

The Probini Foundation Digest

In support of education for the needy and orphaned in Bangladesh and India

The Probini Foundation
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প্রবিনী ফাউন্ডেশনের টুকটাকি

FEB 22ND BREAKFAST HIGHLIGHTS PROBINI ACTIVITIES

By Udayan Chattopadhyay

Around 40 well-wishers braved the elements on Saturday, February 22, to attend a breakfast organized by the Probini Foundation in Queens, New York. Probini supports 12 orphanages and schools in India and Bangladesh.

Mono Sen, a prominent Indian-American activist and former deputy-mayor of Jersey City, was the first speaker, highlighting the message of selfless service as preached by Martin Luther King and Gandhi.

Ms Sharon Maurer, the president of NYC School District 26,

spoke on how school administrations had proactively met the educational challenges resulting from the changing demographics of Queens. She emphasized empowering the children from immigrant families to ensure their success in school, by providing translated materials and encouraging parental involvement.

This was followed by a presentation from Probini co-founder Dr Sachi Dastidar, covering his recent visit to several of the schools supported by Probini. Those included schools in Calcutta and Durgapur, in India, as well as Dhaka, Barisal

and Madaripur in Bangladesh. He also visited the Mahila Ashram in Karnal, Haryana (India), where 65 families, victims of the 1971 Bangladesh Liberation War, have been sheltered.

His presentation also highlighted the difficulties faced by Probini-supported minority institutions in Bangladesh since violence targeting them began following the October 2001 elections. Probini was actively involved in the rehabilitation of several communities over the past year. Dr. Dastidar met with a local Member of the Parliament to keep him abreast of Probini's concerns.

PROBINI'S LATEST VENTURE: THE PROBINI CHHATRABASH DORMITORY

At the request of the Pranab Ashram in Madaripur City, Bangladesh, the Probini Foundation is helping to rebuild the student dormitory that was destroyed in 1971. To build the proposed sturdy brick-and-

concrete building, the ashram needs about \$17,000.

We are looking for individuals who would be interested in having their names engraved on a marble tablet at the ashram for a modest contribution,

as sponsors of the dormitory.

If you would like to contribute, call us (718-343-0189) or email us (probini@hotmail.com) for more information.

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Probini News

New Teachers

With Probini funds, the Assam International Brotherhood Mission Buddhist Vihar and Orphanage has appointed Miss Namita Saha and Mr. Manoranjan Sarkar as teachers at the school. Mr. Sarkar holds a Bachelor of Commerce degree, while Miss Saha is recipient of P.U. and Teacher Training diplomas. Congratulations to Namita and Monoranjan, and to the Venerable Acharya Bhikkhu Karuna Shastri, founder and head monk of the Vihar.

Swami Vivekananda Bani Prachar Samiti [Assoc. To Spread Swami Vivekananda's Message] has appointed Mr. Dilip Kumar Bauri, age 21, as the second teacher supported by Probini funds to teach at schools run by the Samiti. Mr. Bauri is a resident of Tilok Road Basti, a neighborhood in Durgapur, in the state of West Bengal, India. Earlier Probini funds enabled the Samiti to hire Ms Barna Bauri, age 22, of Joydev Basti, Durgapur, as the first teacher with funds from Probini. Congratulations to Dilip and Barna!

The Binod Bidya Niketan of Madaripur Pranab Ashram has appointed Ms Sipra Rani Sil as the second teacher to be supported by Probini funds. Congratulations to Sipra!

Visit

In December of 2002, the Dastidar family visited the Probini -supported institutions in Calcutta, Durgapur, Dhaka, Mahilara and Madaripur. A number of directors of Probini-supported institutions met with the family while in the Indian Subcontinent.

Remember!

Probini has Tax Exempt status from the IRS.

All of your donations to Probini are fully tax deductible

LETTER TO PROBINI

On October 13, 2002, during Durga Puja celebrations, The Hon. Zahir Uddin Swapan, Member of Parliament [Bangladesh Nationalist Party], Bangladesh, visited *Mahilara Mott* [Ashram & School] where the annual autumn festival was taking place. Mr. Swapan wrote in the guest book:

Dear Mahilara Ashram,

Today, on 13.10.02, on the occasion of *Saradiya* [autumnal] Durga Puja, I am visiting the historic *Mott* [temple] and the *Puja Mandap* [marquee place.] I have exchanged good wishes with the Devotees and Pujaris [priests and priestesses.] I am pleased to witness that puja celebrations are being held with complete communal harmony.

I express my good wishes and gratitude to [Probini] for building the Nihar Kana Bhaktabash [school and guest house built by Probini supporters, and now Probini Foundation is providing teacher at the school].

Signed,

Z. U. Swapan



Assam Buddhist Vihar Orphanage, Dibrugarh, India - Probini is providing funds for teachers' salaries.

Ramakrishna Orphanage, Comilla, Bangladesh - Probini is providing scholarships for several students.

Dhaka Girls Orphanage Society of 1908, Bangladesh - Probini is supporting several girls until they complete their school education.

Barisal Poor College Student Scholarship - at the Ramakrishna Mission, Barisal, Bangladesh.

Sri Sarada Bagdipara Schools, Durgapur, India - Probini is providing funds for teachers' salaries.

Gandhi Ashram Trust, Noakhali, Bangladesh - Probini is providing scholarships for schoolchildren and loan scholarships to college students

Jagatpur Ashram Orphanage (1898), Chittagong, Bangladesh - Probini is supporting several boys & girls until they

complete their school education.

Madaripur Pranab Ashram (1920s), Bangladesh - Probini is providing funds for teachers' salaries at the free co-ed Binod Bidya Niketan school.

Mahilara Ashram School, Barisal, Bangladesh - Probini is providing funds for teachers' salaries.

Manab Kalyan Kami Anathalaya [Orphanage for the Improvement of Mankind], Netrokona, Bangladesh - Probini's funds created an agricultural project making them self-sufficient in food.

Harijan Palli Sri Rama-krishna Bidyalaya [Free School of the Sweeper's Colony], Dinajpur, Bangladesh - Probini is providing funds for the salaries of two teachers.

Sishu Kalyan Parishad [Children's Welfare Association Orphanage], Calcutta, India - Probini is providing scholarships for several girls.

KAUMARAVICHCHA JEEVAK : TALE OF AN ORPHAN

By Prabhansu Ghoshal

It was a fine morning some 2,600 years ago when a *rishi* [hermit] living in his *ashram* [monastery] in northern India heard a baby cry. He was surprised, since there were no babies in his ashram. When he stepped out of his cottage, he found an infant boy left at the door. The surprised hermit asked his disciples to find out who had left the infant. When all attempts failed, the hermit then realized that it was a divine decree that he would take care of the orphan. He picked up the boy, embraced him and named him *Jeevak* (the survivor). Thus, Jeevak joined the disciples growing up in the monastery and studying under the hermit.

The hermit was an authority in medicine and surgery. He, like a true guru, took great care to teach his disciples all his knowledge. Then, after a few years, he asked them to take the final test - to go out in search of herbs that have medicinal values. One after one, the disciples returned with impressive samples of herbs.

Jeevak returned last, but empty-handed. The other disciples asked Jeevak why he didn't bring back any herbs. Jeevak touched the feet of his guru and explained that he couldn't find any herbs devoid of medicinal value. So, instead of getting everything, he decided to not to get anything at all. The guru was very pleased. He blessed Jeevak, and proclaimed that he had successfully graduated with all the knowledge that the guru himself could offer. He gave Jeevak the title *Kaumravichcha* [a specialist in obstetrics and childcare] and asked him to help the suffering of humanity by practicing medicine.

So, Jeevak left the ashram. He had the blessings of his guru but had no place to go. So he wandered around from place to place serving people. On one journey he met a large convoy of servants carrying a sick boy, his grieving mother and a

large supply of food, medication and other essentials. The mother told Jeevak that she was taking his son to *Rajagriha* [Abode of the Kings].

Rajagriha was the capital city of Magadha, where Bimbisara of the Maurya dynasty was the reigning Emperor. It was a flourishing metropolis famous for nurturing scholars in every field. It was also a seat of culture, frequently visited by Buddha and Mahavira. There were many renowned physicians in the capital, one of whom, the mother hoped, would be able to cure her son who was afflicted with constant stomach pain.

However, once she found out that Jeevak was a physician, she asked him if he would examine her son. Jeevak's diagnosis was that the boy had a malignant intestinal gland. Jeevak asked the convoy to stop. He performed surgery, removed the gland and stitched up the incision carefully. In a few days the boy's stomach pain began to subside.

The mother was so impressed that she offered Jeevak a large sum of money. Jeevak politely declined saying that his mission is only to give, not to take anything. She asked him to accompany the convoy to the capital, to ensure that her son would not fall sick again. Jeevak agreed.

After reaching Rajagriha, Jeevak temporarily settled in a small hut and took care of sick people. Besides regular medical practice, he perfected the art of reconstructive plastic surgery that would remove facial scars and rebuild the noses and lips of his patients. His patients were so impressed that people with all kinds of medical and surgical problems poured in large numbers and his name spread beyond the Magadha kingdom.

Once, Emperor Bimbisara himself was struck by constant fatigue. He went through various treatments but the royal physicians failed to cure him. His condi-

tion deteriorated rapidly and he soon became bed-ridden. Finally, royal ministers summoned Jeevak. After a thorough check up, Jeevak prepared a special medicine that he asked the ministers to administer to the Emperor for ten days. Jeevak then quietly left the kingdom on a pilgrimage.

Bimbisara did not like the taste of the medication, especially its pungent odor, but he took it anyway. The Emperor, however, asked his physicians to investigate it. The investigation revealed the medicine contained animal extracts. Bimbisara was infuriated. Being a devout Buddhist, he was a vegetarian and opposed to killing. For him to take anything with animal products was a sin.

Bimbisara ordered Jeevak be brought to justice, but the search team returned with the news that Jeevak had gone beyond the kingdom, where Bimbisara could not exercise his royal decree. Meanwhile, the Emperor was completely cured and resumed his royal duties. He then realized that Jeevak's medication did what all his well-paid royal physicians failed to do. Also, his subjects came to the court in large numbers asking for Jeevak's return.

Remorseful, Bimbisara sent a minister to Jeevak asking him to please return, conduct follow-up treatments and, most importantly, to take care of his subjects who considered Jeevak a divine savior. Bimbisara promised that no harm would come to Jeevak.

So Jeevak returned. He explained that the medication for the Emperor was a derivative of goat livers. That was the only treatment that could have saved Bimbisara since, due to an infection, his liver was failing. Grateful, Bimbisara asked for Jeevak's forgiveness and offered him a large sum of money together with the position of the head of royal physicians and anything else that

(Continued on page 4)

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KAUMARAVICHCHA JEEVAK : TALE OF AN ORPHAN

(Continued from page 3)

Jeevak wanted.

Jeevak refused them all with his usual modesty. At Bimbisara's insistence he only accepted a mango grove, where he said he could establish a treatment center for all. Then the Emperor expressed the desire that Jeevak would look after his guru, Lord Buddha. Jeevak accepted.

When he met Buddha he was impressed by Buddha's tranquil nature. He became a disciple of Buddha. His first treatment for Buddha was to cure his constipation by having him inhale fragrant medications spread on a lotus flower. Though the science of inhalers in modern medicine is fairly recent, it was widely practiced in ancient India. Regrettably, Jeevak could not save the life of Buddha, as Buddha died in Kushinagar, away from Rajagriha.

India is the first civilization that invented and practiced surgery (including plastic surgery) calling it *Shalya*

Chikitsa [Surgical Treatment]. The earliest recognized description of surgery goes back to 650 BC, when the hermit Shusruta, an authority on *Ayurveda* [Science of Life], wrote the book *Shusruta Samhita* [Shusruta's Compendium]. Modern scientists acknowledge that the book is surprisingly well written for its time. It has descriptions of more than 125 surgical instruments, various methods of stitching (including the use of horse's hair), more than 300 operations and 42 surgical processes.

M.R.S. Planket, a medical historian, describes Indian achievement in these words, "The Hindus were so advanced in surgery that their instruments could cut a hair longitudinally". Amongst the types of surgery Shusruta Sanhita describes include nose reconstruction surgery, called "rhinoplasty" in modern science. Modern scientists acknowledge Shusruta's contribution to the use of cheek skin in rhinoplasty, calling it the "Indian Method."

Kaumaravichcha Jeevak practiced

medicine. But he had a natural talent for surgery. He improvised, perfect and invented various types of surgery with the knowledge derived from his guru, borrowing wisdom from Shusruta's writing and his inner instinct as a scientist. In Buddhist texts, one can find mention of Jeevak operating on the brain of a merchant. He cured disease of the head, sometimes by surgery, fistula by use of ointment, jaundice by medication and performed surgery on intestinal "entanglements." Jeevak was the first person to successfully identify and treat "Shyam Rang," now known as "cyanosis" in modern medical science, a characteristic blue color of the skin, caused by unoxygenated hemoglobin in the blood.

Jeevak lived a long but dedicated life. He gave everything but took nothing in return. He left a rare legacy that still persists. His mango grove in Rajagriha - now known as Rajgir, in the state of Bihar - is now a tourist attraction known as "Jeevak's Amravan."

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