

প্রবিনী ফাউন্ডেশনের টুকটাকি

Spring 2008

Conference Report— by Prof Sujata Ghosh Dastidar

4th Annual Probini Meeting at Dhaka, Bangladesh January 4, 2008



The conference

started at 9:30 AM at the Dhakeswari Temple Conference Room. The agendas included yearly report pre-

-sentation and plan of work for the next year of all Probini-aided organizations. The agenda also included discussion among members to raise funds from other sources for economic self-sufficiency; utilization of such funds for repair and maintenance of various Probini aided ashrams and schools; and job creation. A total of 19 participants were present from the beginning and the conference was presided over by this writer, Professor of Jadavpur University, Kolkata, and Vice President Children's Welfare Association, Kolkata, India. (see p 3)

Visit to Probini Institutions: 2008



Welcome At Bhakta Palli School

New Probini School Building—SriRamKathi

A'Manik Probini Girls' Hostel Opening

After the 4th Annual Probini Conference in Dhaka on Friday, January 4, 2008 some of us had the pleasure of visiting a number of Probini institutions in Bangladesh and India. In Bangladesh the visit took a group of travelers through 11 districts and in West Bengal, India it covered travel through four districts. A long river ferry across the mighty Padma River and across the picturesque countryside took visitors for a warm welcome from students of Pranab School Probini Boys' Hostel (Director: monk Jibon Maharaj) at Madaripur on south bank of Padma. It seems Probini Hostel has brought life back not only to the students residing in the hostel but the ashram itself with its newly built guest house, a brick wall surrounding the ashram, vegetable and flower gardens and a refurbished kitchen. Residents gave the visitors a tour of sites of possible expansion, 20 minutes by cycle-rickshaw. Next they were invited to Tuthamandra Sarajubala Girls' High School in Gopalganj District where they are in dire need of a dormitory because of lack of public transportation. This school was founded by Mr. Ramkrishna Kirtaniya. Next on the agenda was visit to KadamBari College in Rajoir, (continued of p 3)

OUR MOST RECENT BENEFACTORS: [October 16, 2007— MARCH 15, 2008]

Sponsor: Ms Mita Banerjee, Estate of the late Ronald Moehle Drs Prof Sachi G & Shefali S Dastidar

Patron: Dr Santanu & Nisha Datta, Professor Uwe Gielen, Prof Nurullah Hajra, Dr Prof Kusumita P Pedersen

Donor: Sailendra & Shree Chatterjee, Pratip K Dasgupta, Prabhansu & Sibani Ghoshal, Barun & Sipra Mukhopadhyay, Krishnendu Rudra, Paresh & Shimul Shah

Contributor: Anonymous, Amistad Early Childhood Education Center, Mrs Arati Bhattacharji, Asok & Karabi Chakrabarti, Udayan Chattopadhyay, Rana & Christine Das, Francis & Lena Farrugia, Susanta Gupta, Mrs Rafiya Khan, Gopal (CPA) & Daksha Patel, Suranjan Ray, Ms Porie Saikia-Eapen, Asish Sarkar, Mihir & Amala Sen, Professors Sashi & Sumitra Shah, South Asian Marrow Association of Recruiters Inc., Ms E Ann Weber, Rev Arlene Wilhelm

Chair of Trustee:

Dr Sachi G Dastidar

Executive Secretaries:

Mr Sheikh Jahangir Alam
Mr Shuvo G.Dastidar
Mr Srikant Mookerjee

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Mrs Madhabi Roy Gharami

Barisal

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Chittagong

Mr Rana Dasgupta, Esq

Comilla

Mr Swapan K Dey

Dhaka

Mr Subir Mazumdar
Mr Ananta Roy
Mr C R Mazumder, CFA

Dinajpur

Ramakrishna Mission

Madaripur

Jibon Maharaj

Mahilara

Monk Dayamoy Sadhu

Mymensingh-Netrokona

Mr Tariq Ali

Noakhali

Ms Jharna D Chowdhury

SriRamKathi

Brother Sunil

Uzipur

Mr Ranajit Kumar Roy

ENGLAND

Mr Kamlesh Chowdhury

INDIA

Calcutta

Dr Sujata G Dastidar
Mrs Purna Chowdhury
Mrs Pratima RoyChowdhury

Delhi

Dr Shyamal Goswami
Dibrugarh
Ven Karuna Shastri

Durgapur

Mr Nirmal Mondal
Mr Dilip Bauri

Probini (New York) elected a new Committee for 2008-2010: Sheikh Jahangir Alam, Shuvo G. Dastidar and Srikant Mookerjee as Joint Secretaries; Prof Gerard Weber, Treasurer; Members: Tanjim M. Alam, Manideepa Bose, Udayan Chattopadhyay, Pratip Dasgupta, Prof Sachi G Dastidar, Dr Shefali S Dastidar, Joy Karim, Anindita Mookerjee, T. J. Morris, Prof Kusumita Pedersen; Intern: William Porter

Loss:

On Oct 11, 2007 we lost a great soul, the Peace Ambassador gurudev Sri Chinmoy, a great friend of Probini. Gurudev leaves behind thousands of followers and devotees worldwide. Gurudev's Sri Chinmoy Center helped many of our centers in B'desh.

Suprabhat Sengupta, a long-time friend of Probini, left his mortal life on Friday, November 30, 2007, at his Queens residence. He leaves behind his wife Uma, a Samaj Bandhu honoree, and their children and grandchildren.

We will miss them!

Promotion:

Udayan to Vice President of Business Development, Times Square Alliance, NYC

Prof Santanu Datta of North Carolina and Probini was elected to Florida State University Alumni Association's out-of-state rep.

Congratulation!!

Remember!

Your donations to Probini are fully tax deductible

REVIEW OF PROBINI'S SACHI G. DASTIDAR'S BOOK BY DR. BECKE KALMANS

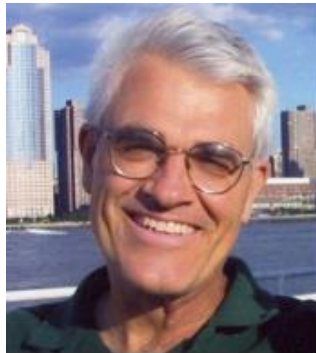
In his latest book, *Empire's Last Casualty: Indian Subcontinent's Vanishing Hindu and Other Minorities* (2008, Firma KLM, Calcutta: \$29), Dr. Sachi G. Dastidar focuses on the effects of religious communalism on the human rights and survival of the indigenous Hindu and other Christian and Buddhist minorities of Bangladesh/East Pakistan/East Bengal. The book aims to break down what Dr. Dastidar terms the "taboo of silence" in Bangladesh and in the Indian province of West Bengal, as elsewhere in India, with respect to the plight of Bengali minorities since partition by providing quantitative estimates of the vanishing

Hindu population principally, but not exclusively. This pioneering study so attempts to provide an answer to the question posed in private by poor villagers and oppressed castes to the author during his travels in the Subcontinent: "Kaku/Babu" (Uncle/Sir), "aamago lokera jai koi?" (Where do my people go?)

Bengal Province in British India is at first described as having linguistic and cultural homogeneity, religious tolerance and peaceful coexistence prior to 1905 when it was initially partitioned by the Colonial Administration. Although Bengal was reunited in 1912, Muslim-Hindu communal rioting continued

to characterize Bengali politics to the 1947 partition of India into the Dominion of Pakistan (later Islamic Republic of Pakistan) and the Union of India (later Republic of India). While Dr. Dastidar's main time frame of analysis is the post-1947 era when large-scale population migration and, as he documents, institutionalized intolerance occurred in East Pakistan and in Bangladesh after its independence in 1971, he includes data which illustrates that extensive Hindu migration actually started one year before partition after the massive killing of Hindus during the anti-Hindu Noakhali Danga pogrom.

(continued in page 4)



Ron E. Mohle's Gift to Probini Foundation

Moehle's Estate: Probini is gratified to receive a large sum of money from the late Ron E. Mohle's estate as per his will. Moehle's attorney is Alicia Kaplow, and executor is his sister Lorna Wallick of Seattle, Washington. This contribution will be used to build a girls' hostel at Nayan Sadhur (Monk Nayan's) Ashram at Netrokona, Bangladesh. Thanks a million!

Doihari Classroom after Cyclone



PROBINI PROJECTS

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

Bagerhat-Khulna AndharManik Girls' High School: Probini is building a girls' dormitory.

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

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

Comilla Ramakrishna Orphanage, Bangladesh - Probini is providing scholarships to several boys.

Dhaka Girls Orphanage Society, Bangladesh - Probini is providing scores of scholarships to girls to complete school education.

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

Durgapur Sri Sarada, Bagdipara & B-Zone (three separate) Schools, India - Probini is providing salaries for teachers.

Gandhi Ashram Trust, Noakhali, Bangladesh -

Probini is providing scholarships for school children and loan scholarships to college students.

Jagatpur Ashram Orphanage (1898), Chittagong, Bangladesh - Probini is supporting several boys & girls' education.

Madaripur Pranab Ashram, Bangladesh - Probini is providing salaries for teachers and has built a boys' dormitory.

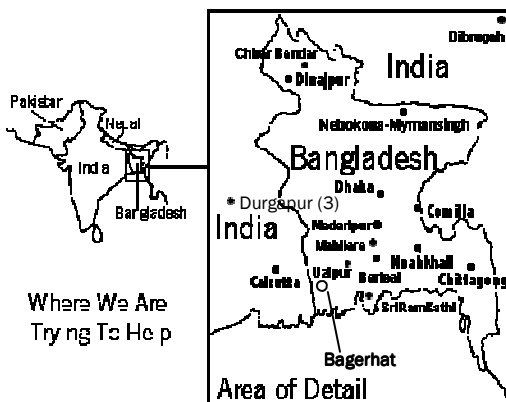
Mahilara Ashram School, Barisal, Bangladesh - Probini is providing salaries for teachers and built a school.

Netrokona ManabKalyanKami [Improvement of Mankind] **Anathalaya Orphanage, Bangladesh** - Probini is providing student scholarships and has created agricultural projects for self-sufficiency in food.

Khochna School, Chirar Bandar, Bangladesh - Probini is providing salaries for teachers.

Pirojpur SriRamKathi Pranav Shishu Bidyaniketan School, Bangladesh - Probini is providing salaries for teachers and has built a school building.

Uzipur Surjo Sen Anath Sishu Sadan [Orphanage], **Uzipur, Bangladesh** - Probini is supporting students at the Orphanage and has built a dorm kitchen.



(From p 1, **Annual Probini Conf....**)

The invocation of the conference was a recitation from Holy Gita by Swami Satyapriyananda, head of Probini hostel in Madaripur. This was followed by garlanding of the delegates. Addressing the delegates Dr. Ananta Kumar Roy, Chair of Sub continental Committee, expressed heartiest welcome to all the participants particularly Sabyasachi (Dr. Sachi G. Dastidar) for joining from the U.S.; and two delegates from India, Mrs. Pratima Roy Chowdhury and this writer. In his introductory speech Sabyasachi described how Probini Foundation was formed in New York with the initiative of a few individuals and the extent of its charitable activities. He said that Probini is now involved in overall development of 18 different institutions of which 13 are in Bangladesh and 5 in India. He made an appeal to the delegates to work harder to raise funds in their own countries by various means so that their respective organizations can function independently in course of time. This was followed by deliberations by the participants.

Mr. C.R. Mazumdar of Dhaka Orphanage Society informed that they had kept the entire fund from Probini in fixed deposits earning maximum interest. They use only the interest amounts for various purposes in the Orphanage. Swapan Kumar Dey of Ramkrishna Ashram Anath Nibas orphanage, Comilla, expressed deep gratitude to Probini for support and proudly declared that his was the first organization that received funds from Probini. He enlightened the participants with their present activities.

Monk Swami Gitatmananda, head of Pranabananda Shishu Vidyaniketan (children's school), Sriramkathi gratefully acknowledged how the financial support from Probini could be utilized for making a permanent structure for the School in ashram campus. Srimati Madhabi Roy Gharami from Andharmanik Girls High School, Bagerhat Dist., informed the group of a new girls' dormitory building on the

campus with the help of funds that they obtained from Probini. She invited everyone for its opening ceremony on January 9, 2008.

This writer of Children's Welfare Association (Shishu Kalyan Parishad), Kolkata described how their Ashram was initiated with 12 Hindu refugee girls from East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) in a small two-room flat in North Kolkata by a few devoted social workers, mostly ladies. In course of time an ashram home could be built for accommodation of these refugee girls in South Kolkata. At present this is a large ashram, mostly for orphan girls who are sent by the West Bengal Government, accommodates over 450 girls. However, Probini has donated a large amount to this Association with which several girls receive scholarship for their boarding, lodging and basic necessities including education. Similarly, the other participants profusely acknowledged Probini help and described their modes of function. Sabyasachi distributed several checks from the foundation to individual organizations.

A **Sub-continental Committee for Probini** was thereafter elected with Dr. Ananta Roy (Dhaka) as Chairman; Sri Subir Mazumdar (Dhaka) as Secretary; and Dr. Sujata Ghosh Dastidar (Calcutta), Sri Swapan Kumar Dey (Comilla), Sri Ranjit Roy (Uzirpir), and Advocate Achyutananda Gharami (Bagerhat) as Members.

The meeting also elected a **Subcommittee for Economic Self-sufficiency and Job Creation** with Subir Mazumdar (Dhaka), Chair; Mrs. Pratima Roy Chowdhury (Calcutta), Jibon Maharaj (Madaripur), Kalpana Mondal (Noakhali) and Ananta Roy (Dhaka), Members.

(From P 1, **Probini Visit**)

an hour by car from Madaripur, seeking Probini help. Now KadamBari's principal's one bedroom doubles as girl's dorm.

Mahilara (Barisal District) Ashram children's and adult school at Probini School Building was next. It was great to see the

destitute look of poor community gone and new buildings have been added for social and religious events. Children's recitation welcomed the visitors. Life not only came back to the people who in 2001 came under attack from the extremists before the national election, but even the flowers were reassuring with their smile. From that ashram the group quickly headed to Adarsha Palli Bhakta Ashram school where a large public reception waited them complete with ululating, marks on forehead, citation, speech, and music. Adarsha was reached by a short walk through a naturally-landscaped path following a canal and lush-green scenery.

The visitors then went to Surya Sen Orphanage in Uzirpur (Barisal District) headed by Ranajit Roy. This project contains a coed school, an orphanage, a Sanskrit college, a vocational training center, and a home for destitute women. For weeks fallen trees blocked all access in parts of Bangladesh. Many of the buildings, dorms, classrooms were blown away. Students are struggling sleeping on the floor, yet they were upbeat as their school is still functioning. A number of dignitaries were invited to a large public meeting that included distribution of goods to cyclone victims. To their surprise guests were asked to formally open "Mahatma Dr. Sabyasachi Ghosh Dastidar Sanskrit College Building," that has been "approved by the College Board and the local administration." (Probini hasn't contributed any funds for this.) 20-minute walk to the complex was lined by residents who welcomed the guests with incense dance, garlanding, and ululating. The guests left as the *matua* folk song and dance was exploding with energy. Next day the Probini group headed for dedication of SriRamKathi Pranab Children's School Probini Building headed by Monk Sunil. 150 miles through breathtaking scenery and a ferry over Madhumati River took five hours from Madaripur. A tour of the newly-built facility waited the visitors. Here too a genie seemed to have touched the ashram. Residents have (p 4)

I'd like to help!

Yes, I/We/Our organization would like to help

Please make check(s) payable to **The Probini Foundation**

Sponsor \$500

Patron \$250

Donor \$100

Contributor (any amt) \$_____

Name _____

Address _____

E-mail _____

Phone _____

Please clip and mail to: **The Probini Foundation, 80-56 251st Street, Bellerose, NY 11426**

(from p 2 ...**Review**) The study uses Indian and Bangladeshi Census figures for 1941-2001 to measure changes in population and flows of migration. Dr. Dastidar laments that it is much more difficult to estimate documentation of loss of life through genocide, pogroms and outright murder. Here, he includes only those estimates corroborated from (often horrific) accounts published in books, newspapers or other reliable sources, while recognizing that a vast number of such deaths still remain to be counted.

The census data reveals that the Hindu population in East Bengal/East Pakistan/Bangladesh has been reduced from a third of the population at the time of the 1947 partition to 8-10 percent in 2001. This loss of population, depending on the rate of growth of population used, ranges from 45 million to 50 million, including a documented estimate of 3.1 million deaths accredited to anti-Hindu violence beginning with the Noakhali Danga pogrom of 1946. The latter figure alone is cited to be larger than 75 of the 189 nations listed in the World Bank's April 2003 World Development Indicators! While Dr. Dastidar makes a concerted effort to be an objective practitioner of data collection and estimation to avoid any bias, his sadness and outrage speak through the Bangladeshi and Indian Census numbers and the further documentation of the mass murder of Hindus that he attributes to Muslim extremists, the Pakistani Army and Bengali Islamists. As a result of Hindu religious tradition, it is noted, the rivers of the world's largest delta have washed away the ashes of a great many of these people – but now their deaths, along with the deaths of the other vanishing Bengali minorities, have for the first time, perhaps, been accounted for and brought to the attention of an international audience.

February 25, 2008

(Dr. Kamlans is a professor at State University of New York, Old Westbury)

Cyclone Sidr (Relief) that hit Bangladesh on November 15, 2007 has had devastating effect on the nation and to many of Probini schools and dorms. Sadly we lost a 7th grader of AndharManik Girls' School making irreparable damage to a bright, promising girl's family. Sidr struck at night when Sathi was at home. From the beginning Probini insisted building sturdy brick-and-concrete structures so that those can double as storm shelter as well as flood shelter. Probini's new buildings in Pirojpur and Mahilara and two new dorms at Madaripur and Bagerhat did just that. Our director of Pirojpur center, Brother Sunil Maharaj, made several boat trips to delta islands, with volunteer doctors and nurses, to provide relief.

Earlier Probini sent funds and materials to cyclone victims. In Jan 2008 Probini's Pratima RoyChowdhury of Calcutta, Anata Roy of Dhaka, Jibon Maharaj of Madaripur and Sachi G. Dastidar of New York visited Uzirpur and SriRamKathi for relief work.

(From P 3, **Probini Visit**)

transformed themselves into a livelier, cheerful, self-confident place. Even poor residents have raised funds to build additional structures. Mother only knows how She is showering Her children with such power. Here too if only the marigold could talk! A public meeting with Probini visitors was joined by students, teachers, faculty, parents and neighbors where awards and supplies were distributed. A short trip by a motorized country boat took us to Doihari village in a river island to Shahid (Martyr) Memorial Girls' High School. Beauty of the land and river, the blooming rose and jasmine, smiling children belied

what Mother Nature has brought on them. Sidr had completely blown off the tin roofs of all the classrooms, dorms and living quarters. They are seeking emergency help. A day-long program at AndharManik Girls' High School where the newly built Probini Hostel was dedicated waited the visitors. Local schools declared it a holiday for their students and faculty to attend the gala event that was opened with recitations from Hindu Gita and Muslim Koran. Chanting, drums, cymbals, and ululating welcomed the guests in that auspicious event. Dignitaries included the founder Anil Gharami, heads of other schools and local administrators. After the formal dedication of the Probini Hostel, all were invited to visit the new structure. Headmistress is Mrs. Madhabi Gharami, and former head is Mr. Nirmal K. Mata. The delegation was then invited to AndharManik Boys' High School for possible Probini association.

Trip to Durgapur of West Bengal State of India took visitors to three schools where Probini is providing teachers: B-Zone school, Tilak Basti (slum) Vivekananda School and Mahiskapur Basti (slum) Sri Sarada School. Students and teachers thanked Probini for their help. Four institutions close to Birbhum and Bankura districts seeking Probini's help were visited: Vivekananda Service Centre (for women) in Durgapur, Nivedita School at Mohonta Bagan Para (Santhali tribal) village, Dhoadanga (Santhali tribal village) School, and DVC Bagan Para Santhali Village School. Durgapur was a struggling organization a few years back has blossomed into a multifarious organization providing education to destitute children, job training to adults, village reconstruction, health care, sanitation to poor villages, and more. Projects are run by Nirmal Mondal, Jayanta Biswas, Dilip Bauri, Chandra Biswas, Sandip Kha and others.— by Sachi G. Dastidar

The Probini Foundation
80-56 251st Street
Bellerose, NY 11426
 718-343-0189
 probini@hotmail.com