justice and beauty - this was new for me. Thinking about it, I realized that justice is "beautiful" because we always tie beauty to harmony. Which is as follows in our context. Your help enhances the harmonious life together in the Shanti community - and much more than that in these Corona times (I reported on this in our last letters).

It is "beautiful" because you help relieve the consequences of the unjust treatment of the poor and the lower castes. It is "beautiful" because illness and hunger, illiteratism and unemployment lose their terrible power over people.

This is how your solidarity delivers impressive and amazing results. People start to blossom out feeling being treated justly, and they are enabled to create real beauty in many areas.

OUR SHANTI CAFÉ

Just look at the photo Bijendra, our Junior Manager, sent us. It was painted by Kumar - a highly talented artist, who has not a single intact finger as a result of leprosy, with neither any feeling in his hands. But what skills he has and what care he used to make this picture, which will decorate our new Shanti café! Now what is it about that café?

It started as a disaster: One of the neighbours of our Centre lost all financial security in the Covid pandemic. He had opened a small café just before the first lockdown, which he had to close immediately. It was located just two houses from our Centre. The neighbour had to pay for a loan for the equipment and also the rent, still having no income from it. So nothing was left for him and his family. He wanted to take his life over all this misery.

Bijendra knew about that man's situation. He called me, asking me: "I remember you, did you want to operate a café near Shanti - is it not possible to take over the debt of that man, and operate his café?" I immediately liked the idea; so we paid 2,000 euros for the remaining lease and took over the equipment. Neighbours gave us biological seeds. And the man would go back to his village and work there as a farmer.

This is how we got the café we had longed for! Four young men, former Shanti children, are the happy managers. All of them went to a hotel management school but did not find any work. Due to Corona, no tourists are coming, so there are no guests in the hotels and restaurants. The four men were really happy about this chance. Dikshya, our helpful accountant, is supporting them with accounting.

OUR HOTLINE

Nepal is still in the terrible grips of Covid. The hospitals are under a great strain, misery reigns everywhere. In a similar situation some months ago, our best master tailor sadly died from suffocation in his car - looking for a clinic responding to him. To avoid that, other poor people die such a death in front of a hospital, we had the idea to install an emergency hotline by phone. We were given five subsequent numbers - and until late at night Shanti



students respond to the calls, organizing help as far as possible.

Besides the requests for food, we are again and again asked for oxygen. You may ask yourselves, where do we get any oxygen from if not even the hospitals have any? It was again Bijendra who had a surprising idea: he organized some oxygen bottles from some car repair shops - as not many cars are driving on the roads due to the lockdown - and also from artists who need the bottles to cast the metal god figures into dies. The lack of tourists results in no need for any supply of smaller or larger gods!

Each bottle got a precise number in order to return them to their owners after this exceptional situation. These bottles are filled at a price of approximately five euros each, again and again so they can be used by Shanti in an emergency.

Let me tell you another story of how such oxygen was able to help: A dear friend from Madrid (she worked for Shanti some time in the past) called me. She asked whether Shanti could help the father of a Nepalese friend in Kathmandu. The old man was suffering from Covid, having terrible breathing problems. I informed Bijendra at once, who contacted the friend. Two hours later, the patient got the life-saving oxygen! He convalesced. Sometimes the paths to saving a human being are rather twisted ...

GRANNY MINA'S BEQUEST

We told you about Granny Mina in our most recent letter. She and her friend Champa had helped a cast out old lady to feel at home at Shanti. Some weeks ago, she grew weaker and weaker and finally passed away. She left us with a last loving bequest: After her death, Granny Champa brought us a small fabric bag, a thailie, in which she had collected almost 400 euros! Her last will was the wish

that Shanti plant some fruit trees for the children so that they can remember Granny Mina every time the fruit is ripe! Grandma Mina was able to save this money by weaving square 40x40 cm patches from old tissue remains, which are then sewn together to large blankets, rugs etc. or for cushions. She got 50 cents for each patch.

Her relatives were not so enthusiastic about Grandma Mina's last will - but our children all the more so! They planted the trees with great zeal - during the Monsoon, this is the right time. We are ever so grateful that we have a lot of ground to dispose of - many more trees of remembrance can be planted by us for birthdays, baptisms and the passing away of loved ones.

URBAN GARDENING

Now I am going to tell you about our roof-greening project. I read in many reports about „Urban Gardening“, which is an important source of vegan food, enriching the air by oxygen and use of rain as water. Since the creation of the Centre, Shanti has been using its flat roofs to grow vegetables.

Another thing is helpful for this: Nepal enjoys the wonderful ancient potter's tradition. Near Kathmandu there is the pottery village Thimi where dozens of potters turn the clay soil of the region into pots before they burn them in small hills made of earth and straw. The potters neither had any income for a long time, of course, because the lockdown has restricted life to a certain extent.

We bought some hundred big clay pots from them, giving them to a neighbourhood, together with ecological vegetable seeds. What happened was such a good resonance to this project that we are overwhelmed. The very first harvest impressed us: cucumbers, aubergines, tomatoes, and courgettes are growing in the pots.



An old lady told our team: "I have finally something real to do - and my family gets fresh produce!" She even exchanges surplus vegetables within the neighbourhood. We invested around 700 euros and won 23 families for the Urban Gardening project. All of them wish to continue, exchanging seeds among their families.

THE TB-SUFFERING GIRL

Any such pleasures are like sunrises for us whenever misery and suffering darken our lives. Do you recall a journalist from western Nepal who has been informing us of special emergencies now and again? He now alarmed Bijendra on the matter of a 15-year-old girl named Kranti. Her father died of tuberculosis three years ago. The widowed mother realized frightfully that her daughter grew thinner and weaker with time. Kranti weighs no more than 26 kilograms. No wonder that the old languages talk of "consumption", the illness of the poor. I remember that this disease was a great problem in Germany after the war, and that we often had to go to be X-rayed. Especially the Grosspietsch family has feared this sickness, TB, as all eight siblings of our Nepalese adopted son, Puskal, died from it. Puskal could survive only because he lived and grew up in Germany. He has been working for our office since as a responsible expert for our computer matters.

Kranti's mother carried her daughter to the next hospital on her back. They told her she would have hospitalized for two months. But she had to pay beforehand! When the woman said under tears she had no money at all, the staff was not impressed, telling her then the girl could not be treated. The mother carried her daughter back to her cabin, under pain.

When Bijendra heard of this, he called us at once, asking if we could pay the bill for Kranti. We affirmed without hesitation, of course - thinking of your

gracious help and generosity which have enabled us to do so!

After that, mother and daughter had to endure a hell of a course over roads destroyed by landslides. They were four days on the road until arriving at Shanti in an exhausted condition. We are worrying because Kranti was tested positive for Covid, but we hope that she will survive. At least, she gets loving care, together with her mother, and they do not have to care for the most essential things for living or only surviving.

THE TB-SUFFERING GIRL

Do you want to hear a story of hope? Apparently, a tiny little baby girl won the fight for surviving. Her mother, a homeless woman, was seventh months pregnant when she collapsed right in front of Shanti's gate.

Shankar, our health assistant, took her to the clinic before the baby had to be taken out, weighing no more than 1,220 grams. Days of fear followed because the baby had problems breathing. Shanti paid for the incubator care, and the child improved. She was named Manuka, the "angel". She is now lying in a thermal bed for babies, at a cost of 800 euros.

Precisely on the day we needed that money, a friend donated it. She is really happy to have contributed in exactly the right measure to save a child's life, and the responsible staff at Shanti is pleased to now have the thermal bed for babies for the future and probably for good use.

The tiny triplets who I reported on one year ago had their first birthday in July. This is a very special birthday in Nepal. And even for three boys - their father is overjoyed when he arrived from a work stay in Malaysia and saw them for the first time ever! The family is no longer depending on Shanti's



care. They have returned to the larger family in Sindhupalchowk.

FLOODING AND LANDSLIDES

Here in Germany, we all are still under shock from the bad stormy weather, disastrous flooding, houses fallen down, felled trees, cars stacked like toys after being swirled around and so on. These images - do they really only occur in our country? We normally only see them from the developing countries, from Nepal for instance, don't we?

And, it is true, they are really occurring again as Nepal suffers from flooding and landslides every Monsoon month. They were very disastrous this year, again. The people suffering the most were - like always - the Dalit, the caste of the untouchables. They are required to settle down outside the village communities. So many of them had built their huts on the mountainside, losing them in the 2015 earthquake. The huts disappeared somewhere deep down. After rebuilding their huts in a safer way with no means at all, they thought that the lower parts of the rivers were safer - and the floods swept every-thing away, killing several dozens of men. Nobody knows the exact numbers for Nepalese do not have to register. Hundreds of homeless people were stranded too. They were left out in the rain, no pun intended, without any home.

Here in Germany, everybody was immediately ready to donate, in an overwhelming way. But in Nepal, no such thing is known, neither from the politicians, nor from the "regular" population. Some say it frankly that they are only "dalit" - who are just punished for their crimes in a former life according to the Hindu belief.

Dear friends, I cannot tell you enough and again and again how thankful I am because you enable us to help in a direct manner with constructive

ideas in such a situation! We have concentrated our relief on the region of Sindhupalchowk, where the earthquake had raged so terribly, and where the reconstruction of the destroyed houses has reached its final stage.

Our team transported tent tarpaulins, sleeping bags, clothing, and food packages there immediately, seeing with joy: the new houses on the mountainside are undamaged.

Our doctor, Dr. Gautam, also thought of mosquito netting as the insects transmit the dengue fever, a dangerous disease leading to bouts of high fever. A second infection may be lethal. Hundreds of nets were distributed.

Sunita, our creative textile working teacher, has made plans for the imminent winter, supplying entire groups of knitters with wool. They are knitting warm jackets, caps, and legwarmers. The Shanti children also knit caps for needy children again as in the year before.

You may think that this is just a drop in the ocean, as the saying goes. But every time we see a relieved face of a grateful person having been given a warm sleeping bag, this is precisely the help he or she has needed in that moment.

So we would like to thank you for many hundreds of sleeping bags, food packages, for mosquito nets - and last not least for everything which gives relief and hope, too, for all those suffering persons!

Stay protected, especially in these difficult times - you and all the people close to you!

Yours
Marianne Grosspietsch

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