

SPOTLIGHT

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Achieve much good
with little means P.10

The new look
of our website
www.handinhand.at



„The future belongs to those who believe in the manifestation of their dreams.“

For dreams to come true and materialize, our organization “Hand in Hand” has been engaged for many years in helping people who are disadvantaged by life. It is in the North East of India where the organization, together with “Prajnana Mission”, is achieving great results in supporting children, youngsters and adults. Their hope for a positive and better future shall be realized. But this can only happen thanks to your donations and to minimal administration costs.



Sheetal Bharatiya

Hello, I am Sheetal. I am in Class 9. I am very proud to be here in this beautiful arena of Hariharananda Balashram which is a protec-

tive shelter as well as an educational institution. It supports and guides me in every moment of my life. It provides me with many facilities for the betterment and development of my future. It helps me to solve my problems in every situation. The kind and loving guidance of our loving persons in support helps me for my career. So, I feel very lucky and thankful to Balashram and I am also thankful to those who support Balashram.



Deepa Jena

I am Deepa Jena from Class 8. We get everything that we need from Balashram for

our living and study. We also thank everybody who helps Balashram to provide all that is necessary for the students. We promise them that one day we will keep the name and fame of our Balashram. In the whole world, Balashram will be number one of all institutions. Thanks for your helping attitude towards Balashram.

Children say
Thank You!

Gurudev Panda

I am 13 and in Class 7. When I was 4 years old, Balashram started to support me and took care of me

very well. My life changed for good and I can study here at Balashram. For this I will remain grateful and thankful to Balashram forever. I feel to have a bright future in my life.



EDITORIAL

Dear Friends,

Every human being has dreams, visions and hopes. Some can be fulfilled, others not. The important thing is to keep believing in these dreams.

That is our belief within the Humanitarian organization "Hand in Hand". We identify where our help is needed and we make sure that people in need, especially in the North-East of India, are receiving it.

Please read, in the current edition of "Spotlight", how people, who normally cannot afford medical care, are taken care of - for free - at the Prajnana Mission Health Centre in Cuttack/Jagatpur.

We have also very much at heart the well-being of children and youngsters: at our Balashram Residential School, 560 children, some of which, orphaned and semi-orphaned, are receiving free education, board and lodging, and undergo a comprehensive holistic development on all levels.

One of the Balashram teachers explains how children, who are often deeply affected by their difficult past, find a new home at the Residential School. One of the students explains that, even for the pupils who graduate from school, the "Chrysalis Project" ensures continued guidance and support.

To make the dreams of these people and ours come true, we need your help in form of donations. Many friends are already supporting us with great fundraising ideas, for example, Dirk Denzer through the 6th International Variety Festival, or Julia Steber with her singing group, Swiss pupils selling homemade, delicious food. A heartfelt thank you to all of them!

Please help to realize the dreams of the underprivileged people and let your own visions come true. We firmly believe that here lies the future!

Yours,

Peter von Breukelen
President of 'Hand in Hand'



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Teacher Bijayalaxmi Samal has been at the Balashram Residential School since 2009. In an interview with “Spotlight“, she tells about her experiences with the youngest children, their origins, their future, and how they are settling in at Balashram.

Care in a familiar environment

From which family background do the children come?

They come from a very poor socio-economic backgrounds. Some are orphans or semi-orphans and sometimes there is no one there to take care of the child at the native place.

How are you guiding them to approach this new lifestyle at Balashram?



Some of the students come from tribal areas and don't even know Odia language. I guide them to speak Odia and later English by telling them some stories and singing some rhymes.

I have to take care of their proper dressing and cleanliness. In this way they slowly become acquainted with the new life style at Balashram.

What are the reactions of the children when they first arrive at Balashram and then when they have spent some days there?

When they arrive here, they often start crying and sometimes remain silent without taking food, but it happens for a fortnight only. Soon after the child becomes friendly with his/her friends and the caregivers present in the hostel. The dedication of monks, caregivers and teachers play a pivotal role. As we make them play, tell good stories and

Holistic strength for life after school

Meghanad Gahir left Balashram, after completing his schooling in 2016, to study art. Balashram and “Hand in Hand” are also supporting him in this new phase of his life, as part of the Chrysalis Project.

How old are you now and since when have you been studying at the Balashram Residential School?

I am Meghanad Gahir. Now I am 19 years old and since 2004, when I was 5 years old, I have been studying at Balashram Residential School.

What is your family background and how did it happen that you came to the Balashram School?

My family background is not so good. In my family we are five members. We mainly depend upon my father who is a farmer but without owning land, he has to ask others to have a share of the harvest. The economic situation is troublesome.

Do you remember your first days at the Balashram School and how it all started?

When I came to Balashram, I cried a lot because I missed my parents and my family members. It was a sad day. But later on things changed due to the parental love and affection of my teachers and caregivers.



Looking back on your time at Balashram - what would you say about the whole time you spent at Balashram Residential

School?

Looking back to my time at Balashram, I can say that it was really full of splendid moments. It was wonderful having people around me who cared for me even more than my parents and showing the right path. I really miss my Balashram and my Balashram family as I am staying away



Many children are traumatized from the past, maybe because of a natural disaster, the loss of parents, or generally difficult economic situations. How do you make sure the children are being taken care of, also psychologically?

Yes, it is true that they are traumatized from the past, but we try to our best to drag them to the main stream of the society and the life style of Balashram by providing them with special care and preparing them for brightness. Here is a team of monks, teachers and caregivers who work unitedly for the betterment of the children.

give proper care just as parents do, they change quickly and adjust themselves to the new family atmosphere of Balashram.

How often do these children see their parents?

Do the parents also visit them at Balashram?

The parents are not allowed to meet the children within 3 months after admission as this would make the adjustment to the changed situation for both sides harder. After 3 months the parents can come to see the child on the last Sunday of the month and can call and talk with the child every Sunday. In case of emergency, they can call at any time any day.

In short:

What does the daily routine for the youngest look like?

The children enjoy a nice, balanced daily routine in order to make them healthy and active. It leads to all-round development as it contains physical, academic and moral training with lots of fun in a peaceful environment.



from school nowadays.

What is your impression about the education and the possibilities in your leisure time at Balashram?

The education at Balashram is far better than at other schools. The quality of education is higher than at any of the schools of my present friends. Here, co-curricular activities are part of the curriculum in contrast to other schools: examples are value education, chanting, dance, music, tabla, art, etc. In leisure time we are taught gardening, cooking, making cow products, tailoring, planting, plumbing, and different games which are helpful for our life after leaving Balashram.

What are you doing now in the chrysalis project?

After completing 10th grade at Balashram I am now studying arts in 12th class at B.J.B college which is one of the best colleges in Odisha. And till now, Balashram is helping and supporting me for my bright future.

What are your personal plans for the future?

After completing my studies I have planned to do integrated BA B.Ed (Bachelor of arts and bachelor of education) and hope to be a good teacher in order to serve again in my Balashram.

What do you want to tell the international donators who support the Balashram project?

I thank all the international donators who are supporting the Balashram project from the core of my heart. Till now what we are is just because of you all. Thank you all again and again.



Impressed by the magic of Balashram

Mette Koivusalo, a 39 year old Danish woman, who gave up her career at the Stock Exchange in London to work as a Yoga teacher, visited in October 2017 the Balashram Residential School. Together with her husband, she is involved in several charity projects, among which also "Hand in Hand".

Visiting the Balashram school for the first time is an experience you can never fully prepare your heart or mind for. Nothing can both delight more, but at the same time also send a cold chill down your spine knowing each and every child had experienced extreme poverty and a difficult family background, with less material security than any of us could probably even imagine.

My husband Hannu, me as well as two Indian friends of ours accompanying us, were warmly welcomed by Maheshanandaji, who forms part of the school's management sector. His warmth, love and enthusiasm for the school was inspiring for all of us to see. He invited us on a tour around the premises. As a first impression, all of us were immediately overwhelmed by the beautiful serene and almost magical atmosphere this place radiates. We started the tour at the girls' hostel, and were also shown the teachers' headquarters, new physics, chemistry and computer science classrooms, and were immediately im-

pressed by the organizational skills as well as the cleanliness visible everywhere. Buildings were designed tastefully and constructed professionally with an unusual high quality for Indian standards.

Meanwhile the students were all in class, and we had the opportunity to watch discretely through the windows from a distance. We were all amazed by the silence and calmness, as well as peaceful order everywhere at the school.

The grounds outside the classrooms were beautifully filled with colorful flowers of orange, yellow and pink. Many new useful trees had been planted, as well as palm trees. We walked past a big playground area with swings and fun child activities, where we could imagine the children enjoying themselves in the breaks.

Student toilets were available nearby, as well as places with pure drinking water.

Next, we had the opportunity to visit the youngest students at the school. It was nice to see both boys and girls from the age of 4 living together under the same roof in separate sleeping departments with their own clean dining hall, classrooms and bathrooms. Their



little white shoes were neatly lined up at the entrance hall and sweet children drawings were decorating the walls. The girls and boys all came to meet us with their natural childlike joy and enthusiasm, obviously happy to be in their new home.

At lunch break, we had a chance to meet a few of the teachers and the politely behaved older students on their way to the dining hall. They were smiling and happy to answer any small questions we had. The students were praying and singing gracefully before eating their nutritious meal of rice, dhal and vegetables. Older students were serving the younger ones and all were peacefully sit-

ting together in lines on the floor without the usual noise at schools. Again we were impressed.

Finally, we visited the cow sheds, where milk for all the students, workers and teachers is collected by hand daily. Never before had we seen better conditions for the cows in terms of both cleanliness, space and air quality also in comparison with European standards. Small newborn calves were resting while their mothers were being fed well nearby. All cow dung and urine is recycled in the newly built biogas plant next door. We all agreed that it was great to see not only children being treated so well but the workers and animals too.



We were invited to taste the delicious lunch and try the fresh nutritious milk for ourselves in the teacher's dining hall. A monkey sitting nearby was hoping to have a taste as well...

Never before had any of us in our group seen a more functional, more beautiful and better organized school. Everyone seemed so motivated and enthusiastic about making the school work as well as possible with the small funds available. These people are doing an excellent job in every way they can, putting their soul, heart and hard work into making a better life for these underprivileged children. We became more eager than ever to do our best to help and

raise funds and awareness about this important project, which really needs all of our support in order to survive. We saw with our own eyes that it is not easy to run a school and project like this. It takes so much work, organization and effort as well as high costs to maintain. With relatively small amounts for our western standards, we can all really help in this way to make a difference in the world and create a better future for our new generation.

And if ever you have an opportunity to visit Balashram in Odisha, I would highly recommend it. Seeing these young students' sparkling eyes with new hope for a better life, made this visit all worth it and the highlight of our trip to India.





The 6th International Variety Festival - a creative way of supporting "Hand in Hand"

Art and creativity play an important role at the Balashram Residential School, and they were also the essential components of the International Variety Festival in Schweinfurt (Germany), which has been supporting "Hand in Hand" in a special way.

It is the biggest festival, worldwide, of its kind. For the 6th time, following the invitation of Dirk Denzer - the variety, show and production artist - 150 artists from 15 different nations congregated in May 2018, to entertain 15000 visitors. He has been a reliable partner of "Hand in Hand" for many years.

Each day was characterised by a new theme. For example, Dirk Denzer's Show Spirit Dreams, visually and creatively presented fundamental questions on life, with the accompaniment of singer Alexandra Marisa Wilcke and her band.

The 2500 visitors had the opportunity to acquire the music together with the reflective and stimulating lyrics after the show, by making a donation to "Hand in Hand". The proceeds amounted to 4.500 EUR.

Thank you very much!



Music between Continents connects

Singing brings joy and singing together connects all in joy.

Julia Steber (guitar and vocal), Markus Noichl (harp) and Jörg Holik (tablas) regularly organize get-togethers in the cultural centre „Freiraum“ in the Allgäu region, to convey and share the experience of religious songs- the bhajans-, and Indian, Hebrew and English heartfelt songs. They are happy to be able to send all the proceeds of these evenings to the organization "Hand in Hand". These are some of the building blocks which allow the children of the Balashram Residential School to have a promising future. It gives them the chance to develop their creativity and their talents. Through music, we might enable the children to develop their own musical talents as well.



Picture shows Annina Hofer & Riana Lutz

By means of ideas, inventiveness, imagination and engagement, the Swiss students have contributed notably to the Balashram Residential School. They are sending “Hand in Hand” this report.

Our Hand in Hand stand at the spring market

We are pupils of the 3rd class at the Weitsicht Secondary School in Switzerland. We prepared delicious delicacies and treats for our Hand in Hand Stand as part of the school project work. Among our eleven different products, there were jam/preserves, roasted almonds, lollipops, baking mixtures, muffins and more.

On the 17th March we were ready to go. We added some flyers and Spotlight magazines, together with a donation box in favour of the Hand in Hand organization, to our stand table. Posters outlining and explaining the school project and the Hand in Hand organization were hanging around the stand.

People liked our fund raising initiative very much, as well as our stand. At 3pm, we had already sold everything (2 hours before market closure) and we could go home!

We raised 1105.- CHF in total and since our parents had covered all expenses, we were able to donate the whole amount. Hand in Hand is the perfect organization for us. We were looking to donate to children or to a school because we liked the thought “students help students”. We are happy to know that much good can be done in India with the money we have raised.



Achieve much good with little means: visit to the Hariharananda Health Centre



Picture shows Olivia with a medical team

23 year old student Olivia Walker from Salzburg has been supporting, together with her parents, the “Hand in Hand” Association for many years. They have close to their heart the medical care for destitute people in India, and therefore, have been involved in the Hariharananda Health Centre Project in Cuttack (India).

Olivia reports from her last visit there:

During our last visit at the Hariharananda Health Centre in Cuttack last December, my parents and I could again witness how much can be achieved with little or no means. One of the three Prajnana Mission Health Centres, which is supported by “Hand in Hand”, is located in the Jagatpur slum area. People who are unable to afford medical care are treated here for free by: 16 doctors, 2 apothecaries, 2 laboratory assistants, 2 dental assistants, as well as by 1 nurse.

The 3-storey Health Centre building has 16 beds for outpatients who can benefit from the following services: general medicine and surgery, gynaecology, ophthalmology (eyes), dermatology (skin), internal medicine with special emphasis on diabetes, otorhi-

nolaryngology (ear, nose, and throat), endocrinology (hormones), neurology, cardiology (heart), pharmacology, psychiatry, as well as dentistry.

The waiting area offers seating accommodation which is perfectly normal for Western standards but which is seen as a privilege by the poorest of the poor. The most common daily treatments performed by the doctors involve stomach/abdomen pain, cough, colds, sunstroke and also seasonal disorders. Risk of disease is increased by poor hygiene and diet and by too basic living accommodations. Minor accidents are treated here as well and only small interventions are carried out in the operating room.

A middle aged patient, who visited the centre during my visit there, remained impressed in my mind. He was suffering from leprosy but could be healed thanks to the administration of antibiotics. The doctor explained that otherwise he would have lost his arm. If leprosy is caught early and treated accordingly, it can be completely healed. This is an example of how someone could be saved from a life as a beggar on the streets, thanks to the competence and experience of the medical team at the Health Centre.





For the complete care of one patient, the hospital needs 200 Rupees per day, which amounts to around 3 Euros. Approximately 1200 patients are treated here every week. The hospital team works 6 days a week, and is always available for emergencies.

On top of this, doctors treat also around 400 patients affected by diabetes, an illness which can be managed easily with the appropriate treatment, allowing people to lead a nearly normal and symptom-free life.

The feedback given by patients to doctors and hospital staff is always positive. During a personal conversation with a doctor it emerged that, in contrast to public services, at the Health Centre doctors were able to dedicate more time to each individual patient. Staff and supporters of this project have the vision

to expand medical services to be able to give more patients the opportunity of hospitalisation, which allows longer, and more intensive medical care and treatment. This requires some investments, for example fire stairs, which would fulfil the required safety standards of a state-recognized hospital, and which in turn, would allow the Hariharananda Health Centre to receive state funding and support.

For us travellers it was remarkable how service to mankind was provided efficiently but without too much bureaucracy. This visit was a real gift to us. I am thankful to everybody who is committed to this project and thus helps to ensure a better life for many financially disadvantaged people.



NEW WEBSITE ONLINE!!!



One drop can make a difference



www.facebook.com/hariharanandabalashram

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

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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