

SUMMER
2022



SHANTI LEPROHILFE
DORTMUND E.V.

NEWSLETTER

ISSUED SUMMER 2022

A JEWISH BLESSING:

I WISH YOU EYES
WHICH YOU CAN USE TO LOOK INTO OTHER PEOPLE'S HEARTS
AND WHICH WILL NOT BE BLIND TO THE THINGS THEY NEED FROM YOU

I WISH YOU EARS
WHICH YOU CAN USE TO PERCEIVE NUANCES BETWEEN THE SOUNDS
AND WHICH WILL NOT BE DEAF WHEN YOU LISTEN TO ALL
THAT MEANS HAPPINESS AND THE MISERY OF YOUR NEIGHBOUR

I WISH YOU A MOUTH
WHICH CALLS ALL THINGS WRONG BY NAME AND WHICH DOES NOT REFRAIN
FROM SAYING A WORD OF SOLACE AND LOVE AT THE RIGHT TIME

I WISH YOU HANDS
WHICH YOU CAN USE TO GRIP, TO STROKE AND TO CONSOLE
AND WHICH WILL NOT HOLD ON TO THINGS YOU POSSESS IN ABUNDANCE AND WHICH
YOU CAN SHARE

I WISH YOU FEET
WHICH BRING YOU ON THE PATH TO ALL THINGS IMPORTANT
AND WHICH WILL NOT STOP YOU WHEN YOUR STEPS ARE DECISIVE

I WISH YOU A SPINE
WHICH MAKES YOU STAND UPRIGHT AND LIVE IN HONESTY
AND WHICH WILL NOT BEND IN FACE OF OPPRESSION, DESPOTISM, AND POWER

AND I WISH YOU A HEART
THAT IS A HOME TO MANY PEOPLE, AND WHICH WILL NOT TIRE IN
PRACTISING LOVE AND FORGIVING OTHERS' FAULTS.



DEAR FRIENDS OF THE SHANTI-FAMILY,

Today is Sunday, and we are still revelling in last Sunday: our Shanti Anniversary. It was a beautiful sunny day a week ago, pleasant temperatures, expectation in the air. The big Reinoldi Church received us with a colourful gate painted by our male and female painters in Nepal - you were informed of its creation in our last letter with some pictures. Inside the church, beams of colourful lights were directed to the pillars, and Jyoti, our fish painter, was looking at us from a large screen behind the altar.

The church was filling with around 230 people who had promised to come to our festival – finally more than 400 actually came to share our party in the church! The singing was therefore very lively and refreshing.

I, Christa Schaaf, would like to start to write this letter as Marianne Grosspietsch flew to Nepal on the Thursday right after the anniversary. And I take you directly into the preacher's sermon, in which Marianne answered the question "What was it that made you care so intensely for the lepers in Nepal?" She has often had to reply to this question whenever she talked about Shanti's work anywhere. She told us about the following detailed answer in the sermon:

MARIANNE'S MOTIVATION

Reiner Kunze has put my motivation in words that I could not have said better:

Almost a prayer:

*We have a roof
And bread on our shelf
And water in the house
So much comfort!*

*And we have it warm
And also a bed.
Oh God, I wish that
Everybody had all that!*

He is so right, Reiner Kunze! I live in that luxury, as all of us here do. When I saw the lives the lepers live in Nepal, I suddenly saw with a brutal shock that the situation we have, and our social security is not a matter of course. I saw the lepers begging at the temple, outcast from their villages, sick, hungry, shivering in the cold. No roof for them, no bread or rice respectively on the shelf, no water, no bed.

Before my experience in Nepal, I was convinced that I could never bear so much misery, I would never set foot in such a poor country! Then I looked into the sad, hopeless eyes of the people, I understood that they have to live that way every day, without any hope for improvement: They have to suffer all that I did not even want to see!

I felt that I had to do something – they are my neighbours – they need my help! It cannot be fair that they cannot find a way out of their misery while I could at least relieve their fate a little – perhaps together with others, so that some pressure is taken off them.

SHANTI'S DEVELOPMENT

In July 1992, Shanti began its work with 12 patients in a small rented house. After that beginning, many people with solidarity-based minds came to help me, becoming a community. Shanti grew and grew. Over the years, around 1000 have become a part of the shanty family, both lepers and people with other disabilities of the most diverse types, old people and single mothers with their children, orphans and outcast girls.



Whoever is able to, works in the clinic and in our residence homes, in the kindergarten and the many workshops of a number of crafts, our organic farming estates, in the kitchen and the household.

Thanks to consistent help from Germany, we have overcome very severe times like the year-long civil war and the disastrous earthquake of 2015, the strict Covid lockdown and the current famine, hopefully.

Since 2011, our son Heiko is a full member in Nepal, responsible as a "Technical Director" for all technical and architectural problems. He lives here almost the whole year long. It is a great relief for me that I can fully rely on him. He quickly understands the most complex contexts, he immediately sees a solution to all problems, and he is quick and skilled in helping where the Nepalese are often without clues.

The people coming to visit us are surprised about the flashy and colourful paintings on the walls of our centre - in the style of the Maithili who live in southern Nepal and who are highly talented artists (while our patients come from all over Nepal). You may have seen a bit of it on the gate of the church when you came to our anniversary, and the on the still image showing our fish painter. We promote the artistic design of the centre so that the patients can feel good and at home there. They told us during the inauguration in 2009 "we will make our home a palace!"

Now, Shanti is much more beautiful than a palace for they did it themselves - not only with their love, but also with their craftsmanship. I am convinced that this is no luxury but necessary for the individual healing of each person - beauty is a cure! Beauty heals the soul and has an effect on your entire well-being.

During all those years, something very inspiring has happened: Former single fighters have grown together to build a community. The beggar who was lonely and lived in fear that the female next door neighbour would get what he needed himself is also noticing that he is able to help in some way, too.

Their fear of hunger could be minimized gradually because they feel safe, too, knowing that there are some people in Germany who do their best so that they can survive. The people at Shanti notice each other because they feel that they are noticed, too.

I am repeatedly grateful for this experience - and happy when I see grandmothers consoling the children who have nobody, and feel consoled themselves through this act; how the patients in wheelchairs sit on the bedside of dying people, and how everybody who can work contribute that Shanti works; how they do their best that the big community is being supplied. And as they feel cared for, they help in the farther environment: they help with health camps in slums, they help with meals for hungry children and their parents.

In the winter, our Shanti children knit woolen caps for the neighbouring children getting cold in the slum. They perform dances and sing folk songs which the neighbours enjoy, too. Man does not live from bread alone - you also need parties and festivities!

Nepal has many religious feasts, and the Shanti family celebrates them with great joy. They divide the year in a reliable manner - and nothing is more connecting than a party shared! It is a great pleasure for us to see all the children attending musical and dancing lessons. An orphan has nobody who brings them close to their roots, and much of the



old traditions is kept in the dances and songs. They are connected with their roots by these although they have no family of their own. All feasts end with the Shanti song: "We are one family, and Shanti is our home". Everybody will get a piece of fruit, and all faces are beaming! Is there anything that motivates more than happy faces?

This is how Marianne Grosspietsch summed up her motivation and what was created by it during a span of 30 years.

WORKING TOGETHER IN NEPAL

Last but not least I would like to retell another text of the festivity that was by Renate Kotz who herself founded a relief organisation in Nepal. Here is what she said as a greeting during the service:

*Dear Ladies and Gentlemen, my name is Renate Kotz. I am the founder and chairwoman of the **Re: Help e.V.** charity who has cared for a remotemountain village in eastern Nepal for the last 10 years.*

I met Marianne Grosspietsch – or MaryAnn or Ma'm how she is called by everyone – during the first year of the pandemic. In the towns, the pandemic had a vastly more disastrous impact than in the rural regions. So in the city hunger and misery were more evident than in our village Rapcha as the people there are autonomous, and the region has fertile soils. I was greatly interested in helping the people in Kathmandu who had to suffer unemployment, hunger, and misery, which made me look for a suitable organisation.

And finally I met Marianne Grosspietsch. Our charity donated to her soup kitchen Shanti operates in Kathmandu. In numerous long phone calls I told her my great wish to organise a health camp in my

village Rapcha as we have no medical care there. But I was helpless as our charity does not know any doctors or hospitals in Nepal. Marianne said "This is no problem whatsoever, my dear! We have wonderful doctors at Shanti – we shall organise a health camp and come to your village!"

It was ready last November. The Shanti team arrived in Rapcha and treated more than 900 patients within two days! I experienced these poor people most of whom had never seen a doctor being treated by the Shanti team warm-heartedly and with empathy. Nobody was forgotten or left untreated!

The cooperation with Shanti is marked by a respectful and understanding cooperation. And most of all by one idea: "What can be done in order to improve things for the other person?" Nobody only laments – NO! It is being done – acting is what you aim for and not the question: "What obstacles could be in the way?"

After that wonderful health camp I had enough time to visit Shanti Sewa Griha in Kathmandu. I only can describe this place as being a HEALING place – both the place and all the people working there. Any people the society has marked as unwelcome or a nuisance or ill – all such outcasts are sheltered by Shanti. They get everything they want there. Wounds are cared for, hunger is stilled. And what is more important: They get respect. As soon as you feel recognized and respected and a part of a community, you get inner peace: "Shanti!"

Dear Marianne, my biggest thanks and respect to you and your work during the last 30 years. Thanks to all the companions of Shanti, donors, friends, and supporters! Thanks that you have a great heart and noticed the importance of the work and doings of the Shanti family.



FILM

After the greetings by Renate Kotz we saw the small documentary broadcast by the ZDF: "Mima people - Marianne Grosspietsch" which you can find in the ZDF media library. It was broadcast on 8 July but only in a shorter version. During the service, the film was extended by dances of the adults and children at Shanti and the Shanti song. At the end, the children let loose 30 doves into freedom – for every year one dove! This was a résumé of our 30th Anniversary!

HERBERT GROSSPIETSCH (1938 – 2022)

The Sunday after our anniversary was a totally different matter. We were informed around midday that Marianne's husband, Herbert Grosspietsch, had died in total peace at the age of 84 during the night from Saturday to Sunday (on 24th July).

He had been a part of Shanti since its foundation, with heart and soul. Many of you will know him, for 28 years, he was the competent, friendly telephone partner when anyone made a call to the office. He completed everything that had to do with administrative work with a lot of patience and commitment.

Two years ago, he had to leave his parents' home for a nursing home where he felt well-treated and humanely cared for. He was accompanied by his computer - Shanti's wellbeing was one of his wishes until the last minute. "Shanti – that is my life!" That's what he told me during a conversation a few weeks ago. He was perfectly enthusiastic about the planned festivities last Sunday.

The older he got the more conscious and grateful he lived. He was always happy about the wonders and beauty of nature, which he saved in many photos with his smartphone. He edited them and sent them to the people in his surroundings – to infuse

them with his joy. We are grateful that he was able to take part in our party and enjoy it without regrets – this was indeed like a shining end to his life for Shanti. Both the Shanti family in Nepal and we here in Dortmund will be forever thankful to him for his loyalty with which he helped and supported Shanti from the beginning.

PANCHAKALA AND FAMILY

(This is me - Marianne - who writes this herself!) A week ago, I arrived just on time for the funeral of my husband from Nepal, and I am still grateful for the loving company and echo of so many people participating in it. It felt so good to experience the friendly appreciation from you! His solidarity commitment of long years is repeatedly fed by the pleasure any success has produced. He was also deeply touched by the following event which was tragic at first and later he enjoyed the development that has now taken place:

Panchakala's grandpa suffered from leprosy, and in fear of being infected and afraid that they themselves would be cursed by the gods, the village community cast him and his family out of the village. After that he lived in a cabin at the edge of the jungle. Nobody can imagine the misery of the old man: hunger, thirst and coldness hurt, and he was afraid of the predators. In Nepal, the forests are still the home of panthers and leopards and even tigers. One day he was gone, and it is assumed he was killed by a big cat.

His granddaughter Panchakala noticed the symptoms of leprosy on her; her grandpa had infected her apparently. Her parents banned the 11-year-old, but not into the jungle, they brought her to the leprosy clinic in Pokhara. I can still remember the friendly English doctor Ruth Watson who ran the hospital for many years.



Panchakala stayed in the clinic until she was 20. She met her future husband Ganesh there. Then they heard of Shanti and came to us, into the outpatient station Buddhanilkantha.

Panchakala and Ganesh had two boys and a girl, who attended the Shanti school and graduated successfully. In April, they suffered an extremely painful disaster: Panchakala's skin was largely numbed by the leprosy. She did not notice that a burning pinecone rolled out of the fire and set fire to the wide trousers of her Punjabi. The flames went along the legs up to her buttocks, and she only noticed it when the trousers burned on her abdomen. Only then did she roll herself on the floor to extinguish the fire.

Bijendra took her to a specialized hospital immediately, and for a few days we feared for her life. She needed several operations, and we were impressed how brave she was. When she was able to be transported, we took her to the nursing ward of our Shanti clinic, of course. Two long months followed until she was able to take part in normal life again.

But during that time, she had a big pleasure: Her daughter Alisha graduated with a bachelor's degree and started as a schoolteacher at our school where she was allocated the third class. What a path for the young lady in whose family leprosy had produced so much misery, poverty, and hopelessness! Shanti enabled her to study at college as the first person in her family. She wants to be a loving and empathic partner for our Shanti children with all their worries and joys, and the children are obviously feeling good in her presence.

Again and again, I am deeply grateful and happy about such a development of our young ones! I am also happy to share my pleasure with you who are the ones who enable us to open and smoothen out such paths in life to some young people. Thank you very much for your help!

Stay protected everyone!

Your
Marianne Grosspietsch