

# Ghosaldanga Bishnubati Adibasi Trust

(Registration under Trust Registration Act 1982)

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## Christmas and New Year Greetings 2012

Dear friends,

The month of December partly coincides with the month of Poush in Bengali calendar. The month of Poush is the time of village fairs, festivals, jatras (folk theatre performances), family reunions and joyfulness. People here enjoy themselves not much differently from people in Europe during Christmas and New Year. After harvesting the seasonal rice from the fields, our villagers indulge in merry-making by organizing such annual festivals. Rabindranath Tagore started the historic fairs 'Poush Mela' and 'Magh Mela' in Santiniketan and Sriniketan during this time of the year where the villagers could buy and sell their newly grown agricultural and home-made products. Santals also celebrate their biggest festival 'Sorhai' during this time. Though we celebrate the 'Sorhai' festival for five days, the joy and festival spirit continue for one month. But the whole mood of these fairs and festivals solely depend on how good the rice harvest has been. This year the rice production in our area is much better than last year, so our mood of merry-making reflects this. December is also the time of self-evaluation for many whose lives revolve around the English calendar, like we do. Every year during this time we take the opportunity to update you about our work and developments.

As many of you are aware, we started this year with a grand celebration in February. The Silver Jubilee celebrations of our registered society which looks after development work in Ghosaldanga and Bishnubati have been very successful. Hundreds of villagers, friends and well-wishers from Ghosaldanga, Bishnubati and their neighbouring villages, from Santiniketan, Bolpur, Suri, Kolkata, Delhi, Dumka and from abroad attended the two-day celebrations. We were happy we had a delegation from our German support group "Friends of Ghosaldanga und Bishnubati e.V." with us. The celebrations were conducted in three venues – at the Rolf Schoembs Vidyashram (RSV) near Ghosaldanga and Bishnubati, at Santiniketan and Bolpur. We dedicated these celebrations to the 150<sup>th</sup> Birth Anniversary of Rabindranath Tagore, the iconic bard of our country. The Raja Ram Mohan Ray Library Foundation (run by the Ministry of Culture, Government of India), Kolkata sponsored most of our programmes - seminars, publications, an art exhibition, theatre and cultural programmes. We convey our heartiest gratitude to Mr. K.K. Banerjee, the Director of Raja Ram Mohan Ray Library Foundation, for his support.

In the beginning of this year we have started a beautiful project related to the development of the traditional arts and musical skills of the Santals. As art and music are so close to Santal life, Santals from neighbouring villages also take part spontaneously in these training programmes. The project is supported by the 'Tribal Cultural Heritage in India Foundation' based at Amsterdam/Netherlands. This is the second time we are collaborating with them.

In October we organized a four-day Primary Teachers' Training Course. A team from Loreto Day School, Sealdah, Kolkata, and Dr. Sujata Das (a psychiatrist), Kolkata, were the main contributors to the workshop. Thirty-five teachers from our organization, from neighboring schools and from Bankura District came to attend the workshop.

We have included two new programmes on a trial basis: mushroom cultivation and bee-keeping at RSV school campus. The professors and teachers of the renowned S.N. Bose Institute, Kolkata, have been guiding us through their outreach centre at Falta by providing us with training and equipments.

The construction of a new girls' hostel building is at its final stage. It is the first time that we are having a concrete flat roof building in our organisation. Till now we always had houses covered with a tin-, tile- or thatched roof. The Ministry of Economic Development and Co-operation (BMZ) of the German government has provided most of the funds to construct this building, and our German support group 'Friends of Ghosaldanga and Bishnubati' has played a big role in getting this project for us. The building will be inaugurated on 9<sup>th</sup> December 2012, and Prof. Sushanta Dattagupta, the Vice-Chancellor of Visva-Bharati, has kindly agreed to be the chief guest of the programme.

This year eight students and doctor volunteers came from Germany to work with us. They mainly participated in our regular activities like teaching in our kindergartens, at RSV school and at our high school coaching centres, joining our health care programmes, our bio-farm, organizing sports, art and music events. They form an integral part of our village communities and we all enjoy their helpful and enthusiastic presence. This year's volunteers are: Alik Habigt, Clara Charlotte Edinger, Katharina Djamila Maria Kastner, Dr. Kathrin Klein and her husband Torsten, Judith Drexler, Hannah Beckmann and Jakob Simon Doerr. Anne Bucher and Rolf Bucher (organic farmers) are helping us to prepare bio-supplement food in our nutrition centres.

Our founding member Boro Baski has received his doctorate (Ph.D.) from Visva-Bharati, Santiniketan at its Convocation this year. Since then he has begun to work for Santal culture on a broader canvas. Invited by Jadavpur University, he has translated a Tagore play into Santali; he also wrote two articles in English for the journal "Community and Development" on Indian village culture.

We received a number of guests this year. Some of them we mention here:

\* Foremost among them is the team of the "Friends of Ghosaldanga and Bishnubati" from Frankfurt (Germany), lead by Ms. Marianne Pal Chowdhury, with Hedwig and Ulrich Oser and Manfred Watzke (all Frankfurt).

\* In January, the chiefs of the pharmaceutical company Merck (Darmstadt/Germany), Mr Jon Baumhauer and Dr Karl-Ludwig Kley, visited RSV and in a small function made a donation of ten annual stipends for our students.

\* In February we welcomed for the Silver-Jubilee-Programme Mr Ludwig Pesch and Elisabeth den Otten, both from Amsterdam/Netherlands. They run The Tribal Cultural Heritage in India Foundation which has become a close partner in our efforts to develop Santal culture. For the celebrations, we received old friends who have supported us since many years – Peter Adams (St.Wendel/Germany), Dr. Dominik Mardi (New Delhi), Fr. D. Soloman SJ (Dumka), Ms. Lubna Mariam (Dhaka), Henni and Peter Rick (Aachen/Germany), Profs. Kumkum and Ranjit Bhattacharya (Santiniketan), to mention but a few. Some other guests were Prof. Ronald Kurt with his family (University of Bochum/Germany), Dr. Joachim Schmerbeck (TERI University, New Delhi) who sent us of his two students for research; Profs. Joe and Kathleen O'Connell (Toronto University/Canada) and others.

\* Dr. Monika Golembiewski visited us several times this year. After establishing her Children's Clinic in Makrampur near Santiniketan, she comes regularly to work there and to visit the villages around Ghosaldanga and Bishnubati to treat patients and initiate nutrition programmes in collaboration with us. Invited by Dr. Monika, high officials of the Würth Company (Chur/Switzerland) visited our villages on 1 September.

\* Through his own registered society, Sanyasi Lohar of Bishnubati has linked up with the work conducted by “Friends of Ghosaldanga and Bishnubati”, by Dr. Monika and by Mr. Pesch’s Foundation.

\* Mr Arun Kapur (New Delhi) arrived at RSV with Mrs. Ranu Dattagupta (Santiniketan) and has begun sponsoring three of our students. Prof. Sharmishtha Dattagupta (Göttingen/Germany) came to inform herself about our work in October.

\* Erna Lutz, member of “Friends of Ghosaldanga and Bishnubati”, and Mr Martin Fröb, member of Sonnenhaus (Beuron/Germany) which is one of our main sponsors, are expected to visit us in December.

We thank you, dear friends for extending your support to us during all these years. All members of Ghosaldanga and Bishnubati wish you a very HAPPY CHRISTMAS and warm NEW YEAR greetings 2013.

Boro Baski

Sona Murmu

Gokul Hansda

Monotosh Das

Martin Kämpchen

Snehadri S.Chakraborty