

SPOTLIGHT

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awareness** P.6

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medical help** P.10



**Disasters are increasing...
...thus helpfulness should
not decrease!**



EDITORIAL

Dear Friends,

Again and again, we are witnessing, all around the world, catastrophes of enormous proportions, as well as injustice, hardship and misery. In such situations, people normally want to help their fellow beings. However, it often remains a desire or is quickly forgotten.

“The desire to help is a virtue but actually helping is a blessing”. This is a guiding principle of our organisation, Hand in Hand, which provides continuous help and assistance to people in need, especially in North-East India.

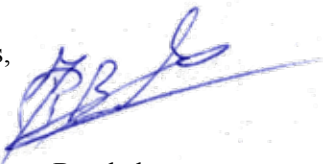
In that area, extensive parts of the Eastern coast of Odisha, were devastated by an extremely strong cyclone, at the beginning of May this year. The premises of our partner organisation Prajnana Mission, as well as the Health Centre, were badly damaged. Despite that, members provided immediate medical and material help to the severely affected people in that area. This effective aid can only be provided thanks to your generous donations to Hand in Hand.

Destitute, senior citizens residing in the Sevak nursing home in Jaipur, also benefitted from the free medical care given at the Mobile Health Camp of the Hariharananda Health Centre. Read more about it in this Spotlight edition where you can also revisit the beginnings of the Hariharananda Balashram Residential School 15 years ago, when it opened its doors to give underprivileged children an opportunity to create an autonomous and self-confident life. Today the school has 560 children in residence.

Children are showing us how help can be given: primary school pupils in Fell, near the city of Trier in Germany, collected donations for Hand in Hand through a charity run. They also learned more about the Balashram children through pictures the children had drawn themselves.

Let's follow their example and let us put our will to assist into action - because helping is a blessing!

Yours,



Peter van Breukelen
President of 'Hand in Hand'



Sw. Achalananda and
Peter van Breukelen



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Chronicle & Milestones



„A dream comes true“:

milestones in the development of the Hariharananada Balashram

At any time, and everywhere in this world, the important spiritual masters have emphasized the importance of education. As a young man, Paramahansa Hariharananda was welcoming into Karar Ashram orphaned children living in the streets. He lovingly looked after them and taught them English, Bengali and arithmetic. That was the beginning of a big dream which was going to be fulfilled by



his successor, Paramahansa Prajnanananda, by founding a residential school, Hariharananda Balashram.

It is already 17 years since Swami Amrutananda, at that time Kamala Kar, donated her house and land to Prajnana Mission for the purpose of establishing a school there. More than 100 teachers and educators, coming from all areas of Odisha, met, in September 2002, at the back of her house under the tarpaulin roof, to discuss the beginning of a new school, which today is the Hariharananada Balashram.

Two years later, on 29th July 2004, the school, located among the vast rice fields of Arua, a village in the district of Kendapara in Odisha, was opened. It all began with 40 children, 3 teachers and a couple of caretakers, supported by monastic residents. Since then, each year, 40 additional children coming from the economically- underdeveloped districts and from the city slums in Odisha, are carefully selected and cared for, at no cost, by Prajnana Mission. Today Balashram is a residential school with around 560

What two of our young students think of Balashram



Sasmita Kar,
classe 11, 17 years old

What do you like most about the school?

What I like most is the education we are receiving. It is free and of such high quality compared to other schools. Our school is unique in the whole world.

What would you like to do after graduating from school?

Once I leave school, I would like to serve our country. The best way for me to do that, is to become a doctor. It would

allow me to help people sincerely and with devotion, and I would be part of society.

What do you do when you face problems at school?

It is important to realize that there will always be problems and hurdles in life - they come and go. We shouldn't fear problems but we should deal with them intelligently, while trying to understand how the problem could be solved without damaging anyone.

What is your favourite subject or activity on offer?

Besides education, we have the chance to do and practice music, dance, tabla drumming or handicraft. We can also take part in sports groups, for example volleyball, soccer

boys and girls. The school is affiliated to the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE).

From the very beginning, subjects like music and fine arts were added to the curriculum, to give the children the opportunity to follow their interests and inclinations. The students have received several awards during public performances and appearances. In the years to follow, more courses like “life skills” were developed. In the year 2013-2014, practical subjects like hair cutting, bicycle repair and the basics of cooking and computer repair, were introduced. This was an important milestone in the development of the school. After extensive examination, the CBSE acknowledged the quality and approved the education level until class 10 (High School Level). This achievement represented a high point which was to be followed some years later by another equally important one.

The first batch, who were initially accepted at the school in 2004, completed their schooling in 2016. They had to leave Balashram to continue their education. Later the school administrators decided to offer the children the chance to stay and mature a little longer in the “Balashram Family”; they therefore, applied to the CBSE for affiliation till the 12th school year (Senior Secondary Level). The required structural and curriculum expansions were prepared under high pressure. In July 2017, permission was granted: the 11th class started in May 2018 with the newly created

branch of Science, and in September 2018 the remaining students were enrolled in a distance education program offered by the Board of Secondary Education, Odisha.

Numerous celebrities have visited Balashram since its opening, and have supported it and contributed to it making Paramahansa Hariharanda’s dream for the children, a reality. The implementation of “seva” as an educational



concept, represents the newest milestone in the history of the school. It pursues the goal to promote the awareness for a peaceful, responsible and long-lasting cohabitation. We hope that the Hariharananda Balashram Residential School creates a future for the well-being of all.

or rugby. Many of us are involved in the scouts program, which aims at serving society honestly and with dedication. We enjoy helping people. I like most, the seminars and programmes on mindfulness and awareness.



Anirvinya Dash,
classe 11, 17 years old

What do you like most about the school?

I like most, my friends at school because we are like a family. We

have been together since we were small. We have grown up together and together we will soon leave the school. I love my friends with all my heart.

What would you like to do after graduating from school?

I have the dream of my own car dealership. That would be really great!

What are your favourite subjects?

I like Physics, Maths and English.

What do you like doing in your free time?

I like playing with friends. I also like practicing martial arts, and many more things.



An environmental group has been actively engaged at Hariharananda Balashram for the past few years. Swami Achalananda, the secretary of our partner organisation Prajnana Mission, describes its various efforts.

The pupils practice active environmental protection and educational work on the school premises, as well as in the surrounding villages. For this purpose they often travel in the area. More senior students for example, explain to the villagers how to keep their environment clean so as to protect themselves from malaria or dengue mosquitoes, and young students, together with the school's scouts, clean the streets, temples, or ponds of a village.

Replanting of all types is very important for the Eco-group. For this reason they repeatedly distribute saplings to the villagers, to be planted on both sides of the streets. Tree planting on the school premises has become a ritual during celebrations like the „Vana Mohastav“ festival, or on Independence Day. During those celebrations, girls from the higher classes, plant trees on the campus and name them after famous freedom fighters, while the scouts teach their fellow students and the village people about the significance and the correct care of plants and trees.

„Cleanliness plays an important role in environmentally conscious actions. The school organises, in that sense, its own “week of cleanliness”, which engages the children in





Environmental awareness – a guiding principle at Balashram

cleaning and tidying their quarters and the school premises. Seminars on hygiene and cleanliness are arranged as well. The students report during the morning assembly on this subject.

To sensitize the students on a conscious approach to, and interaction with nature, they receive practical instructions. For instance, during a visit to the woodland nature reserve Bhitarkanika, information on the various aspects of flora and fauna (plants and animal kingdom) is provided by scientists, rangers, conservationists and social workers.

A milestone in the history of Hariharananda Balashram is the construction of the sewage treatment plant on the school premises. Thanks to your generous donations to our organisation Hand in Hand, a sewage plant has been

installed where sewage water and wash water from the school campus and the boys' quarters, can be treated. The water can be used in the grass fields, which then become food for the cows. The wash water from the cow shed is added to the liquid manure, to feed the biogas plant.

This modern plant could be built thanks to the financial aid of our donors. The biogas is used in the new kitchen as fuel. Herewith, we reached the goal to eliminate completely the use of wood. Vegetable scraps and food leftovers are added to the biogas plant for fermentation.

The implemented concept of this cycle includes the factor that, from vegetable scraps or animal food leftovers, like straw, all can be created into compost for plant fertilization.



To do sports while helping other children, and get to know their reality. This combination of thoughts and activity was put into practice by the children of the St. Barbara Primary School in Fell, through their fundraising run for “Hand in Hand”.



Drawing and running for friendship

Each year the primary school children in Fell (in the Rheinland-Pfalz region) run to collect funds for schools and other projects. Each run around the school sports field, which lasts 30 or 60 minutes, is sponsored financially by parents and friends. This year the 6 – 10 year olds have decided to devolve part of the proceeds to the children of the Balashram Residential School in India. The organisation Hand in Hand received more than 500 Euros from them, a quarter of their proceeds.

The children, however, didn't want to just hand over the money, they wanted to know more about the children in India, and also tell them about their own everyday life in Germany. Therefore, they drew and painted many pictures and posters which were bound into booklets and handed to the children in India by some Balashram friends during their trips there. The Indian children were sometimes puzzled about the depicted scenes from everyday life in Germany, which were unfamiliar to them. They wondered about the solid houses and the horses which they found in many pictures, and were happy when they found familiar scenes like a soccer game.

In return, the Balashram children have drawn many pictures for the German children in Fell, and which were handed to them by Uschi, the Secretary of Hand in Hand. The children in Germany were enthusiastic and impressed by the artistry and by the intensity of the drawings. They bombarded the messenger with many questions about the Indian children and they listened attentively to the tales Uschi was telling them. One could feel the sense of connection and solidarity between children of different nationality, language, religion and skin colour.

The conclusions made by the children

”We, the school community of the Primary School Fell, agree that: next time we shall run again for the Balashram children. Moreover, we would like to create a real school partnership with our friends. And, we shall also try to draw with oil chalk.”



On-site mobile medical help

The Hariharananda Health Centre offers medical assistance to destitute, elderly people



The Sevak-nursing home for destitute, elderly people in Jajpur is the site of a Mobile Health Camp belonging to the Hariharananda Health Centre (HCHC). Doctors and medical personnel are performing check-ups and treating all 102 residents. Half of them are suffering from skin conditions, or from psychological disorders. Among the diagnosed and documented conditions are high blood pressure, diabetes, cataract, lung diseases, anaemia and physical disabilities.

After the medical personnel of the Hariharananda Health Centre had documented their diagnosis, each patient received a booklet where the findings were recorded. Doctors distributed medicines and instructed the caregivers on the correct dosage. Moreover, the elderly resi-

dents and the caregivers were given guidelines on health-care, hygiene and diet.

The pharmacist and the lab technician took blood samples from 27 patients, to be tested in the HCHC lab. The results might imply the prescription of new medicines.



Cyclon Fani - help and medical camps

After the disastrous cyclone, Prajnana Mission is providing assistance and aid with the financial support of HAND IN HAND

An unusually powerful cyclone, with top speeds between 230 and 300 km per hour, struck the East coast of Odisha, where Puri is located, on 3 May 2019.

The tropical storm “Fani” caused huge devastation and destruction. Hundreds of thousands of trees were uprooted, and many straw-covered houses were destroyed, and electrical, as well as phone masts, were severely damaged. For over a month the lives of people were highly affected. Shortages of food, water, electricity and medicines, created a catastrophic situation where people were anxiously waiting for help.

The premises of Prajnana Mission with the Health Centre in Puri, were massively damaged. Despite that, they provided medical and material assistance in the immediate surrounding areas, inhabited by 50,000 people.

Mobile Medical Camps were held in 12 locations in Odisha, which provided medical assistance to 1,200 people. Prajnana Mission distributed relief supplies (each package valued 1,000 rupees = 13 Euros) in 13 villages. The packages included mats, bed sheets, torches, buckets, umbrellas and mosquito nets. They were able to support and aid 500 poor families.

It wasn't an easy task for the relief team: firstly there was the challenge of reaching the villages of the people affected because the roads were almost impassable. Moreover, they had to choose among the high number of affected people, who would be entitled to receive the 500 packages. Selection criteria were that the house had been destroyed and that people could shelter under a plastic tarpaulin only where they were living, sleeping and cooking for the family.

In the face of this great crisis and need of so many people, the Prajnana Mission relief team was unable to help all. The aid packages however, surely reached those most in need of help and who were struggling to survive under the scorching sun.

There is the plan to construct one-room brick houses with solid roofs and verandas for the people affected by the cyclone. Each house would cost ca. 2,800 Euros, and there are 60 planned.

Due to the start of the rainy season however, they couldn't commence the digging of the foundations, and the construction of the houses has been postponed for the time being. As soon as the rainy season is over –normally it lasts from June to September- the works will resume.





One drop can make a difference



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Please donate directly through our webpage www.handinhand.at via 

Please make that difference with just **1 Euro a day** for the Balashram children! Give the children, from the poorest of circumstances, a new chance for their life. With a **Class-Sponsorship of 35 Euro per month**, you can give the children both financial support and a secure future. Thank you!

More details can be found at www.handinhand.at (sponsor a child) or secretary@handinhand.at



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