

Ghosaldanga Bishnubati Adibasi Trust
(Registration under Trust Registration Act 1982)
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Christmas and New Year Greetings 2016

Dear friends,

this year we will remember as the year of exchanges of experiences and collaborations. This apart, our regular programmes like the running of our kindergarten (anganwari) centres, evening coaching centres, our RSV school and hostels, the health care and sponsorships programmes went on well. We also organized a number of short term programmes with several individuals and organizations. The programmes started with *Sharmistha Dattagupta and Holger Bartels* (Göttingen, Germany), they conducted workshops for the students on the life cycle of plants and animals. *Magdalena Fochler*, (Bernau am Chiemsee/ Germany), too, arrived in January 2015 and stayed with us for two months. *Mechtild Jahn* (Frankfurt), a retired school teacher and active member of 'Friends of Ghosaldanga and Bishnubati', returned to us for the third time and staying with us for the month of March. She and Magdalena played the (European) violin for us on several occasions. Mechtild worked with the kindergarten children of Ghosaldanga and gave a seminar for the teachers of RSV and the evening schools on methods of education. Later in the year, *Karlin Reus* arrived and stayed for three months working with our children, teaching them yoga and gymnastics, English and games.

In June, Ramjit Mardi, Sona Murmu, Gokul Hansda and Martin Kämpchen (Martin-da) went to Germany for two weeks on the invitation of the Udo Keller Foundation (Hamburg) to perform Santal cultural programmes. This was to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the Foundation. The group staged programmes in other places as well (Frankfurt with Friends of Ghosaldanga and Bishnubati; Sonnenhaus, Beuron; Tübingen with Erna Lutz; Baden-Baden with the Schöck Foundation; Göttingen staying with Sharmishtha and Holger). They were based in Darmstadt in the home of Prof. Klaus Jork.

In November, Boro Baski went to attend an International Symposium at Oslo (Norway). On his return trip to India he stopped for three days at Frankfurt and met our Friends of Ghosaldanga and Bishnubati. The Symposium was held on "Belief, Scholarship and Cultural Heritage: Paul Olav Bodding and the Making of a Scandinavian-Santal Legacy", organized by the Museum of Cultural History of the University of Oslo and the University of Tromsø. At the end of November a group of our Junior Leaders from Ghosaldanga and Bishnuabti went for an educational tour to an organization at Ayodhya Hill in Purulia District (West Bengal).

The long-term collaboration and extension programmes with several NGOs also took a new turn this year. The Visva-Bharati University, Santiniketan, continued to support us in running three

evening schools in the neighboring villages. We too extended our income generation programmes like mushroom cultivation, vermicompost, rearing of goats, country chicken, and pigs as well as fishery into eleven Santal villages. These livelihood programmes are supported by one of the premier scientific research institutes of India, the Bose Institute in Kolkata. This is the second year that we are working with them.

This is the first time in 25 years nine teachers and non-teaching staff members have been reshuffled within our three centres, Ghosaldanga, Bishnubati and RSV school. Boro Baski, who has been the teacher-in-charge of RSV school for many years, has now transferred his responsibilities to another Senior Leader, Sanyasi Lohar of Bishnubai, a trained artist who has worked with us since the beginning. To get a break from the day-to-day running of the school, he has taken a job at the Panchayat Department of the West-Bengal Government. But Boro continues to do the correspondence and discharge other responsibilities of our Sangha. As before, he stays on the RSV school campus when not at the Panchayat Office.

Besides these positive developments we too had some setbacks and worries. In the last one-and-a-half years seven young people between the age of 12 and 45 years died from snake bite, tuberculosis, meningitis and cancer. The most alarming sign is that four people have been diagnosed with cancer from Bishnubati of whom two have died and two are under treatment. We feel this is because of the uncontrolled use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides on our fields which seep into all spheres of our life – into our soil, water, rice crop, vegetables and live stock. These problems which are beyond our control make us feel nervous and helpless.

The positive aspect is, however, that we continue to create awareness among the villagers of need of producing biological agri-products with the help of bio-compost manure and vermin compost. Our large bio-orchard farm on RSV campus is a model venture in this direction. Another good news is that this year we have got a special support from the 'Mini-Bread Project' of Germany to continue our efforts in bio-farming. In this way we try to address our problems, which are indeed our national problems, through small initiatives.

We take this opportunity to express our gratitude to you for all the moral and practical support you have extended to us this past year. Your support means a lot to us for our development as individuals and as a community.

We wish you a very happy Christmas and a bright New Year 2016.

Boro Baski

Sona Murmu

Sanyasi Lohar

Gokul Hansda

Monotosh Das

Martin Kämpchen

Ramjit Mardi

Snehadri S. Chakraborty



Teachers' day celebration
At Ghosaldanga



Students planting trees to protect
soil erosion



Girls football team of Bishnubati