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Greetings for Christmas and New Year 2019

Dear friends,

We hope the year 2018 had been fruitful and peaceful for all of you. For us this year too has been full of activities and with new insights. The regular programmes like the kindergartens, evening schools, high school coaching classes, the RSV school classes and hostel activities, the bio farming on our RSV land, the activities in the Museum of Santal Culture in Bishnubati and health programmes went on as usual. Many individuals and institutions revitalized our efforts through trainings, logistic support and collaboration. For example, Mr. Samar Bagchi, former director of Birla Technological Museum at Kolkata, and Prof. Souymo Chakraborty from Santiniketan gave an incentive Science Teaching course to our teachers in December. In January of this year, we had a one-day seminar on the future strategy of our village work at Amar Kuthir near Santiniketan with all our employees and senior students. As in earlier years, the Bose Institute of Kolkata organized through our staff, especially through Pintu Ghosh, a Rural Bio-technological project in twelve villages, giving financial and technical resources.

There is also an infrastructural development in our villages by the various government schemes. The dust roads of Ghosaldanda and Bishnubati have been transformed into concrete and tar roads; the mud walls and thatched-roof houses are being changed into 15 feet by 12 feet concrete walls and tin roof houses. The villagers are happy with this and so is the government with the success of their schemes. However, there is a concern among many of us about losing the century-old traditional knowledge and art of building 'low cost-no cost' mud houses and related skills and crafts like wall paintings. Since the inceptions of our organization we have been working towards striking a balance between our traditional way of life and modernity. The transition to a modern life should be gradual and not stressful, and allow us to keep rooted in our cultural values.

Educational tours and collaboration with friends outside our villages have always been an important part of our work. We had an annual picnic with about 200 students, teachers and senior committee members at the riverside of Bakreshwar this year. Many groups of our students have visited our Museum of Santal Culture in Bishnubati. Some of our High School students have visited Nandan Mela, the traditional Art Fare, at Santiniketan. However, our most important cultural exchange programme this year was visiting Germany for three weeks in June-July. Four members of our villages, Bhabini Mardi Baski, Padma Murmu, Anil Hemram and Boro Baski (as leader), went on a month-long cultural tour through Germany. During their stay, they presented Santal culture through music, dance, songs and they participated in discussions with the audience at eleven different venues, the places include four schools in Koblenz, Hamburg, Tübingen and in the kindergarten of Merck Company at Darmstadt. The team also performed and exchanged ideas with the elders and academic circles in the Indo-German Society at Darmstadt, the Bonifatius Parish community at Frankfurt, the Catholic Academy at Münster, the Meditation Centre Sonnenhaus at Beuron and of the Lion's Club at Boppard.

Most important, the group participated in the Ten-Year-Anniversary of our support organization 'Friends of Ghosaldanga and Bishnubati e.V.' at Frankfurt where more than 60 people participated, mostly the former visitors of our villages. The group stayed with the families of the village friends like with Prof. Klaus Jork in Langen near Frankfurt, with Tim Weinert's in Koblenz, with Henni and Petrus Rick at Aachen and in Boppard the group stayed at Mr. Rainer Liesenfeld and his wife and in Martin (Kämpchen)'s home. They also met some interesting people during this tour, like Mrs. Christel Neudeck, the wife of Rupert Neudeck, who is well-known for the humanitarian work among the refugees of Vietnam. The group also paid homage to him at his cemetery and at his memorial.

The group stayed the longest with the Udo Keller Foundation (UKS) at Neversdorf near Hamburg. As in 2015, the Foundation kindly sponsored our flights. The group had a wonderful time at the splendid Foundation House, the members went cycling to Kloster Nütschau and undertook a day's city tour through Hamburg together with our many friends (who all had been to Ghosaldanga and Bishnubati earlier). Some of these friends took the group to the ocean coast nearby.

On behalf of the villagers we express our sincere gratitude to the members of 'Friends of Ghodaldanga and Bishnubati', especially to Marianne Pal Chowdhury, Hedwig and Dr. Ulrich Oser, Manfred Watzke and to our dear volunteer friends Tim, Hannah, Judith, Jakob, Laura, Markus, Joschka and Frederick who all met us and hosted us at various places. The tour would never have been so enjoyable, memorable and successful without their active support. We are also very grateful to the Udo Keller Foundation for giving us the opportunity of this wonderful trip and for letting us stay with them so many days.

Finally we wish all our friends and well wishers in India and abroad

A HAPPY CHRISTMAS AND A BRIGHT NEW YEAR 2019

Boro Baski

Sona Murmu

Sanyasi Lohar

Gokul Hansda

Monotosh Das

Snehadri S. Chakraborty

Martin Kämpchen

Ramjit Mardi and his team of Junior Leaders

Website www.dorfentwicklung-indien.de

