



SPOTLIGHT

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ON THE TRAIL OF A SECRET

20 years of Balashram

PAGE 8

FROM DAY CLINIC TO HOSPITAL?

10 years Jagatpur HCHC

PAGE 18

“People think worldly success and material possessions can bring them joy and happiness. We can see in the world that material prosperity has its use, but true happiness and bliss remain hidden. We must discover these experiences through an inner journey of Self unfoldment.”

Paramahansa Prajnanananda *



When we, from HAND IN HAND, arrived at Balashram before breakfast, on 17 February 2023, the beautiful school campus lay silent and deserted before us. Only later did we learn that the final exams had taken place that morning and that two weeks of holidays were just around the corner - the calm before the storm. Hence, when we arrived at Balashram, there were only a few curious baby monkeys and their somewhat sceptical mothers who took notice of us, squinting in our direction. The morning sun bathed the schoolyard in a clear light and the air was still pleasantly fresh. A beautiful morning which was making the silence feel even quieter.

“Are there really over 550 children being taught here right now?”, we asked ourselves in view of this astonishing silence.

We were strolling a little uncertainly up the street to the kindergarten building when all of a sudden, a door was pushed open, and a boisterous bunch of 40 little girls and boys pushed their way out and stormed exuberantly in the direction of the nearby playground. As if out of the blue, the morning silence gave way to such a lively and merry confusion of shouting, children laughing and racing each other that even the playground equipment, which now had clusters of happy children hanging on it, literally sounded upbeat. It was so touching! What presented itself to us now, just as surprisingly as the silence had been before, were now simply happy children. And looking at the beaming little faces, the question came to us,

“What is the secret of Balashram?”



* Paramahansa Prajnanananda (2022): Keep Smiling. The Art of Living and Giving Series. Book 8. Prajnana Publication. Vienna.

EDITORIAL



Dear Friends of HAND IN HAND!

Almost 20 years ago, on 29 July 2004, we celebrated the opening of Balashram (p. 4). Since then, I have been visiting the children every year. In the first year there were 40 and in the second year already 80 little Kindergarten children smiling at me from the classrooms; and in the summer of 2006, school had already started for another 40 children - and it has been continuing that way ever since.

The children grew up, and with them, Balashram became bigger and bigger: A school was added to the kindergarten, and the school then became a campus. Until finally, the children from the very first cohort moved confidently into the world, determined to make their dreams come true. And on 25 June 2023, the time had come: Our first alumni meeting with the school's graduates took place at Balashram (p. 14). What an event! Believe me: Not a dry eye was left. I am looking forward to the first weddings and to the first grandchildren coming to visit us... Balashram will always be the home of these children. To date, 922 little girls and boys have found a new home at Balashram - **and all thanks to your donation!**

Like Balashram, our Health Centre in Jagatpur started small: With two doctors who offered free medical treatment to destitute people, in a garage. Today, we are standing in front of an impressive clinic that opened its doors on 15 February 2014 with the help of your donations. In February 2024, it will celebrate its tenth anniversary (p. 18). Time flies and nothing stays the same. Just as Balashram continues to evolve with its children, the clinic must also continue to grow together with the needs of its patients (p. 21). Only one thing remains unchanged 20 years after Balashram was founded and in the ten years since the Jagatpur HCHC opened: *"One Drop can make a Difference - every contribution can make a difference."* Now.

From the bottom of our hearts, THANK YOU!

Peter van Breukelen

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FROM ABJECT POVERTY TO A SELF-DETERMINED LIFE



In July 2004, the first children moved into the newly opened Balashram. There, a teacher and a handful of carers with open hearts, a great sense of responsibility and a loving willingness to help, were waiting for the 22 girls and 18 boys who were marked by the hardship they had survived. After the devastating 1999 floods in Odisha, millions of people had lost everything and tens of thousands had lost their lives.



“Officially more than 10,000 people perished, unofficially close to 20,000.” Recalling this, Paramahansa Prajnananda, founder of the Balashram Residential School, continues, *“So many children lost their parents. Witnessing suffering on such a scale, was the deciding factor to act very concretely and with great discipline; and our spiritual students in the West approached us to help,”* he describes the beginning of PRAJNANA MISSION and HAND IN HAND.

Through the committed cooperation of these two initiatives, the ceremonial opening of Balashram became possible on 29 July 2004. Those children who came to the newly founded school in 2004 were victims of the 1999 flood disaster and almost all of them were half-orphans or orphans. They had all lived in unimaginable poverty before joining Balashram.

However, even before the 1999 floods, extreme poverty had been the fate of many children in Odisha, one of the poorest states in India – and is still today. Compared to other parts of India, Odisha is only slightly urbanised, hence a relatively large number of people live from agriculture and from the use of the forests, as is especially true for people living in tribal cultures. Extreme weather, such as storm tides on the particularly vulnerable East Indian coast, but also the no less catastrophic forced expropriations and resettlements due to economic interests, force people into the cities. They are driven into poverty, which leaves deep scars, especially on children.

These children know nothing but a life of deprivation, in which there is never enough care. Their parents, in distress, have to work hard to provide the family with the bare essentials. Child labour is just one of the terrible consequences, and often older children have to take care of the younger ones. School is out of the question. There is virtually no chance for these children to escape the misery into which they were born. This is a terrible cycle of poverty!

Long before the 1999 floods, Paramahansa Hariharananda, an eminent monk of the Giri lineage in India, had the desire and the vision to break this cycle and to give security and education to impoverished children whose dignity had been deeply affected. Wherever in the world, children should be able to develop according to their possibilities, talents and dreams and thus have a real chance for a good life.

Already as a young monk, Paramahansa Hariharananda took orphaned children living on the streets into his ash-

ram. Like a divine gardener, he thus prepared the ground for the realisation of a greater vision – the establishment of the Balashram Residential School. Paramahansa Prajnananda, the worthy successor of his great teacher, made it possible for this dream to become reality. The Hariharananda Balashram Residential School founded by him for the children of the poorest in Odisha, has become home to more than 922 girls and boys to this day; it is now a widely recognised educational institution.

Since its inception, the Balashram curriculum has gone far beyond that of public schools. Equal attention is paid to the development of social, emotional, scholastic-academic, practical, artistic and sporting skills. The school’s leaders put special emphasis on the ethical and moral education of the students.

After his first visit to Balashram in spring 2023, Martin Lion remembered one thing above all - the children’s happy faces.



Martin Lion,
a supporter of
HAND IN HAND
in Germany

“Visiting the Balashram School was a fantastic experience. The imposing and well-kept building with the colourful plants and the frolicking monkeys exuded a kind of positive authority and life. And then the children! Happy children!

“After the visit, it crossed my mind that I would like to see such a school and education for our children here in my country. In a loving and protected setting, teachers and children work together towards a common goal: For the children to receive a solid, comprehensive education that prepares them optimally for later in life, that gives them joy in learning and helps them to develop their own personal creativity. Mistakes are allowed at Balashram because one can learn from them.

“Everyone makes sure that the children have enough time for play and social life, teachers and students are a team, the day is organised together, and yoga and meditation are not neglected and are integrated into everyday life in a very natural way. I wish every child in the world could have such an opportunity!”



MY FIRST VISIT TO THE BALASHRAM

By Laurence Merchet-Thau

On the way to Balashram, before my first visit there, I had a lot of images in my head. I imagined children standing in a circle around our small team “from the West”, with a warm feeling of love. I was right.

When we got there, the beautiful Balashram School seemed like a little paradise. So full of flowers, so bright and peaceful and so clean. And this, despite the fact that the campus with its classrooms and residences, is huge. Over 550 children! Teachers and caretakers also live there with their families.

We received a very warm welcome from the Vice-Principal and all the staff! Before we were shown around the school, the headmaster invited us to a delicious breakfast. My heart filled up at the thought of all the poor, and yet blessed, children who undoubtedly find security here and are being treated so well.

When we went back to the school building after lunch, the children were having their break and were happily and exuberantly playing on the swings and the merry-go-round. I was surprised how they were neither disturbed nor shy by our presence, they just looked very happy and seemed glad to see us. I took photos of the children which I showed to them and they were laughing and got even busier posing for more photos.

From the playground, the tour continued to the classrooms.

We were introduced, from one classroom to the next, to the students and their teachers and warmly welcomed by all - from the cute little children aged four and five, to the equally proud and humble older ones, whom I estimated to be around 17 years old.

All these children and young people seemed happy, loved and balanced to me. They seemed to feel connected, safe and in good company with each other. It seemed to me that they really enjoyed learning; the teachers made a very professional impression on me; they were positive and filled with inner peace.

All this struck me because it is unusual to feel so much balance and harmony in such a large school like Balashram. In our schools, I know that the children generally behave excitedly and very loudly, while the teachers struggle to make themselves heard.

The classes and corridors at Balashram are all very simple yet beautifully designed, with messages about yoga or ahimsa, with Mahatma Gandhiji, and some pictures of Paramahansa Prajnanananda. All the messages seem to contribute to such an environment of peace, devotion and respect.



In one of the classes, the older girls were learning Odissi, the classical Odisha dance, and we were unexpectedly given an impromptu, beautiful performance. In another classroom, a group of older boys were practising classical music and tablas, and they too spontaneously gave us a great performance. We were then taken to a room with more than 30 computers available to the students, and to classrooms which were very well equipped for physics and chemistry lessons.



Later in the afternoon, we visited the cow barns and it was indescribably beautiful for me to see the little calves and hundreds of cows being treated so well. With sadness I thought of all the industrially-run farms, where they don't stop torturing the animals in order to use them far beyond their natural capabilities. At Balashram, on the other hand, the animals which are so lovingly kept, contribute to the peace that the campus exudes.



Everything I saw at Balashram touched me deeply. All work done at Balashram is so valuable and sincere! I felt fortunate to be able to witness the wonderful work that everyone at Balashram does - a rare lesson of good living for me, an example for all of us.

ON THE TRAIL OF A SECRET - WHAT MAKES BALASHRAM SO SPECIAL

HAND IN HAND in conversation with the Balashram teachers

On 17 February 2023, we from HAND IN HAND visited, the Hariharananda Balashram Residential School. Above all, we met only happy children there. Again and again, Balashram seems like a miracle and we asked ourselves: *“How is it possible that all the children at Balashram, who had such a painful start in life, are now beaming so much with joy?”*



Ambika Mohanty with two of her students

To find out, we went to meet the school management and the teachers. While talking with them, it soon became clear that all those who live and work on the campus have one thing in mind above all: The well-being of their protégées.

It is touching to see how sensitively they respond to each individual child. *“Happy children are also the basis for a peaceful and responsible coexistence in this world,”* said Dr. Malaya Nanda, who was Director of the school from April 2017 to March 2023. With both quiet and great kindness, he led us from one classroom to the next, and emphasised that, above all educational goals, ‘happiness’ was the top priority at Balashram. For him, happiness and joy are simply the basic prerequisites for a successful learning and teaching process between students and teachers.

We listened attentively to Dr. Malaya Nanda (who has recently been entrusted with new tasks in the higher education sector). But we had doubts as to whether this high standard could be reconciled with the performance principle of public schools. After all, Balashram students must also adhere to external guidelines. As a CBSE-certified school, they are obliged to follow the prescribed curriculum. All final examinations are conducted by an external committee of the CBSE, i.e., not by the teachers of Balashram themselves. The latter can only do their utmost to prepare the children and young students for the exams, accordingly.

“How can one ensure that ‘Happiness’ is the common thread in the curriculum? And how is it possible not only to formulate happiness as an educational goal, but actually to implement it?” This is what we asked the teachers all of whom had gathered for a talk with us. Ambika Mohanty has been a teacher at Balashram since 2013 and teaches languages and sports. She was the first to answer:

“We always ask ourselves, how do the children feel; are they feeling at home, or are we just adults to them? These children have no one out there who loves them, who cares for them. We are not just their teachers, we are their family and like parents to them. The children turn to us not only with school issues, but also with their own personal joys and problems, and that’s fine.”

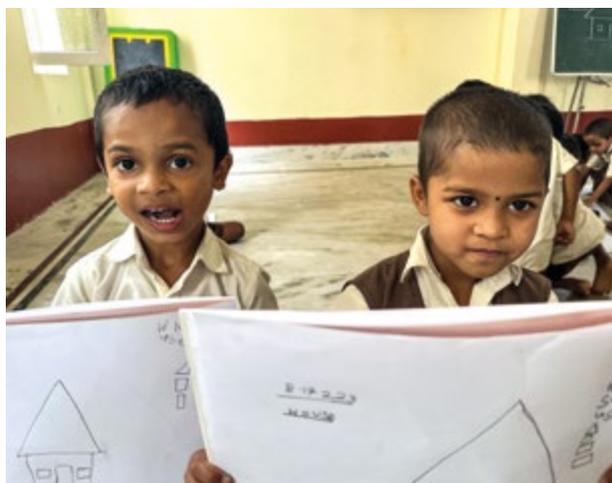
Vice Principal Vibhuti Daund agreed with the dedicated teacher and reiterated the importance of the children confiding in the teaching staff:

“We try to empathize with them and understand their individual, personal needs. We try to secure their future by truly recognising the opportunities, strengths and interests of each child individually and support them accordingly. We give the children a lot of encouragement and we generally spend a lot of time with them.”



The assembled teaching staff of Balashram with Vice Principal Vibhuti Daund (pictured right, front left).

The teachers then explained that, depending on their qualifications and skills, they are given responsibility for a certain part of the curriculum by the school management. "I teach physical education and languages," Ambika Mohanty gives us a concrete example and explains:



"I think about how to teach the children a language, for example, to the very young ones.

When the children first join us at Balashram, they usually speak a regional dialect that is not well understood, neither by the other children nor by us. It is therefore very important that all children learn Oria (the local language) from the very beginning. And we also make sure that they come into contact with English, as a matter of course, already in kindergarten, because English is the language of instruction at Balashram. This means that the children have a lot to learn - and we have to make sure that, especially in the beginning, they experience learning as something that is fun."

This is where Jayashree Routray comes in - she has been teaching chemistry at Balashram since 2017:

"In the higher classes, the joy of learning has another dimension. We think it is, among other things, comprehension and understanding through experience, which is especially practised in chemistry classes. We start by introducing the pupils to theory, which is not necessarily fun for them. Nobody can see electrons and neutrons, it's all very abstract. But in our well-equipped laboratories, we can show the girls and boys how chemical reactions take place. And when they see that what they have learned in theory, really happens, it triggers in them joy but also pride, which contributes to their self-confidence."

As the conversation continued, it became clearer and clearer that the focus at Balashram was on developing the individual skills of each child, so that each child can find their own special place in the world and fulfil their own personal dream of life. A wide range of extra-curricular activities (beyond the curriculum) are offered to the students to support the processes of self-development.



Jayashree Routray – since 2017 she teaches chemistry at Balashram.



Personal attention and individual support are of central importance at Balashram.

The collegium reported on its efforts to offer graduates, after 10th grade and after 12th grade, appropriate programmes which are developed cooperatively with corporate partners. These would offer vocational training or entry-level jobs, to those who excel in a particular field. Career talks and skills training are also held, where professionals from different sectors are invited to Balashram to teach the children and youth practical skills, such as sewing, or repairing bicycles or computers, cutting hair, cooking and gardening. We are told that the high school programme is being expanded as well, and that the students particularly love the free-time activities - from music and dance to sports and scouting.

It is emphasized that the practical and creative aspect of teaching and learning are the main big differences compared to other schools. In order to ensure the appropriate quality of teaching, the school is constantly expanding the concept. "All teachers attend 75 hours of in-service training per year", explained Vice Principal Vibhuti Daund. It was clear to us that teachers were also in a constant learning process, especially with each new group of children/youth they were taking responsibility for. The educators pointed out that nevertheless, some "learning pressure" could not be avoided even at Balashram. For some, learning at school is more difficult than for others. But the main factor is: "We are always with them; we can always help. And I think that's the key," said one teacher.

Personal attention and individual support are thus considered essential for the children's happiness. "Especially during the early days, personal, individual care is so important. We need to talk a lot with the children and be very patient with them," emphasised the Vice-Director.

The children need a lot of attention, according to the pedagogue, who said: "In the Kindergarten, we currently take care of 15 children per person. We are in the countryside, and it is not always easy to find well-trained staff. Some of our former students, who are now studying at nearby colleges, come to help." All present, readily confirmed that Balashram is "one big family".

While we listened to the teachers' further explanations, we could feel ourselves that caring atmosphere, which allows the children and young people to grow up so peacefully at Balashram. All of them have had an extremely difficult start in life but are now finding support and security at Balashram. Whether a child learns easily or struggles, is more practical or intellectual, shows more sporting or more artistic interests - all are encouraged from the beginning to firmly believe that they can achieve their goals. "Make your Dream a Reality" - that is the school's motto.

"We will help you and be there for you" is the message of the teachers.

»LIFE IS NOT AN EMPTY DREAM« *

HOW THE LIVES OF THE CHILDREN AT BALASHRAM ARE REALIGNING

* Paramahansa Hariharananda, his dream of Balashram has become a reality.



BAISHNAVI joined Balashram in the academic year 2022/23 and she is six years old. She comes from the Kalahandi District and has two sisters. Her parents live in great poverty and her father works hard to provide the family with the basic necessities.

Baishnavi loves to sing and makes up her own songs. She loves to play outside with her friends and often takes on the role of the leader but with joy and the desire to be of help. Baishnavi learns very easily and can already write well. Her desire is to become an engineer and build beautiful bridges.



NILAKANTHA was born in the Gajapati District and celebrated his eighth birthday in June. His father is a farmer and his mother died shortly after Nilakantha was born. He has three brothers and two sisters. For a while he lived with his father and stepmother in very difficult circumstances, in gruelling poverty.

Nilakantha is remarkably bright and very active. He has excellent grades, an alert, open mind and a curious attitude and spirit. He dreams of becoming a scientist and exploring ways to make people's lives less difficult and more beautiful. He wants to find a cure for cancer because he has seen many die from this disease.



KHIRAMANI was born in the Gajapati District and turned 13 last July. Khiramani's father also died early. Her mother, who works on a poultry farm, took care of her only child for as long as she could. She had to finally ask for Khiramani to be admitted to Balashram when she saw that she wasn't able to give her daughter an education.

Khiramani shows great sporting talent and would like to become a Kho-Kho player when she grows up. She likes to be active and fit. Her dream is to be a professional sportswoman who can inspire other women, and to participate in national and international games. For her, being successful would also mean being able to give her mother a better life - and that is a special motivation for her.



SONALI KHUNITA is 15 years old and attends ninth grade. She has been at Balashram for ten years and had just turned four when she arrived.

She remembers well how she was selected for Balashram by the PRAJNANA MISSION committee because her family was in such a difficult situation. Her father was ill and died when Sonali entered first grade.

Sonali is convinced that, had she not been given the chance to join Balashram ten years ago, she wouldn't be doing well now. *"Even though I cried a lot in the beginning and felt alone. But I have experienced so much love - I love all my teachers and they love me; I can feel that"* she says with an expression on her kind face that leaves no doubt about the truthfulness of her words. Her eyes start to sparkle when she talks about her friends, *"They are so good to me and we help each other a lot, they are always there for me. I am really happy and I have a really good circle of friends,"* she says gratefully and continues:

"When I think about what would have happened if I hadn't come here, I feel bad. I would have gone to a public school like my two sisters, but I would have missed all the moral education necessary for my life and to become a good person. I wouldn't learn to dance at a public school either and I wouldn't be able to play all the games in gym class. There are so many different things on offer here.

I couldn't get all that in my village."

Sonali has an easy time at school, she is a very good student, and she likes scientific subjects the most. She would like to go to university and her dream for the future is to become a good doctor. *"Because I can feel how big the problems are in my village because people don't get good medical care and sometimes die because of that - which is very sad. If there is an emergency, you can't be taken to hospital quickly because it is too far away."*

She says: *"There have been improvements in the village. The water supply is good and more and more people in the village can build themselves a proper house. It makes me so happy when I see this, and one day, I want to contribute more to the development of my village."*



ANKITA ADAK was four years old when she came to Balashram. The first four years of her life had been exceptionally difficult.

She was only one year old when her father died. In order to feed the family, her mother tried to find work at a nearby construction site. Ankita remembers when her mother often cried because she had no money to send her daughter to school. But then Ankita came to Balashram, and *"from one moment to the next, nothing was the same anymore"*, she says and elaborates:

"It is only thanks to Balashram that my life changed miraculously.

A needy, dirty, underprivileged child suddenly became a healthy and educated child with a bright future."

Ankita is now 17 years old and attends grade ten. She engages in many of the extracurricular offerings at Balashram, including singing, tailoring, and also music, dance and tabla playing (a traditional Indian instrument with two drums played while sitting on the floor). And in sports, Ankita sometimes achieves outstanding results. She is the proud winner of a sports award. But her greatest passion is dance and she wishes her life to be always filled with dancing.

Professionally, however, Ankita plans a career as a chemistry professor. As her dreams are gradually becoming true, she often thinks about, at some point being able herself to help other children realise their dreams.

"Now I am 17 and studying science in +2 to fulfil my dream of becoming a chemistry professor.

And like Balashram does, one day I want to be able to serve children, so that they can receive a good education, independently of their caste or gender."





THE FIRST ALUMNI MEETING

A letter from Swami Shuddananda Giri

Dear Friends!

On 25 June 2023, we had a wonderful programme at our school, Hariharananda Balashram. Our very first alumni meeting of the Balashram graduates was held at the Sadhana Sadan Auditorium.

The Hariharananda Balashram is a CBSE residential school for orphans, half-orphans and impoverished, destitute children. The children join the school between the ages of four and five, and stay with us for 14 years or until they pass the final exams. After that, we help them transition into a job or further studies (Chrysalis).

The Balashram Residential School was established in 2004. Since then, many students have graduated and left the institution. Some are continuing their studies at university; others are already working.

Under the leadership of Principal Bina Dash, and no doubt with the blessings of God, we organised the first Alumni Reunion. About 120 former students participated in the day-long programme. Vice Principal Vibhuti Daund moderated the programme.

The first batch of children who came to Balashram in the summer of 2004 were our dearest. We spent a lot of time with the first 40 little girls and boys. They sat on our laps and played with us, creating a very special bond. Now, when we see them, all grown up and so mature, tears roll.

After the welcome song (Hey puja atithi e shubha lagane) sung by the Balashram students, the programme started with a welcome speech by the Principal. Then Aradhana Madam, the longest serving teacher, gave a very touching speech describing how much she was missing the children. Swami Jyotirmayananda, the head of Sharada Chhatra-va, the girls' dormitory, looked back into the past in her speech, and told of how it all began.



Bismruti Nayak gives a touching speech at the first alumni meeting; at the age of four, she was one of the first children to join Balashram.

The former students shared their experiences with us. They spoke in such a touching and emotional way, that we had tears in our eyes while listening to them. They told us how they were experiencing and feeling the difference between their new life in the world and the one they had at Balashram. Megha, Saras, Bismrito, Pavitra and Divya spoke all a little longer while others spoke only a few words. But all of them touched us deeply.

Paramahansa Prajnanandaji Maharaj spoke to the children from his heart. Quoting Gandhari when she addressed Lord Krishna (twameva mata cha pita twameva...), Paramahamsaji said that the children were everything to him.

Please find below a few soulful words of love from his talk:



The founder of the school, Paramahansa Prajnanananda, with one of the first children to find a new home at Balashram.

1. In 2002, Balashram was a dream.
2. You all are my dream.
3. Never forget your character (चरित्र), your ideal (आदर्श), your gratitude (कृतज्ञता) and your love for the country (देश भक्ति).
4. Go back to your villages where you were born. Love your village and its people.
5. Have you kept the routine from Balashram? Early rising, prayer, meditation, etc.?
6. Have control over what you eat.
7. There is no need for non-vegetarian food. It spoils the mind and life.
8. You have received an all-encompassing education, always remember it, and apply it in your daily life.
9. This education is not an education which you forget and don't practice.
10. Minimize salt, oil, and sugar (SOS) in your food.
11. Grudev says: पुत्रात् शिष्यात् पराजय, which means that children should surpass their parents and students should surpass their teachers.
12. Always be successful.
13. Follow what you have learnt. Your conscience will guide you.
14. If you know something good, practice it and live it.
15. Work hard; trust yourself and God.



In 20 years, Balashram has grown into an impressive campus. To date, 922 children have found a home there, 244 have already moved out into the world, and 121 came to the first alumni reunion.



A HIGH VISIT AT BALASHRAM

A SUMMARY OF THE SPEECH GIVEN BY THE GOVERNOR OF ODISHA

By Prashanth Vasudevan

On 8 December 2022, the honourable Governor of Odisha, Prof. Ganesh Lal, visited Balashram.

This was a very special honour for all the staff at Balashram, and especially for the children and students. It is unusual for such a senior personality to visit a school and even less for a person of such stature to stay longer than the normally allocated 45 minutes.

Everyone at Balashram was filled with pride.

The governor gave a very nice speech, which he framed as a conversation with the students. He spurred them on to excellence and success, both in terms of human values and academically.



The governor began his speech with a few questions for the students:

What is Harihar?

It is a state without ego. It is a feeling of oneness with the whole creation.

What is Ananda?

It is beyond words. No words are sufficient to describe Ananda. It is when every nerve and cell dances in ecstatic joy. It is love. It is being at peace. It is life. Ananda is a mysterious word.

What is Bal?

Bal in Sanskrit means child, so what is the meaning of a child?

The smile of a child is the smiling tenderness of divinity within. The twinkle in a child's eyes is the twinkle in the eyes of the Lord of the Universe. A child has the immeasurable ability to do anything and everything. A child can change the entire history of humankind. In fact, the entire creation is the manifestation of God. A child represents the beauty of such a great deity.

What is Ashrama?

It is a hope. It is divine. It is a fresh breath.

What is Bharata?

Bharata is the ancient name of India.

You all are Bharata, the growing and bright children who are the most beautiful manifestation of divinity. You represent the future, growth, and evolution.

You all have the great fortune to be in this place. You are all innocent and divine. You are the dewdrops on the leaves in the morning sun reflecting the rainbow colours. I wish the whole world would become childlike. I really wish that all the powerful people in the world, both in politics and in business, would become childlike and the world would become a better place. Wars would end. Peace would prevail.



Balashram-Schoolgirls give a dance performance in honour of the visit of Prof. Ganesh Lal, Governor of Odisha.

TEN YEARS OF HARIHARANANDA CHARITABLE HEALTH CENTRE (HCHC) IN JAGATPUR

A heartfelt THANK YOU, dear friends and companions of HAND IN HAND!

So much has been achieved since Jagatpur's HCHC inaugural celebration ten years ago. This past decade has undoubtedly been a great success story, especially when it comes to helpfulness and volunteering. At present, 43 doctors provide general and specialist medical services free of charge. Together with 13 other staff members, they assist, every day, between 200 and 300 sick people who would otherwise not be able to afford medical treatment. Thus, the HCHC stands especially for the concept of "charity and altruism" and we have to thank YOU from the bottom of our hearts for this. YOU, the numerous supporters of HAND IN HAND, have made ten years of Jagatpur HCHC possible!

It all started in a garage

In 1999, the small Hariharananda Charitable Health Centre (HCHC) in Cuttack started providing patient care. In 2014, this beneficial era came to an end and a new one began just a kilometre away: The first patients already filled the new HCHC Day Clinic in Jagatpur on its opening day, on 14 February. The Clinic – a three-storey building – was planned well in advance, and then built in record time as soon as the required funds had been raised. Only 15 months after the groundbreaking ceremony, more than 800 people celebrated the opening of the new Health Centre as "God's gift to the poorest of the poor". Among the guests were spiritual and respected Odisha personalities from political, academic, and medical backgrounds.



Photos taken at the opening ceremony of the HCHC Day Clinic in Jagatpur on 14 February 2014.



Nothing would work without the help of volunteers and supporters

Around 13 retired medical professionals from various disciplines were soon ready to offer their services, free of charge, to the Jagatpur HCHC. Two others who were not yet retired but offered specialist care, received a modest salary. It is thanks to all of them and to YOU, dear donors, and supporters of HAND IN HAND, that a small treatment room in Cuttack could become what the first Health Centre of PRAJNANA MISSION, the local partner organisation of HAND IN HAND, is today: a widely respected charitable day clinic with the potential to grow into a hospital.



Your donations, dear HAND IN HAND supporters, and 15 medical professionals who provided their services, enabled the opening of the Hariharananda Charitable Health Centre in Jagatpur, in 2014. Pictures above show impressions of the Health Centre. The volunteers working there in 2014 are/were: Dr. Bhanja Kishore Sarangi (X-ray), Dr. Bhagabat Bal (Surgery), Dr. Ramesh Routray (Surgery), Dr. P. K. Bhuyan (General and Internal Medicine), Dr. Shishir Behera (Dentistry), Dr. Purna Chandra Mohapatra (Dentistry), Dr. Arakhit Prusty (ENT), Dr. Debabrata Sahaney (Ophthalmology), Dr. Santibala (Paediatrics), Arakhit Prusty (ENT), Dr. Debabrata Sahaney (Ophthalmology), Dr. Santibala (Paediatrics), Dr. Durga Charan Jena (Dermatology), Dr Jagdev (General and Internal Medicine), Dr D N Sarangi (General and Internal Medicine), Dr Ratnakar Panda (General and Internal Medicine), Dr Sanjiv Satpathy.

HELP CAN BE VERY CONTAGIOUS - AND THAT IS THE SECRET OF SUCCESS



India is a deeply spiritual country and the respect of the people of Odisha for Paramahansa Hariharananda and his successor Paramahansa Prajnanananda, who is the founder of PRAJNANA MISSION, is immense.

Their love and compassion are literally “contagious”. It motivates many to volunteer at the Jagatpur HCHC. “*It was only there, that we really started to understand what it means to serve humanity*”, recalls a board member of HAND IN HAND.

The doctors working for PRAJNANA MISSION are as grateful as their patients for the “*enormous efforts that PRAJNANA MISSION takes on to help needy and poor people whilst giving us the opportunity to effectively serve others*”, Dr. Bhagabat Bal sums up the attitude of the volunteers.

Paramahansa Prajnanananda, the founder of PRAJNANA MISSION, at the opening of the new clinic.

HAND IN HAND EUROPE VISITS THE CLINIC IN FEBRUARY 2023 – A REPORT ON SITE

When we, from HAND IN HAND Austria, Germany, France, the Netherlands and Switzerland visited the HCHC Jagatpur in February, the manager of the clinic, Dr. Rashmi Ranjan Mishra (in the picture 2nd from right), was already waiting for us at the entrance. Dr Rashmi Ranjan Mishra has been working as a doctor for PRAJNANA MISSION for more than 22 years. He had already been a front man in the first HCHC in Cuttack. When asked what the exact designation of his function in the clinic was today, the medical doctor answered with honest modesty and with an infectious smile:

“I only serve.”

The many people waiting at the reception near the main entrance who were observing us visitors curiously, started asking us questions after a while. Most of them were holding a piece of paper in their hand, and we learnt that they were waiting for the results of an X-ray or a blood test.

It was amazing to see what could be acquired with the donations to HAND IN HAND since 2014.

For example, important analysis equipment that can measure up to 300 parameters within 10 to 20 minutes, as well as hardware and software for documenting medical histories. And, in the spring of 2020, the long-awaited radiology service started operating as well.



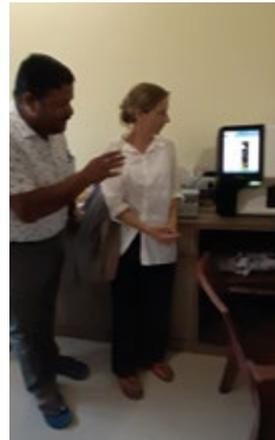
Members of HAND IN HAND Austria, France, the Netherlands, and Switzerland with the Manager of Jagatpur HCHC in the entrance area.

Dr Rashmi Ranjan Mishra explained that they started with a semi-automatic analysis device in 2014. Later on, due to the great demand in pathology, a fully automatic biochemical analysis device, a Na/K and a coagulation analysis device were purchased on 10 August 2019. A 300 mA X-ray machine with a Fujitsu CR machine was installed on 14 Febru-

ary 2020. The fact that X-rays and blood tests can now also be done at the HCHC, is crucial for diagnostics. For many people, who often come on foot and from distant regions of Odisha, this service is what makes in-depth treatment possible in the first place - and because all is free of charge for those in need.



Many people wait here for the results of their X-rays or blood tests. Fortunately, both have been possible here on site for several years now.



This woman also had to travel a long way to find treatment at Jagatpur HCHC.

FURTHER GOALS: EXPANSION OF THE PATHOLOGY AND PHYSIOTHERAPY DEPARTMENTS



Manas Ranjan Nayak, lab technician

As soon as the necessary financial and human resources are available, the plans already drawn up for the further expansion of pathology and diagnostics, will be implemented. The clinic's management hopes that immunological analyses will also be possible in the near future. The costs for such an analysis device amount to about 17,000 Euros.

A larger room is therefore needed for the laboratory, which should be on the same floor with all the other units that are connected to the laboratory.

This for a good reason:

“At the moment, when the doctors send people for a test, they have to go downstairs to get the necessary papers and then back upstairs to draw the blood and so on. This up and down of doctors and patients means that the staircase is almost constantly full of people. That’s why we have decided to move the laboratory to the ground floor, where the physiotherapy department is at the moment,” described Swami Achalananda, the managing director of PRAJNANA MISSION, about the current situation.



Rojalin Das and Swadhin Kumar Jena, lab technicians



The only physiotherapist now, Janmajaya Behera, is reaching his limits. The plan is to expand physiotherapy in terms of space and staff.

The physiotherapy department is also reaching its limits and has to be moved to larger premises. Over time, it has established itself as an alternative to drug pain therapy, and increasingly, also integrates offers for preventive treatments – according to the motto: prevention is better than cure.

“It is important for people to know how to better maintain their health so that they can work and thus provide for their families,” said the surgeon Dr Baghat Bal, who never tires of emphasising the importance of good health in the fight against poverty.

Since last year, patients have been receiving training on how to better maintain their health, especially in very stressful life situations; they also learn physiotherapeutic yoga exercises. Physiotherapy is running at full speed, claimed the management, who explained:

“On average, 35 to 40 patients come every day. And we only have one physiotherapist who doesn’t know how to do it all by himself when so many more patients need his help. In the near future, we will expand the centre’s premises step by step and that will allow us to take care of many more people. We don’t know yet if we will need an additional room outside the clinic building, so that’s still unclear, but we know we need to get bigger.”

FROM DAY CLINIC TO HOSPITAL - THIS VISION IS TO BECOME REALITY



Dr Baghat Bal in one of the mobile health camps that the PRAJNANA MISSION also offers.

Not only has the clinic made an excellent name for itself far and wide with its outstanding services in physiotherapy, its fully utilized dental clinic ward and its expanding pathology department, but especially with its surgical treatments of, for example, diabetic foot ulcers and burns.

Swami Achalananda told us that a young judge, who used to work in a district of Odisha 400 km away, had heard about the Hariharananda Charitable Health Centre in Jagatpur and that it was “the best”. Later, when the young judge moved near Cuttack, he brought his mother to HCHC Jagatpur.

“A man in such a high position would normally go to a private hospital nearby, however, he wanted to have his mother treated at the Jagatpur HCHC. Subsequently he also offered his support to the Health Centre,” reported Swamiji.



Dr. Baghat Bal and Hara Priya Behera treating a head injury in the operating room. The clinic has made a good name for itself with minor surgical procedures. Larger operations should also be possible in the future.

The number of patients coming to the clinic who can pay for their treatments at the Jagatpur HCHC is increasing. We were told that this means that they can support the treatment of destitute people; 30% of the costs can already be raised this way. A few years ago, the Health Centre could only dream of such a situation as they were 100% dependent on donations. In the long term, the operators aim to use this income to set up a pharmacy service that can be self-supporting.

However, the Managing Director of PRAJNANA MISSION, Swami Achalananda, attributed the clinic's good reputation not only to the quality of the medical services, but also

to the fact that there is a very special atmosphere of charity and altruism at the Jagatpur HCHC and that all the staff is in good spirits and very friendly.

“Not far from the Jagatpur HCHC is a state university clinic. From there, more and more (specialist) doctors come to the Jagatpur HCHC to look after the sick and work with us.”

Asked about the reasons, the answer is always the same, according to Swami Achalananda, who elaborated:

“It is, they say, the respectful and cooperative approach at Jagatpur HCHC, the good-humoured staff, the cleanliness and hygiene, and last but not least, the modern facilities at the clinic“.

“Only a few years ago, we would have been urgently looking for doctors ourselves. Now they are knocking on our door – we have been waiting for this moment,“ said the Swami happily. The aforementioned advantages also offer great potential for further development of the Jagatpur HCHC and of the other Health Centres of PRAJNANA MISSION: If enough competent doctors work for the HCHC, the charitable project can develop further.

“For the future, we are thinking of a good surgeon who can and wants to offer us his services free of charge. We are already doing small surgeries with local anaesthesia very successfully, and we think that in the future we could do more and bigger surgeries. We could then keep the patients for a few days at the Jagatpur HCHC, and would also need nursing staff, thus slowly developing from a day clinic to a real hospital,“ explained Swami Achalananda.





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