



SPOTLIGHT

The HAND IN HAND Magazine 2024/25 · www.handinhand.at · info@handinhand.at

A YEAR OF
ANNIVERSARIES!

Thank you!

**“The highest education is that
which does not merely give us information but makes
our life in harmony with all existence.”**

Rabindranath Tagore

The school is an effervescent source of inspiration for a fulfilled life, not only for the children of Balashram but also for all the visitors. On the impressive campus in the middle of the vast rice fields of Arua, one is inevitably overcome by a sense of connection and happiness.

Balashram and the Hariharananda Charitable Health Centres (HCHC) are the vision of a remarkable monk, whose compassion aligns with the aspirations of countless people for a better world and a fulfilling life.

With every patient receiving medical care at the HCHC, hope takes root, and with every neglected child who finds a home, care, and friendship at Balashram, along with the opportunity to attend school, another dream begins to blossom and come to life.

You, dear supporters of HAND IN HAND, enable the children to establish strong foundations and confidently forge their own paths as young individuals, with an unwavering belief in the true goodness of life. The commitment to being there for others becomes a lifelong guiding principle for the children of Balashram because they understand what it means to be freed from the grip of hardship and poverty. With YOUR HELP transforming the children's lives, they may one day create positive change in society. That is the goal.

Dear friends, feel a part of this great HAND IN HAND family, where even the smallest contribution makes a difference. Let us come together to celebrate global solidarity in this special anniversary year! Together, HAND IN HAND.



EDITORIAL



Dear Friends of HAND IN HAND!

Fifty years ago, in 1974, Paramahansa Hariharananda made his first journey to the West, arriving in Switzerland. To commemorate this significant anniversary, the Balashram Trek 2024 was held there. Everyone who participated in the trek found great joy and inspiration in honouring Paramahansa Hariharananda (p. 16).

This remarkable monk envisioned providing education and medical care for the most disadvantaged, dedicating his life to selfless service. Through his efforts, he laid the foundation for the realisation of a dream: the Hariharananda Charitable Health Centres and the Hariharananda Balashram Residential School (p. 17).

The school, now celebrating its 20th anniversary, was founded by his worthy successor, Paramahansa Prajnanananda, who made his first visit to Vienna exactly 30 years ago – another milestone anniversary!

Just a few years later, in March 2000, HAND IN HAND was established in Vienna, marking the beginning of the collaboration between PRAJNANA MISSION and HAND IN HAND 25 years ago. And in spring 2025, we will therefore also be celebrating 25 years of Hariharananda Charitable Health Centres (p. 18).

All of this coincides with 20 years of the HAND IN HAND donation seal of approval (p. 24). The 1,000 children who have been provided with a genuine opportunity for a better life at Balashram, along with the 1.8 million individuals who have received medical care in our Health Centres to date, are remarkable achievements that undoubtedly reflect 20 years of generous donations and the responsible use of them!

This is all thanks to YOU, dear friends and supporters of HAND IN HAND from India, the USA, Europe, and around the globe, who have helped tirelessly (p. 26).

THANK YOU from the bottom of my heart!

Yours, Peter van Breukelen

CONTENTS

- 5 How it all began –
25 years of HAND IN HAND
- 6 A big dream full of life
- 8 My heart belongs to the children
- 10 One of the success stories
from Balashram
- 11 Breaking the chains of poverty –
this institution makes it possible
- 12 The process by which children are
admitted to school
- 13 New home at Balashram
- 14 Education for more young
people - a look into the future
- 16 Raising funds through the
beautiful Balashram treks -
in support of a noble mission
- 18 25 years of Hariharananda
Charitable Health Centres
- 24 20 years of the HAND IN HAND -
Donation Seal of Approval
- 26 Art and social responsibility go
'HAND IN HAND' - Recent examples

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Media owner and publisher:
HAND IN HAND

Organisation for Humanitarian Aid
A-1120 Vienna, Pohlsgasse 10/4/7
A-2523 Tattendorf, Pottendorfer Str. 69
Telephone: +43 650 7026050
Email: info@handinhand.at
Website: www.handinhand.at
ZVR number 622986022

Editorial and responsibility:
Peter van Breukelen, Uschi Schmidtke,
Kriemhild Leitner

Editorial staff: Patrizia Brunelli,
Linda Hawkings, Christine Schweinöster,
Mette Koivusalo

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**‘Every donation given by your hand will be received by a
relieved hand and a radiant smile.’**

Paramahansa Prajnanananda at the founding of HAND IN HAND in spring 2000



One of the very first board meetings of HAND IN HAND with (from right) Annemarie Ackerl, Martin Gostentschnig, Peter van Breukelen, Paramahansa Prajnanananda, Swami Mangalananda, Anneliese Mixan (today, Swami Nisangananda), Irma Botero and Heinz Medek

HAND IN HAND's partner organisation, PRAJNANA MISSION, located in Cuttack, India, was founded by Paramahansa Hariharananda and established under the guidance of Paramahansa Prajnanananda. The mission of PRAJNANA MISSION is to promote simple and spiritual living, combined with high thinking and a commitment to serving humanity. It was officially registered on 12th February 1999, just a few months before the devastating cyclone struck the already impoverished mainland of eastern India, with tremendous force on 20-30th October 1999. As a consequence, millions of people lost everything they owned, tens of thousands lost their lives, and countless children were left in unimaginable misery.

HOW IT ALL BEGAN - 25 YEARS OF HAND IN HAND

An announcement by Paramahansa Prajnanananda,
Founder of PRAJNANA MISSION
and Co-Founder of HAND IN HAND

"I was in Columbia at the time, and I knew nothing about the disaster until a yoga student spoke to me about it, her name was Ines,"

recalls Paramahansa Prajnanananda of the devastating event in his home country and explains how the idea of founding HAND IN HAND came about:

"Ines came to me to tell me that this had happened in Odisha. It was only then that I learnt about the devastating cyclone. Then she gave me \$500 and asked me to send the money there so that help could be provided.

*And at that moment, the idea came.
That was the seed."*

In Vienna/Austria, too, a handful of people wanted just one thing: to help after this tragedy! They gathered, engaged in extensive discussions, and bravely considered their options, all while searching for the right name for their planned aid initiative. The pivotal idea for the name HAND IN HAND came from founding member Irma Botero, as shared by Paramahansa Prajnanananda.

Thus began the story of the organisation for humanitarian help HAND IN HAND, which Paramahansa Prajnanananda lovingly announced on 27th March 2000, during a gathering of a small yoga group in Vienna:

"Before we start the meditation, there is a small announcement, the announcement of the birth of a new baby. This baby needs the love, care and attention of its parents and relatives.

Now you may be wondering, who is this baby?

"We are human beings, and God has given us two hands. One hand to care for ourselves and a second hand to care for others. This is the creation of God. And for this purpose, God has given us two hands. One hand for ourselves, the other hand for others.

"So, a baby was born, and his name is HAND IN HAND. You may now be asking yourself: What does all this mean? HAND IN HAND really is a baby.

It should bring a smile to many people's faces. And because the baby is so pure, beautiful and simple, it is loved by everyone. And this baby we are talking about here is an organisation. It has nothing to do with Kriya meditation, and yet it is an aspect of it, its practical side: helping people when they need help.

"In this world, need is growing, and greed is increasing. People are becoming more and more selfish and greedy. At the same time, however, there are more and more loving and helpful people.

"This baby organisation was born here in this place [Kriya Yoga Centre Vienna], after the great cyclone disaster in Orissa [today Odisha], where thousands and thousands of people died within a few hours. And this organisation, HAND IN HAND, has three goals: To assist individuals during natural disasters and emergencies, to offer medical care to the underprivileged, and to provide education.

"This baby needs the love and care of everyone, and it will grow up under the loving care of Peter Baba [Peter van Breukelen]. He is the president of HAND IN HAND."

A BIG DREAM FULL OF LIFE

By Peter van Breukelen, President of HAND IN HAND



It began with a terrible deluge, a great flood. So many died, so many were in great distress. The disaster happened on the east coast of India where we had our Kriya Yoga programmes, where we had received so much. And now we wanted to give something back, we wanted to help.

I was very worried about the many children who had already been living in terrible poverty and were now experiencing unimaginable suffering. They had no, absolutely no chance of a good life and, of course, no chance of a good education. Their situation was dire, and they were in desperate need of help.

I was so inspired by Paramahansa Prajnanananda's vision of founding a school and helping these children that I was determined to contribute. Yes, and now I've been President of HAND IN HAND for 25 years, and for me that is above all Balashram.

In the beginning, Balashram was very small, consisting of just one donated building, which served as the kindergarten. At that time, there was only one class with 35 children. It was very nice, though everything was simple and modest because we had limited funds. Over time, Balashram steadily grew, with about 40 new children joining each year. By the second year, there were already 80 children, and by the third year, 120 little residents. Thus, Balashram continued to grow.

I visit the children every year. I especially love spending time with the little ones; they are so genuine and completely open. Whenever they are with me, I feel as though they are my own children. I feel like a grandfather. The little girls and boys who are admitted to Balashram come from very, very poor backgrounds and often from tribal areas. Many are half-orphans and some no longer have parents.

I see the children for the first time when they come to the Balashram and are often less than four or five years old.

At the beginning, when everything is strange to them, they cry a little, but then they blossom and grow, you can see how they become stronger day by day, their energy increases - all of a sudden, they are so full of life!

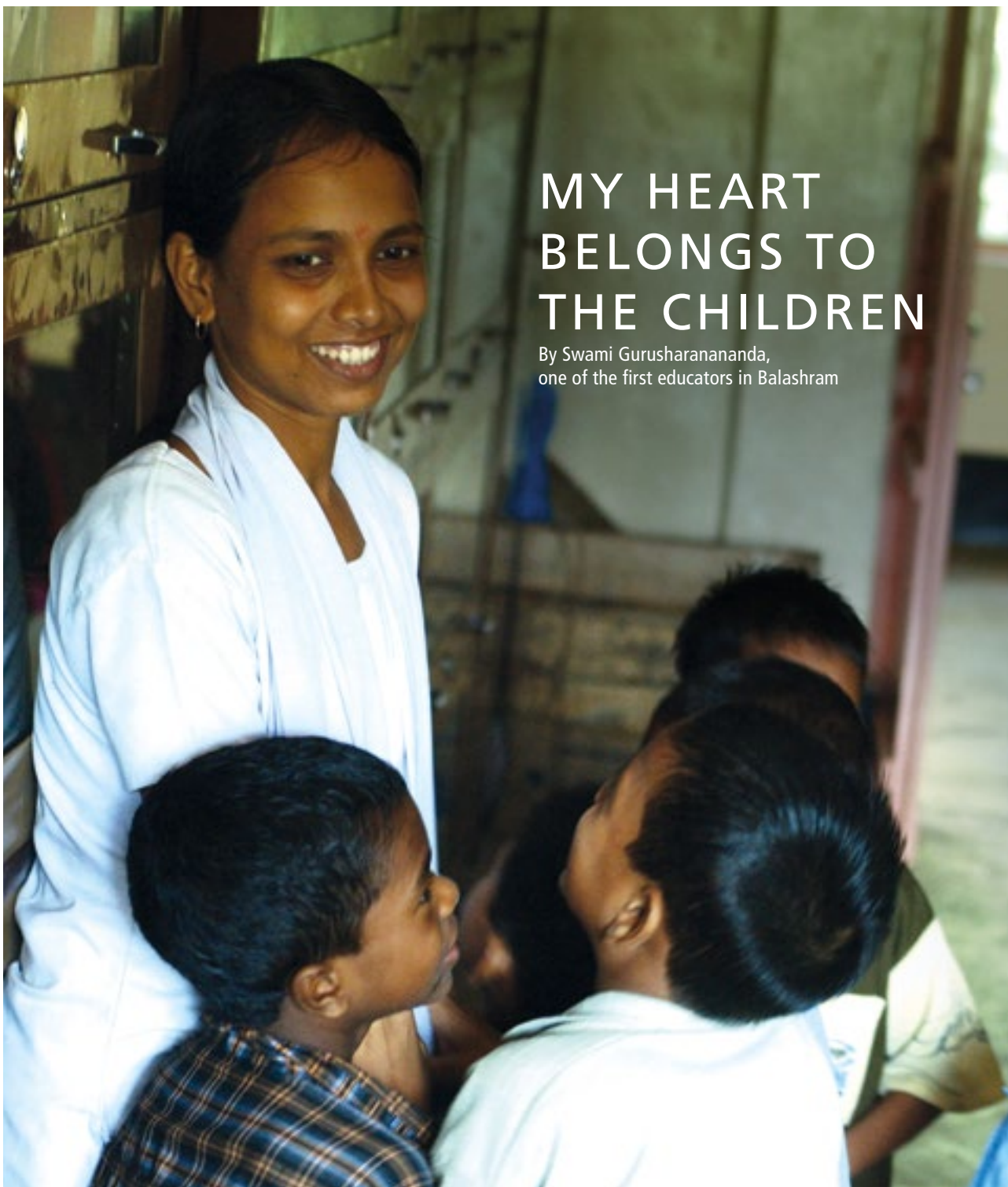
The care, upbringing and education at Balashram are very nice. The life of the girls and boys in Balashram is completely balanced. They get the right food, the right education and training, the right exercise, a wide range of art, music, dance, sport and games and learn practical life skills. And the perfect combination of all this is what makes the school such a wonderful place!

I am very grateful that I can help and see how the children grow up. When they grow up, they learn a trade or go to university and college. But even when the children have finished school, Balashram continues to look after them. Balashram is the children's home. And they are cared for until they are completely free and independent, until they no longer need our help.

Especially if they are orphans, we have to take care of them, they only have us, we are their parents. Balashram is a family and Paramahansa Prajnanananda is Baba to the children, their father. And I hope that soon there will also be the first wedding celebrations when our grown-up children want to get married and have children of their own.

The world is very big, and it is impossible to help everyone. So, you have to make a start. Balashram started out so small. When I see what the school has become today, it all seems like a big dream.





MY HEART BELONGS TO THE CHILDREN

By Swami Gurusharanananda,
one of the first educators in Balashram

For me, Balashram is a temple of 'Jnana and Seva' - of knowledge and selfless service. I am firmly convinced that those who serve this noble purpose and thus contribute to the realisation of a great, loving dream for humanity, are blessed.

Balashram is the dream of Shri Gurudev Paramahansa Hariharanandaji. Many people have contributed, directly or indirectly, to the realisation and development of the school over the past 20 years. And I had the privilege of serving there for 12 years under the guidance of Shri Guruji Paramahansa Prajnananandaji. My spiritual journey began at Balashram.



It was in August 2002, before the completion of the first Residential Brahmachari Training Course (RBTC) in Bali-ghai, when Shri Guruji Paramahansa Prajnananandaji spoke to some of us about the planned Balashram. We were to receive training to work at the residential school, and I felt an immediate desire to serve the children.

On 21st June 2004, I arrived in the small village of Arua, where a new Kindergarten, Balashram, was about to open amidst the green rice fields. I was just moving into Balashram, when the first 35 little girls and boys (many of whom orphans) arrived with their families. The children were so happy when they saw the toys, biscuits and chocolate on their new beds, but after their relatives had left, they all started crying at the same time, as if in chorus, and we had our hands full trying to calm the little flock.

From the very beginning, it was a challenge to familiarise myself with the children's habits, their food and their health and to understand their language, as they all spoke very different dialects. I quickly realised how much patience would be required to fulfil the task I had taken on and to look after the children's needs, their well-being and their education. It meant 24 hours of seva a day.

Shri Guruji Paramahansa Prajnananandaji, Swami Shuddhanandaji, Swami Brahmanandaji and Swami Samarpananandaji as well as other monks and scholars frequently visited us at Balashram. They gave us their time to give us moral support and deepen our understanding so that we could treat the children with utmost love and care. Slowly, Balashram grew and developed into a loving and supportive environment for the children.

Shri Guruji Paramahansa Prajnananandaji often emphasised that children are our future and taught us to treat them as children of God. Not only do we educate and teach the young girls and boys, but they also serve as our teachers. They observe us closely, including our patience, knowledge, and understanding.

We learned that to lift a child, you must bend down to their level. This means that by tuning into a child level and taking their perspective, it becomes easy to understand their nature, health, and thought processes, ultimately helping them develop their potential and realise their dreams.

When I think of Balashram, I feel an overwhelming sense of gratitude. It is for Shri Guruji and the children and all the staff of Balashram, the teachers, the caretakers and office staff, the kindergarten teachers and educators, simply everyone who has worked at Balashram for many years, and for everyone at HAND IN HAND who works behind the scenes to raise funds and make the school's development possible. You have all provided me with the opportunity to serve at Balashram for 12 years.

I am so happy to see that some of the children from the first three or four years have found work in both the government and private sector; others are continuing their studies. I now know with certainty that divine wishes are reflected in pure hearts, and these wishes are being realised.

My heart belongs to the children of Balashram.

ONE OF THE SUCCESS STORIES FROM BALASHRAM

By Swami Divyaswarupananda,
Managing Director of PRAJNANA MISSION

*"I will live life such that
all those who helped me in
Balashram school, and outside
also, will be happy with me –
they should feel proud of me."*

Satyakam Rout

In the remote region of Kendrapara in Odisha, in 2004, far from the hustle and bustle of everyday life, a mother is fighting to survive for herself and her son. Her husband has died, and the woman is destitute. However, she firmly believes in a positive turn of fate. After all, as the saying goes: 'Whom God protects, no frost can harm.' In 2007, she finally receives assistance: her son is chosen for admission to the Balashram Kindergarten!



At Balashram, the little boy no longer has to worry about his survival, and his talents start to flourish. He demonstrates exceptional ability in science and maths, but he is also diligent and eager to learn in all subjects. He understands that very few people receive such an opportunity in life!

He successfully completes his final exams in year ten with 89 out of 100 points and in year twelve in science with over 90% of the required points. He then set his sights on studying chemistry and completes his bachelor's degree. He then took the Joint Admission Test at the prestigious Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), achieving an impressive rank of 154. This is a remarkable accomplishment in such a

competitive and fiercely contested field!

The staff at Balashram are thrilled with the outcome, but most of all, of course his mother. Despite the challenges she faced, she went above and beyond to ensure her child could attend Balashram.

All of us at PRAJNANA MISSION and HAND IN HAND are proud of Satyakam Rout's achievement. He was admitted to the Indian Institute of Technology in Madras to study for a Master's degree in chemistry.

This success story was made possible not least by YOUR DONATION.

Thank you from the bottom of our hearts!

BREAKING THE CHAINS OF POVERTY

– THIS INSTITUTION MAKES IT POSSIBLE!

Conversation with Swami Achalananda, Vice-President of PRAJNANA MISSION

The children at Hariharananda Balashram truly come from the poorest of poor families. Many are half or full orphans, or/and have to go hungry, receive no schooling and often no protection. The little girls and boys often come from low castes, which are exploited and discriminated against in India to this day. They know no other way and quickly identify with the degrading social categorisation and the plight of their families. It is crucial for them to arrive at Balashram at kindergarten age so they can quickly make up for what they have missed up to that point.



Swami Achalananda,
Vice-President of the
PRAJNANA MISSION

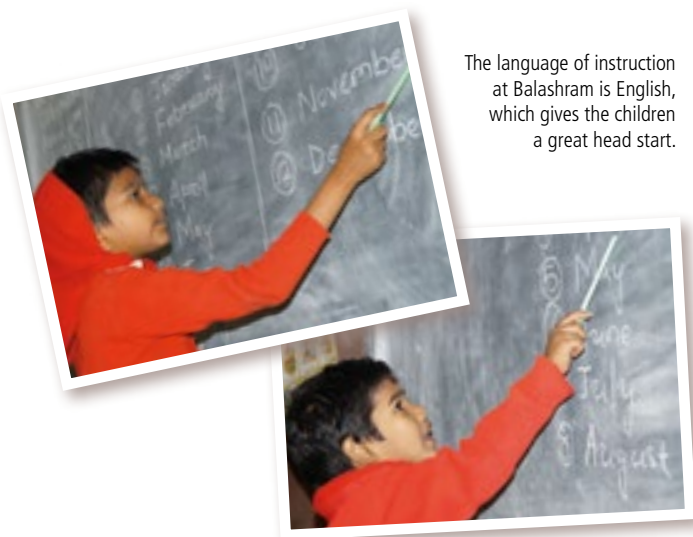
What's more, the first headmaster of Balashram, Samnath Mishra, emphasised at the opening of the school that "in Orissa [now Odisha], an English-language education was previously reserved for the privileged classes who could afford it."

As the language of instruction at Balashram is now English, the children have gained a great advantage, according to the teacher, who said: "The underprivileged are suddenly one step ahead."

Here, they can unlock their potential and later play a significant role in driving social change themselves. Swami Achalananda, Managing Director for many years and now Vice President of PRAJNANA MISSION (HAND IN HAND's

partner organisation), on Balashram and its students:

"The task that Balashram has set itself since its foundation is to filter out children from extremely poor backgrounds who would otherwise either perish or become marginalised, socially disadvantaged members of society and usually slip into crime. And then to offer these children an environment in which they can grow up to be self-confident and responsible people who contribute to society according to their own abilities – that is what we strive for. We only accept 40 pupils a year – which is admittedly no more than a small drop in the ocean – but we hope that this small drop can really make a difference in society, that small changes in the present can make big changes possible in the future."



The language of instruction at Balashram is English, which gives the children a great head start.

Meghanad Gahir, graduate of Balashram, received the award for 'Best Junior Designer'.



THE PROCESS BY WHICH CHILDREN ARE ADMITTED TO SCHOOL

Conversation with Swami Sugitananda, Treasurer of PRAJNANA MISSION and Head of the admission procedure

Over the past 20 years, Balashram has become very popular in Odisha, especially among low-income and impoverished families. Application forms are available in many villages and are typically managed by senior members of the community, who assist in completing the forms since many applicants are often unable to read or write.

By now, the Balashram graduates also offer assistance from time to time. Many of them regularly return to their villages to help enhance the standard of living and submit application forms to Balashram on behalf of families in terrible hardship.

A skilled team from PRAJNANA MISSION evaluates the circumstances of the individuals involved and conducts an initial review of the applications, prompting questions such as: What kind of environment are the children growing up in; do they lack emotional security; how disastrous is their financial situation; what is their state of health?

The first selection process was carried out by Raj Kishore Nanda, Swami Brahmajnanananda and Swami Anandananda at the beginning of 2004, exactly 20 years ago. Swami Sugitananda has been leading this very demanding and difficult survey process since spring 2021. Under his leadership, the 20th selection process has now taken place for the 2023/24 school year.

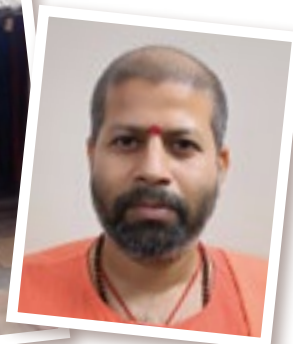
And we can be proud: for two decades, we have managed to admit 40 children every year – and with great effort! The selection team covers a distance of 80 to 1000 kilometres for each interview. The vehicle also carries food, water, cooking utensils, and bed linens due to the fact that their journeys frequently lead them to remote tribal areas.

“The challenges include not only finding a suitable place to spend the night, but also the lack of availability of food and water in some places. The journey takes us through malaria-infested areas, and we have to take great care of our health. We often have difficulty finding a suitable place to rest. The team must therefore be fit enough. In many

cases, we have to leave the car behind and only get to the applicants' houses on foot,” Swami Sugitananda describes the difficult endeavour.

He notes that another challenge is the language barrier. While Odia is the national language, many people in the villages often do not understand it.

An interpreter who can translate into the local dialect often has to be found, says the Swami, who assures: *“However, the people are generally delighted and welcome the research team in their villages with open arms. They can hardly believe that their children should have the opportunity to go to school or even study. Boys and girls are included in the survey in equal measures. Then, in addition to the information we have already gathered from the application, we collect relevant data, take photos, interview people, etc. All information from the survey is stored and analysed in a database.”*



Swami Sugitananda leads the admission process of the Balashram residential school.





Swami Sugitananda with the children newly admitted to Balashram on 21 June. They were warmly welcomed with an ice cream - for most of the children it was their first ice cream.



NEW HOME AT BALASHRAM

Based on the information collected during the admission process, 20 girls and 20 boys are then carefully selected, and an additional five girls and five boys are placed on a waiting list. This is due to the fact that some children often leave Balashram again within the first few months. This is often happening because parents want to take their child back home with them. To counteract this, they are sometimes given financial support from the school to allow them to visit their child at Balashram.



Many families cannot be contacted by telephone or other means, so in those instances, the village council acts as a mediator with the school. In June 2024, another 40 children were admitted. The older pupils at Balashram prepared a lovely welcome party for the new arrivals and their parents on 11th May, by providing them with food and showing them around their new home. Before their final admission, the children are thoroughly examined by Dr Kishore Chandra Mishra (paediatrician) and Dr Sanchit Sethy (general practitioner). Many of them suffer from malnutrition. However, with Balashram as their new home, they all begin to receive good medical care and adequate nutrition.

On 21st June 2024, the time had finally come: the new Kindergarten children received their first blackboard and were symbolically introduced to the world of education according to ancient Indian tradition. 'Akshara Abhyasa' is the name of this custom, which symbolises their newfound involvement in social life.



EDUCATION FOR MORE YOUNG PEOPLE - A LOOK INTO THE FUTURE

Paramahansa Prajnanananda, founding member of HAND IN HAND, outlined his vision of HAND IN HAND for the future at the General Assembly for the financial year 2023/24.

Balashram and village schools' network

Balashram is a residential school, so the expenses associated with its maintenance are significant. HAND IN HAND and its partner organisation, PRAJNANA MISSION, cannot afford a second or third Balashram. However, further educational work is urgently needed. A few years ago, the idea of setting up a day school for poor children in each of Odisha's 30 districts was born. Like in regular schools, the children can study there, have a meal and then go home again in the evening.

For various reasons, only one such school could be established to date. The establishment of additional day schools would also benefit Balashram by allowing for the selection of promising students from the day schools to join the residential school.

Until now, some information was lacking when selecting the children. Yes, we recognize their significant poverty and challenging family circumstances. However, some of those admitted, struggle to meet the demands of school and find



it challenging to adapt. They pose a considerable challenge for Balashram.

The children chosen for the proposed day schools would come from the same dire circumstances as all the other children at Balashram. This would keep the concept consistent, but the selection would be even more differentiated and the offer to support the children according to their abilities would be more varied and therefore even more fruitful for everyone involved. The talented students could reintegrate into society after finishing their education, making a significant impact and assisting other children in need.

‘Education, real education’ is required,

Paramahansa Prajnanananda explained to the group and said openly:



“To be honest, I have not yet found my vision of education that satisfies me in my heart, realised. Balashram is doing a good job, but it is not yet the kind of education I dream of. You will now ask: ‘What do you dream of?’

“That the children of Balashram are so dynamic that they can really bring change to society.

“We don’t just train them to find a good job later on. That is not enough. Yes, they can support their families. But can they also create change in society?

“We need good citizens in the world. Those who love all religions, who love culture and all life – citizens with such a mindset. It is a vision; it is difficult to realise, and such a selection process is lengthy. I don’t know if PRAJNANA MISSION can do it, but there’s nothing wrong with dreaming about it.”

University level sought at Balashram

In 2017, we succeeded in obtaining authorisation for secondary level 2. Since then, the children have been able to continue their education at Balashram for a further two years after completing secondary level 1, i.e. after class X. The additional 2 years can be either in Natural Sciences or Humanities. Once the children decide to go to college or university, they will leave Balashram. *“Should we also think about offering them higher education at the Balashram campus?”* asked Paramahansa Prajnanananda and confirmed: *“It is possible.”*

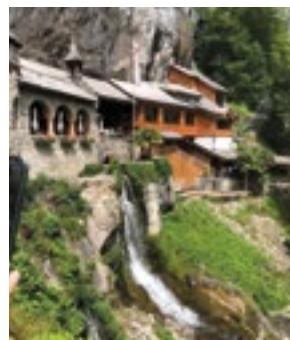
Exploring new educational destinations - a Balashram trek to Odisha

Balashram is located in the coastal region of Odisha. Further west, in the tribal areas, PRAJNANA MISSION owns two more plots of land. And it is precisely there that more education is sorely needed. *“That is why the next Balashram trek might take place in that area where we could also take a closer look at the properties,”* says Paramahansa Prajnanananda, who added: *“Then we will think together about what we can do.”* Perhaps new educational facilities will be possible there? We will see.



The next Balashram trek is planned for November 2025 and will take the donors to the tribal areas of Odisha.

RAISING FUNDS THROUGH THE BEAUTIFUL BALASHRAM TREKS - IN SUPPORT OF A NOBLE MISSION.



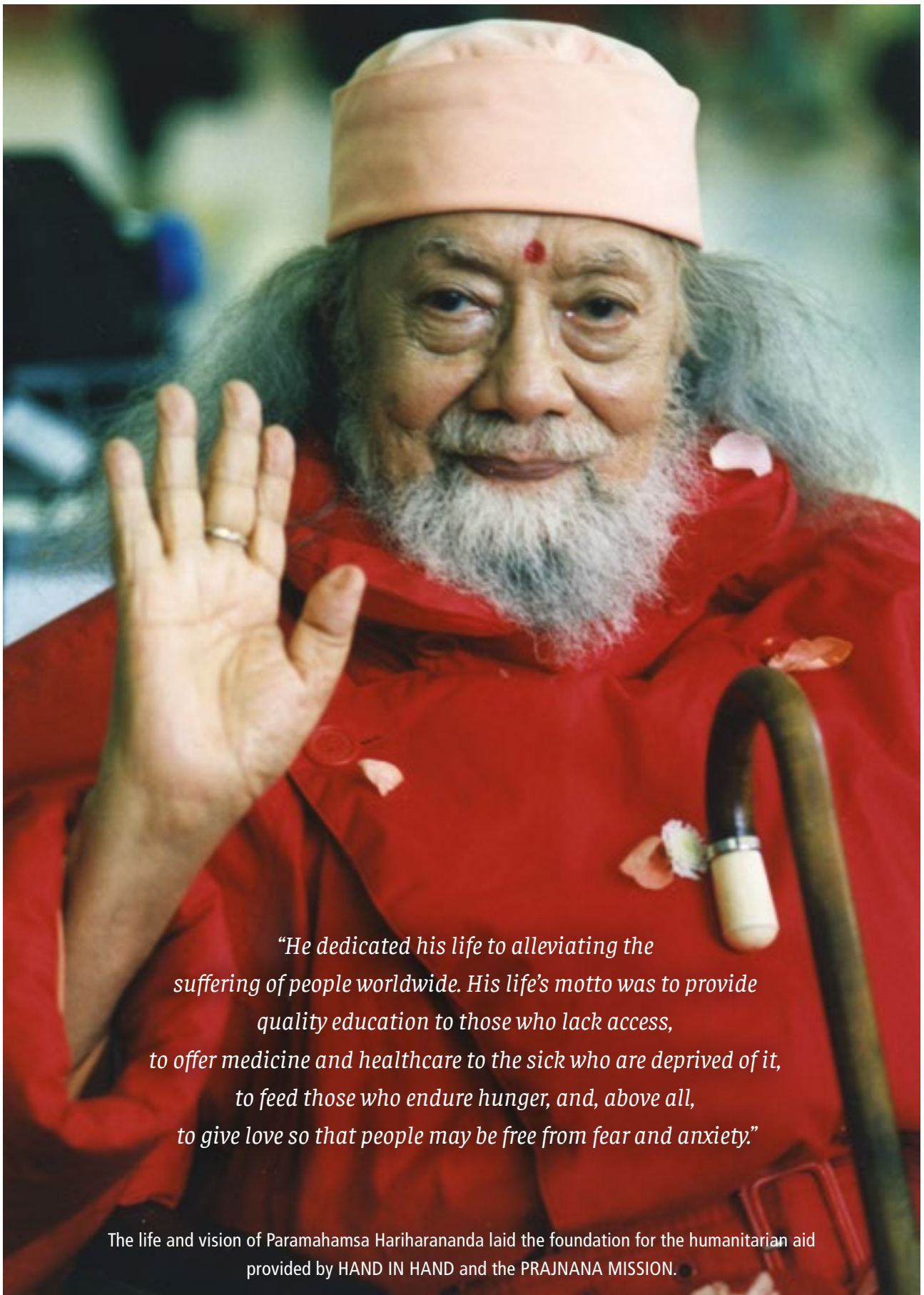
The aim of these treks is to raise funds for the development and running costs of the Hariharananda Balashram Residential School, and for the educational activities of HAND IN HAND and PRAJNANA MISSION. The Balashram treks have been organised by HAND IN HAND supporters in the UK and proved to be highly successful in fundraising from the very beginning. The first tour took the donors to the Sinai desert in Egypt in 2007. This was followed by trips to Ladakh, Garwhal, Badrinath (all in India) and Israel, Tanzania and Scotland.

Thanks to the 2024 organising team, consisting of members from the UK and Switzerland, the 8th Balashram-Trek celebrated a special anniversary. On 7 June 2024, participants from India, the USA, and across Europe gathered to celebrate 50 years since Paramahansa Hariharananda first arrived in Switzerland in 1974 on his initial journey from India to the West.

The Balashram Trek, held in memory and honour of this revered monk from India, became an inspiring journey for all, through the scenic Swiss mountains and valleys. Peter van Breukelen, President of HAND IN HAND, and Paramahansa Prajnanananda, the founder of Balashram, were also in attendance. Paramahansa Prajnanananda reminded every-

one that the humanitarian work of HAND IN HAND and of PRAJNANA MISSION is deeply rooted in the vision of his teacher, Paramahansa Hariharananda, and above all, in the profound example set by his life:





“He dedicated his life to alleviating the suffering of people worldwide. His life’s motto was to provide quality education to those who lack access, to offer medicine and healthcare to the sick who are deprived of it, to feed those who endure hunger, and, above all, to give love so that people may be free from fear and anxiety.”

The life and vision of Paramahansa Hariharananda laid the foundation for the humanitarian aid provided by HAND IN HAND and the PRAJNANA MISSION.



HAND IN HAND organisations in the USA, Germany, Switzerland, the Netherlands and France soon followed.

25 YEARS OF HARIHARANANDA CHARITABLE HEALTH CENTRES

With the support of HAND IN HAND, it has been possible to establish Health Centres in Odisha's most underserved and poverty-stricken regions.

The five Hariharananda Charitable Health Centres (HCHC) now offer essential medical care and access to medicines for those who would otherwise have very limited options. Currently, over 30 doctors, many of whom volunteer their time, provide services.

The impact is remarkable: from July 1999 to March 2024, 1.79 million patients have received medical care!

Year	Treatments
1999-00	15.147
2000-01	22.218
2001-02	17.370
2002-03	20.167
2003-04	41.087
2004-05	58.371
2005-06	70.151
2006-07	67.473
2007-08	70.304
2008-09	60.993
2009-10	56.199
2010-11	54.096
2011-12	65.514
2012-13	89.973
2013-14	94.272
2014-15	105.418
2015-16	122.828
2016-17	138.085
2017-18	143.001
2018-19	124.581
2019-20	106.045
2020-21	57.288
2021-22	68.209
2022-23	93.491
2023-24	93.746
SUM TOTAL =	1.787.415

25 years of HCHC in Balighai

In July 1999, the first steps were taken to establish medical care in Cuttack and Balighai, under the guidance of PRAJNANA MISSION and in very basic conditions. With only one available room, a small group of doctors provided services once a week in Balighai and twice a week in Cuttack.

The successful partnership with PRAJNANA MISSION in India began with the founding of the aid organisation HAND IN HAND, in March 2000. Donations soon flowed not only from Europe but also from the USA, allowing the first Health Centre to be built in Balighai by January 2001. The 120 m² facility featured two treatment rooms, an outpatient clinic with four beds, a pharmacy, and a waiting area. In 2003, the first Mobile Medical and Dental outpatient unit (MMDU) was established to reach those unable to travel for care. Shortly after, the number of treatments soared.

10 years of HCHC Jagatpur

The number of patients at the HCHC in Cuttack also soon exceeded the capacity of the small Health Centre. Expansion plans were developed early on. After the Cuttack centre closed in February 2014, that same month a day clinic was opened less than a kilometre away. Located in the industrial area of Jagatpur, this new clinic was also made possible through generous donations from HAND IN HAND. Today, between 200 and 300 patients receive medical help in this clinic building, every day. Patients receive general medical care and therapeutic treatment, along with specialised healthcare services in key areas such as paediatrics, gynaecology, and surgery.



In 2003, the first mobile medical and dental outpatient unit (MMDU) was set up.



The new MMDU also made it possible for the first time to provide medical care to people who cannot come to one of the five HCHCs themselves.

One of the very first photos of the new HCHC built in 2001 in Balighai





Construction work began in 2012, and the new clinic building was opened on 14 February 2014. For the people of Cuttack, the clinic is a gift from God for the poor.

TODAY, THE HCHC PROVIDE A BROAD SPECTRUM OF TREATMENTS

Along with general medical care, the HCHC in Balighai provides regular specialist skin treatments and dental services, twice a month. Ayurvedic treatments have been available since February 2018, and homeopathic treatments were introduced in February 2021. Physiotherapy services are normally offered twice a month. Between April 2023 and March 2024, a total of 14,884 patients were treated at the Balighai centre alone.



The clinic in Jagatpur now offers ECG examinations and blood tests, allowing patients to receive comprehensive diagnostics on-site without the need to visit additional diagnostic centres.

In 2023/24, the diagnostic services were expanded to include an immunoanalyzer. This extensive range of services has allowed the management to partially fund the clinic from its own resources since last year, marking another milestone in the development of HCHC. Just a few years ago, HCHC Jagatpur relied 100% on donations. Today, thanks to its strong reputation, the clinic covers 65% of its operating costs, largely due to its physiotherapy and diagnostic services.

Efforts to make improvements are ongoing. Since November 2023, the Jagatpur clinic has had an external staircase for emergency evacuations. In March 2024, it received its fire protection and safety certification from the government.

FORWARD-LOOKING INVESTMENTS AT HCHC JAGATPUR



Since February 2024, Jagatpur has had its own canteen with a staff dining room. Prior to the pandemic, employees were provided meals at the nearby PRAJNANA MISSION ashram. However, during the extended lockdowns, this arrangement became unfeasible, and cooking was temporarily relocated to the clinic's roof. Naturally, this was not a long-term solution.

Due to the clinic's forward-thinking management, a neighbouring 0.33-hectare plot of land was purchased in spring 2024, where a canteen was constructed. However, further significant expansions will soon be essential, as both the physiotherapy and dental practices are operating at full capacity. Additionally, the laboratory facilities are approaching their limits.

"You will be surprised to hear that property prices in Odisha have risen incredibly. Unbelievable!" reports Paramahansa Prajnanananda, founder of PRAJNANA MISSION. According to the new Managing Director of PRAJNANA MISSION, Swami Divyaswarupananda, the purchase of the land that has now been added was done wisely before it became unaffordable:



"There were many interested parties, many wanted to buy the land. But because we are working for a good cause and the clinic has already been able to help so many sick people in the area, the owner of the land favoured us when it came to buying it. This was despite the fact that we couldn't offer as much as other buyers."

A GIFT FROM GOD FOR THE POOR

With nearly 100 million people living with diabetes, today, India is among the countries most severely impacted. The actual number of unreported cases is significantly higher, and this situation is true for many other diseases as well.

Countless individuals around the world do not receive the necessary treatment!

This is why the Health Centres are a true “gift from God” for the people of Odisha.

A heartfelt THANK YOU to the medical staff and all employees!

They often share stories about the “shining eyes of those they’ve helped.”.

This same ‘glow’ also extends to you, dear supporters of HAND IN HAND.

*A huge Thank You
to you!*



SOME CASE REPORTS FROM HCHC JAGATPUR:

Babuli Nanda Joy, a man of 70 years, was a patient at the Jagatpur Health Centre in February and March 2024. He was suffering from diabetes and was severely anaemic. A diabetic foot ulcer had caused a deep wound on his right leg. Following a comprehensive assessment and classification of the ulcer, the wound was surgically treated, and the man received the necessary medication. At the clinic, he learned how to properly care for his foot and manage it as effectively as possible. He now attends regular check-ups, and his condition has significantly improved.

Khirod Rath is 58 years old and has diabetes. He visited the Jagatpur Day Clinic in March 2024 due to a severe toe injury caused by maggots. At the clinic, the wound was healed through consistent cleaning and dressing.

To this day, the patient continues to consult with the doctors at HCHC to manage his diabetes effectively.

Bikram Panigrahi, a chef, arrived in Jagatpur in April 2024 with serious burns on his hand. He sustained these injuries while transferring boiling dal. Fortunately, the wound began to heal quickly due to prompt medical attention. He was advised to apply coconut oil to his hand, and after receiving treatment at the clinic, no additional dressings were needed.

Minarani Baisakha, a 65-year-old woman also suffering from diabetes, arrived at the Day Clinic in Jagatpur with severely impaired circulation in her foot. Fortunately, she was also able to receive help.



HCHC Jagatpur (Day clinic)

20 YEARS OF THE HAND IN HAND - DONATION SEAL OF APPROVAL

Mette Koivusalo in conversation with Annemarie Ackerl

1,000 children have been provided with a genuine opportunity for a better life at the Hariharananda Balashram Residential School in the Kendrapara district of India over the past 20 years, along with 1.8 million individuals who have received medical care at the Hariharananda Charitable Health Centres in Odisha: This shows the impressive development of HAND IN HAND and the fact that the donations entrusted to it are handled carefully, responsibly, purposefully and economically. And this is exactly what the Donation Seal of Approval, which has been awarded for two decades, stands for.



In 2014, those responsible at HAND IN HAND received the certificate of honour for ten years of donation quality, and this year HAND IN HAND is celebrating 20 years of Donation Seal of Approval!

HAND IN HAND undergoes a strict audit procedure every year in Austria to obtain this seal of approval. And this year, on 6 June 2024, Annemarie Ackerl, Treasurer of HAND IN HAND in Austria, happily and also a little proudly accepted the certificate of honour for '20 years of the Seal of Approval for Donations' in a festive Viennese setting.

And the special honour truly goes to her! Annemarie Ackerl played a key role in the founding of HAND IN HAND, but it was primarily her sister who drove it forward: "*Swami Nisangananda, then still Anneliese Mixan, was the driving force behind the founding of HAND IN HAND,*" she says with appreciation. In the 2003/04 financial year, Annemarie Ackerl then took over the role of treasurer and did this so effectively that HAND IN HAND was awarded the quality seal in 2004 for the first time.

And it was also Annemarie who has successfully applied for renewal of the Donation Seal of Approval for HAND IN HAND each year since then.

"When I think back today to how it all began, I sometimes feel like I only dreamt it all," explains Annemarie Ackerl with a smile. Her own memories of a deprived childhood were one of the main reasons for her commitment to HAND IN HAND.

"I was born in 1944, so the war wasn't over yet. But the post-war period was also a difficult time. There was never enough to eat, and we were often cold. I still remember wearing wellies in winter. Some children had no shoes at all. We all had frostbite," she says and describes how she herself received help: "My sister and I were eight years old when we were taken by train from Vienna to Denmark for the first time during the school holidays to be 'nursed up', as we were told. I will never forget how well we were received and cared for there."

She highlights that she aimed to support the establishment of HAND IN HAND to the best of her abilities as soon as she conceived the idea and adds: "*I wanted so much to be able*

to contribute something! I was also immediately convinced that even the smallest contribution could make a difference. When I visit Balashram today and see the Health Centres, I must admit that I could have never imagined such success!”

The fact that HAND IN HAND came into being 25 years ago means more to her than she can say in words. Being able to help others is a ‘very special privilege’ for her. She herself would have liked to pursue a more creative career and she loved to dance. ‘Make your Dream a Reality’ - she thinks this Balashram motto is great. Nobody would have even dared to think of such an idea in her childhood.

“What mattered after the war was security, a good job. And so, I became an accountant,” explains the Viennese, who is glad she did today. Because it also allowed her to take over the finances of HAND IN HAND. But she admits:

“It wasn’t always easy, but I am infinitely grateful! Hundreds of children who started their lives in extreme poverty can now pursue their dreams, all thanks to the support of HAND IN HAND. That makes me both proud and humble. The children are getting such a great education! And I am very happy when I see how the girls and boys dance and sing, draw and paint, make beautiful hand-crafts, get involved in the environment and romp around the schoolyard.

“None of this would have been possible without the donations from HAND IN HAND,” Annemarie emphasises once again. Addressing the supporters, she says emphatically: “It is YOUR generosity, helpfulness, and kindness that have made the 20 years of the Seal of Quality for Donations possible - **THANK YOU!**”



Annemarie Ackerl (on the right) took on the role of Treasurer for HIH in Austria back in 2004 and has been so effective that HIH has been awarded the Donation Seal of Approval every year since then.



Bildung und Wissen sind die Schlüssel für die Zukunft!

Wir wollen helfen - helfen Sie mit!

Das 7. Internationale Varietefestival unterstützt die Hariharananda Balashram Schule in Orissa Indien - Hilfe die direkt ankommt!



ART AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY GO ' HAND IN HAND '

- RECENT EXAMPLES

Enchanting festivals in support of HAND IN HAND

With great commitment, Dirk Denzer and Asango Schuster once again made a significant contribution to the HAND IN HAND donation initiative in 2023: In May, the international variety festival „Dirk Denzer's Magical Moments“ was held in the Schweinfurt district. This festival, organised for the seventh time, drew approximately 15,000 visitors over the course of eleven days.

This is a unique comprehensive work of art that combines live music, acrobatics, body art, comedy, and magic. With around 100 artists from 15 countries, the festival offered a diverse kaleidoscope of variety arts that delighted people of all ages and backgrounds. In December 2023, Dirk Denzer then presented his new Spirit-Show, 'Ananda - Variety and Spirit Music', at the Winter Varieté Fulda. The variety shows provide a fantastic setting and a unique opportunity to raise awareness about HAND IN HAND's humanitarian efforts and gather donations for them!

The HAND IN HAND donation initiative was presented to the audience at both events. Dirk Denzer and Asango Schuster delivered the donation appeals and offered the audience detailed information about the aid projects. The work of HAND IN HAND was showcased on an LED wall behind the stage, and information and donation booths were set up in the foyer. Many visitors took the opportunity to find out more about the projects at the information stand, and to donate to HAND IN HAND. A big thank you to all participants and donors for their generosity and commitment!

Asango Schuster and Dirk Denzer on their desire to help:

“We have been supporting the Balashram School and the HAND IN HAND activities in the field of health and disaster relief for many years, because we are convinced that the donations for HAND IN HAND really reach where help is needed, and that they do a great deal of good. Our connection and love for the founder of the school, Paramahansa Prajnanananda, also motivates us to continue supporting the activities of HAND IN HAND.”



The Charity CD Project for HAND IN HAND

We were thrilled and grateful to showcase the CD Project by singer and pianist Yvonne Krüger-Schulte for HAND IN HAND in Sterksel, Holland, in October 2023, and in Tattendorf, Austria, in June 2024.

The dedicated musician experiences sound in all its facets and richness of colour as the key to music and language. *"Both are wonderful ways to meet - with yourself and others,"* says the artist. Her cross-genre music expresses the joie de vivre that she associates with the CD Project. Her genre-defying music expresses a joy for life, which she connects to the CD Project. She was musically supported at the live concerts by the artist Omid Bahadori, whose heart beats for both old and new sounds. 'JOY'N US!' was the motto of the duo's concerts in aid of HAND IN HAND. 100% of the proceeds from the concerts, the CD and the songs, which are also available individually on SoundCloud, will go to HAND IN HAND. Yvonne Krüger-Schulte's musical appeal to all of us is: *"Turn up the speakers and celebrate 20 years of Balashram with us!"* About her commitment to HAND IN HAND, she says:

"With the CD and the songs, I want to offer an opportunity to light up the eyes of the children in Balashram, who have already seen a lot of terrible things. The children find refuge and a home in Balashram. Music, dance, and even oratory skills are promoted at Balashram - and seeing this touched me deeply. Especially the sparkle in the children's eyes that I witnessed when I visited the school last year. I am more committed than ever to supporting the projects of HAND IN HAND and PRAJNANA MISSION through my work!"

Peace flags brought many hands together

Exclusive works of art, such as the beautiful 'Joy Cards', which have become the creative calling card of HAND IN HAND, in a very special way contribute to the successful development of the Aid Projects in India. A new fund-raising project for HAND IN HAND is the peace flags, shining in all colours of joy and unity, once again created by Atelier Silke Weiss.

The dedicated designer from Bad Wörishofen called for tangible support via WhatsApp. Seamstresses and ironers promptly helped to complete the work. The great cooperation of all these HAND IN HAND supporters resulted in colourful, bright flags. The first ones were handed over to the HAND IN HAND team in Austria at the end of September. Their sale will again benefit the poorest of the poor in India.

THANK YOU from the bottom of our hearts!





*One drop can make
a difference!*

Please make that difference with just 1 Euro a day for the Balashram children!
Give children from the poorest backgrounds a new chance in life.

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