

Dargah Hazrat Inayat Khan Hope Project Newsletter

Edited by Kamini Prakash and Heiko Schrader

No. 12

Looking Back

Six years ago when I joined the Hope Project as executive director, I had never been beyond Karims and had little idea of what lay ahead. I never imagined that one day I would feel at home in the basti. Looking back I can only say that it has been a deeply enriching experience and in spite of the inevitable crises, I have enjoyed every minute of it. The basti with its narrow *gallis* (lanes), majestic domes, delicious cuisine and generous residents has left a lasting impression on me and I leave with memories that I will always treasure.

I was fortunate to have inherited a project which already had strong foundations. In the last 6 years our efforts have been to strengthen the existing programs and to improve the quality of services by developing better systems and infrastructure, building staff capacities, enhancing community participation and diversifying our donor base. Looking back, I feel proud and privileged to have been part of this process. However, every organization needs change. Growth and innovation demand new leadership. All of a sudden you realize that the time has come to move on.

I leave the Hope Project confident that it is in capable hands. The management team together with a dedicated staff will ensure continuity and a smooth transition. Moreover, I have been fortunate to find an extremely competent successor in Rita Nanda. A banker for the greater part of her career, Rita made a courageous move three years ago, when she joined Helpage as joint director (programs). At Helpage she worked on programs that addressed the needs of the elderly, a group that is often marginalized. Her result-oriented approach and her financial background will surely help the hope project in its new phase of development. We look forward to her leadership and welcome her on board.

I am grateful to the Trustees and the international board for supporting and guiding me through all the challenges that are integral to the job. I am also grateful to the Sufi community, all our donors, partners, volunteers and friends, both in India and abroad, for their constant support and encouragement.

I will miss the staff at the Hope Project the most. As one of the teachers said, "Initially we fought a lot but in the end we became friends." I hope to remain a friend forever. To everyone at the project, I thank you for all the different, quiet ways you expressed your love for me.

Kamini

Devkali—A Portrait

Devkali's mother used to work as a cleaner in an office. Devkali often used to accompany her mother to help her clean the office. One of the employees persuaded the mother to send her daughter to school and she was admitted into the bridge course. When she came to the Hope Project, she was shy, inarticulate and lacked confidence. Thanks to a sponsorship from the Hope Project, Devkali managed to complete her 10th grade at the first attempt in spite of domestic problems. Then Devkali's mother fell ill and was taken to see the doctor at the Hope Project health centre where she was diagnosed with tuberculosis. With counseling and regular treatment she got better. Some months later, Devkali's father died and her mother remarried. Her stepfather ran a small kiosk near Nizamuddin Railway station but he was

always broke. There were fights every day. In the 12th grade, Devkali ran away from home. Later she told Rita she was unhappy and could not bear the marital problems at home between her parents. The constant fights were disrupting her studies and so she took refuge at a women's shelter called Shakti Shalini. She continued her education at Hope and participated in many school activities such as the school excursion to the Himalayas and the annual theatre workshop. Gradually she learnt to be more confident and started to smile (*cont. last page*).



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Coming Home

„Well, I'm sure volunteering in India is a good thing but don't expect to change the world. You would only end up getting disappointed“

I was told this before going to India and I knew I shouldn't have any illusions about how useful I was going to be. Seriously, what can a European teenager do to fight poverty and oppression far away from home?

When I was a small boy I had lived in Delhi. I knew what I was going to be confronted with. But I didn't expect to change much.

In August 2005, after finally getting my visa, I went to India for a year of social service. The welcome at the project was friendly. In spite of my poor Hindi, I didn't end up being unemployed. I was given many different tasks: a bit of administration, a bit of teaching, a bit of remedial classes, charity-fairs and finally even a charity -"marathon"



When I went home for my Christmas vacations, I looked back at an incredibly intensive, interesting but also exhausting time and I was glad I could take a break.

The impressions and images of my stay are still vivid and I have been trying ever since to put them down in to words without much success: How would you describe the ambience in the basti during the month of Ramadan, when Muslims fast sitting in front of delicious food? Or the mood on Diwali, the Hindu festival of lights, when I was invited to several family-pujas? Or the feeling when you escape a cruel terrorist attack

in the nick of time? Or, even the feeling of powerlessness against so much injustice in our world? The break was needed and did me good.

But then, on my way back from Delhi airport to my flat, I was overwhelmed by a completely unexpected feeling: The feeling of coming home. I was really looking forward to the coming seven months. By now I had developed a good rapport with everyone at the project, especially the students. In the first few months we were all students together: we attended primary classes, sat together, studying Hindi, and writing dictations. Whenever there was some time left, we practiced saying „Guten Morgen“. Having just graduated from school myself and still learning, I gradually became what I continued to be throughout my stay: Max bhaiya (brother Max) - a confidante and friend.

Steadily my Hindi improved and I became more useful. I started teaching English, translated the teachers' monthly reports from Hindi to English, worked in the Crèche, the Nursery-classes and in the end also in the evening school. I had become part of the project and this was a great feeling.

To quote from my farewell speech:

„In the beginning I was always happy when there were other foreign volunteers in the project. They brought a piece of home along. But over the year this changed dramatically. I found that in the presence of foreigners, I suddenly was one of them again and not part of the project, whereas when I was the only „stranger“ I didn't feel like a stranger at all and wasn't treated as one either. It felt like home here and for this amazing feeling I want to thank you all!“

It's not easy to live in Delhi and it takes some time to get used to it. It's not easy to see so much wealth and poverty existing side by side. In general it's not easy to face poverty and misery. How you manage to deal with it, finally depends on you! But the realization that you are working in an organisation that has only one aim – helping the poor - makes it much easier to look in every one's eyes again.

I went to India, knowing that I would not change the world and I'm glad I went.

(Maximilian von Laer (19) volunteered at the Hope Project from September 2005 to July 2006.)

Traces of an Indian Experience

Germany is strange ... where are all the people? The streets are so quiet, almost scary. And why is my fiancée nagging me about crossing the road like a kamikaze? How else can you reach the other side?

My seven weeks in India changed me more than I had realized. Many people who go to India to work in a development project want to serve and bring about a change. However India often ends up changing them. Even more so, if you are working in Nizamuddin for the Hope Project.

I was responsible for photographing the activities of the Hope Project and was fortunate to get an opportunity to experience different aspects of the project and the spirit that holds it together.

Just a few impressions of the city and Nizamuddin:

Delhi is a megacity, with more than ten times the population of Munich, congested, overcrowded, terrible traffic, noise, pollution and obtrusive people. It is impossible to survive here without patience and the ability to accept the moment for what it offers.

But Nizamuddin is different. Cars cannot penetrate the maze of narrow alleys and still the basti pulsates with life. It is amazing, how fast I felt a part of this complex social fabric, although there were no foreigners to be found – or may be that's why.

When I arrived in Delhi and saw people clad in turbans and saris, I was overwhelmed by a feeling of the “Exotic”. Two weeks later in Nizamuddin, I experienced the same feeling when I saw a European visiting the shrine of a Sufi saint, with a handkerchief covering his head. It is fascinating how contact with a different culture can change ones' perspective. This was possible because I lived and worked at the Hope Project. These experiences make a longer lasting impression than visiting tourist attractions in a foreign country.

There were many exceptional facets to the Hope Project but what struck me the most were the outspoken, curious and happy children. The difference was especially striking in the case of the girls in Nizamuddin who are normally extremely shy and reserved. At the Project however, the girls would smile at me and even bombard me with a volley of curious questions – in spite of the language barriers that existed between us.

The scene in the classroom is even more animated. The students can barely contain their curiosity and are brimming with questions and ideas. Most German teachers would be delighted to have such committed, confident and inquisitive students. The pedagogy in the school is extremely successful and has impacted the daily behavior of the students.

If one really values the ideas of the students and motivates them to think and question, one can work wonders even in a conservative neighborhood that has limited opportunities for women. Interestingly, even my own bias against veiled women changed. After all, every one of those veils could be hiding a confident and curious Hope student!

It is funny, but even now I feel that “I belong” and I am looking forward to introducing my fiancée to my Indian family. Even though I am fast settling back into a German routine, I know that India and the Hope Project have left their indelible mark on me.



School girls in science lab

Simon Eickhoff was a volunteer at the Hope Project. Visit <http://simoninindia.blogspot.com> for more information on the curriculum, visit <http://curriculumathope.blogspot.com>



<http://www.sufiorder.org/>
<http://www.hope-project.de/>
<http://www.hopeprojectindia.org>

DARGAH HAZRAT INAYAT KHAN HOPE PROJECT

Initiated by Pir Vilayat Khan in 1975

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Donation accounts Please send your donation to one of the following accounts. Do not forget your name and address!

Country	Recipient	Account No. [Bank Code]	Note
United States	Please send checks made out to Hope Project Charitable Trust, P.O.Box 657, New Lebanon, NY 12125		Donation to Hope Project
United Kingdom	Send checks to Sufi Order International, 23 rue de la Tuilerie, F-92150 Suresnes, or transfer to account Sufi Order Intl.	40150703 [20-96-55] Barclay's Bank PLC, Branch Willesden	Donation to Hope Project
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Netherlands	Stichting Hazrat Inayat Khan Dargah Hope Project	21.24.84.001, Triodos Bank	
France	OSIF Enfants Indie	000 3726 1837 67 [4060]	
India	Hope Project Charitable Trust	522-1-008993-4, Standard Chartered Bank, Narayan Manzil 23 Barakhamba Rd., New Delhi 110001	

Devkali (cont.)

After graduating from the 12th grade, she returned home. She had a new determination and seemed confident about her future. She applied to Vidyasagar Institute of Mental Health (VIMHANS) for a 6 month in-house training course in looking after the elderly. Hope Project paid Rs. 400 per month for the 6 month training. After that she started earning Rs. 2000 during the practical training. Our support stopped then. Today she is earning Rs. 5000 a month and is even saving money.

The VIMHANS coordinator, Ripin, is full of praise for Devkali. She is sincere and hardworking and he hopes more girls from the basti join the course.

Devkali still continues to drop into the Hope Project every now and then. A bright smile lights up her face. We asked Devkali, how this transformation happened?

"You need to act – just thinking about it will never get you anywhere."

Devkali will continue to work but also plans to do her graduation through a correspondence course.