

Sr. Shobha retires and Sr. Anicia takes her place

A Fond Farewell to Sr. Shobha



As many of you may know, Sr. Shobha has been lovingly running our Prajna Vihar School as its Principal for over the last 7 years. She has now resigned and a farewell party was organized on the 19th June 2015. The new Principal Sr. Anicia and Vice-Principal Sr. Cresencia, school teachers, society committee members as well as past and present students joined in celebrating and acknowledging Sr Shobha's outstanding contribution to the school.

Last year she had secretly requested her Provincial Head to send a capable person whom she could train as an incoming Principal. Her request to find a successor was driven by her wish to focus more on her spiritual side and join a year-long Spiritual Renewal Course in Mysore in the Southern State of Karnataka from July 2015. This will give her much time for personal contemplation and meditation.

We wish to express our gratitude to Sr. Shobha, not only for running the school so heartfully, but also for willingly taking on so many other jobs and responsibilities of the school. She has been secretary of our Society requiring to be responsible for all the chores and duties of the Society. She has been pursuing the FCRA which gives the school legal status to receive foreign donations, organising all the Books of Accounts, auditing, FCRA and Society Reports that the government requires. Furthermore, she has overseen all repair works as well as our new School Building construction project. In addition to the many other hats she willingly wore and that the position requires, she has been communicating with and responding to the requests of the many foreign supporters and fundraisers. Kerstin once observed that in her school in Australia there are 20 people doing the jobs that Sister was single-handedly doing at our school.

Sr. Shobha took on all these responsibilities with her special grace and sweetness that we all very much appreciate and she has a special place in our hearts. We will miss her surely and wish her well in her spiritual renewal and the endeavors she pursues in the future.



Sr Shobha brings a warm hearted smile to her work.

Introduction of our new Principal



We are happy to welcome Sr. Anicia, a native of Kerala, in South India, as our new PVS Principal. Many of you may already know her, as she has been working side by side with Sr. Shobha helping her run the school for the last year.

She brings with her a warm and energetic enthusiasm. Her focus on the ongoing support and improvement of the school's administration and education program is welcomed and will ensure the continuation for improving the quality of our school. Her vision is to give the poorest of children the best education possible. Sr. Anicia is a capable and experienced administrator. Her previous position as principal of a school similar to the Prajna Vihar School was in Jharkhand, a few hours south of Bodhgaya. Sr Anicia will continue to teach English and History classes. She enjoys reading, cooking and helping her students' drama presentation skills.

We look forward to working closely with her in the years ahead.

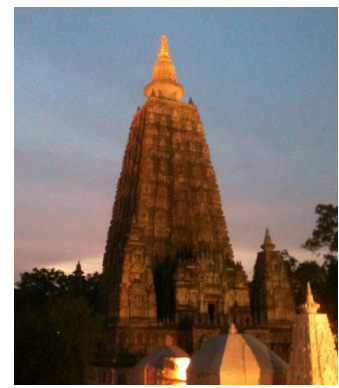
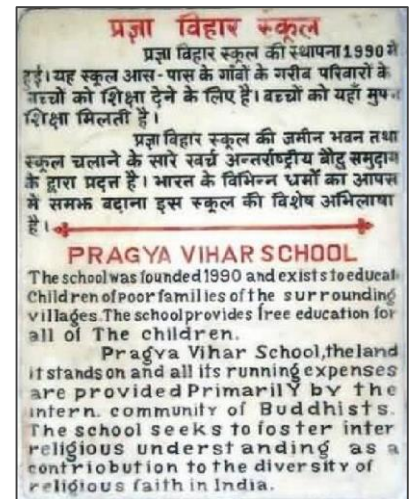


Sr. Anicia brings an enthusiastic smile to her new position.

A Year In The Life Of Prajna Vihar School

The inter-religious Prajna Vihar School, not far from the Mahabodhi Temple, where the Buddha was said to have attained enlightenment over 2500 years ago, has been a beacon for the community in Bodhgaya for the past 25 years. Events and celebrations occur every month within the school calendar; some of them are reoccurring events whilst others are new initiatives. Naturally, the biggest event the school celebrated this year was the 25th anniversary.

The school calendar of the PVS has many academic and cultural highlights. These events and celebrations are used as teaching opportunities and learning experiences. Religious holidays enable our students to learn about and respect the different religions. On Teachers' Day, students themselves put on the event which includes collecting money, making a budget and a menu, buying gifts for the teachers etc. Of course on many occasions they also have the opportunity to perform and showcase their skills which develops so many positive qualities in the students.



The main temple – Mahabodhi stupa: this building's importance to the Buddhist world is immense.



Highlighting the importance of our PV school's additional class rooms: Christopher Titmuss cutting the ribbon, Rick Peterson with Buddhist monks and society member Ven. Kabir Saxena blessing the building.

Our year in review starts in **July** 2014. Under hot conditions, our school director, Ven. U Nyaneinda, together with our principal Sr Shobha, and committee secretary Kiran Lama ceremonially laid the foundation stone, inaugurating the construction of our new building. Since then four new classrooms, and a small flat for our two Sisters, the principal and assistant principal have taken shape. The three classrooms downstairs are now being used and the Sisters are anxiously waiting to move into their new flat, at which time the upstairs classroom next to their flat will be inaugurated too.



From making the initial layout on the left to the pouring of the roof on the right, the building takes shape.

In **July**, the Karuna-Shechen Organisation organised an Awareness Women's Health and Education seminar. Its Shechen Health Clinic provides sanitary pads for the girls at the PV School at minimum cost. The hope is for an ongoing educational seminar every two months.

The Muslim celebration of Id-Ud-Fitr took place in **August** this year. Eid-ul-Fitr or Id-UI-Fitr, often abbreviated simply as 'Eid', is one of the most widely celebrated festivals in the Islamic calendar and it occurs after the sighting of the new crescent moon which signals the end of the month of **Ramadan**.



The teachers and students enjoy *seviyan kheer*, a sweet traditionally served on Eid

In the month of **September**, the Mahabodhi Society sponsors the annual Inter-School Speech Contest, Essay and Drawing Competition. Several of our students competed with the following students winning awards:

Drawing Contest:

Primary group: Rocky Kumar 3rd Prize;
Junior group: Abhnanandan Kumar - 2nd Prize
Saloni Kumari - 4th Prize

Essay Writing:

Guriya Kumari - 3rd Prize

Speech Contest:

Junior group: Saijiya Praveen - 1st Prize
Senior group: Nandita Sakya - 2nd Prize



Nandita Sakya – 2nd Prize Speech Contest



Saijiya Praveen- 1st Prize Speech Contest

Teachers' Day is also celebrated in **September** and students honour their teachers by buying small gifts for them. Students organise this event, they present the gifts to their teachers and perform dances. Afterwards everyone enjoys snacks and cake together.



When his supporters wanted to celebrate his birthday, the Second Indian **President Radhakrishna**, pictured above, told them celebrate teachers instead, and thus *Teachers' Day* was started.

The inspirational Rangoli competition is held every year in **October**. This creative and traditional practice of sand drawings is part of the festival of *Deepali*, the festival of light and colour. Students from Class 3 to 10 are involved

with Class 7 winning first, Class 8 second and Class 10 third prize. Class 5 won the overall prize of all Senior and Junior classes involved.



Above students display their Rangoli artwork

In late **November**, two volunteers from Australia, Hannah and Toni came to Bodhgaya to offer their services to the school. Hannah, a law student, and Toni, a medical student, used English as a Second Language Teaching materials developed and kindly donated by former Australian primary school principal Grant Allen. They had carried the vast array of resources and teaching materials in their luggage and managed to bring it to Bodhgaya. Using the resources enabled the two young women to teach English even without knowing much about the methodology of teaching. It is envisaged to make further use of the resources by volunteers offering their services to the school in the future.



Toni and Hannah with the students

Hannah and Toni's stay happened to coincide with the annual excursion to Kolkata of Class 10. Both of them immensely enjoyed travelling with the students and staff visiting and exploring Kolkata.



Volunteers Hannah and Toni with teachers and Class 10 students in Kolkata visiting the Science City Centre, the Planetarium and the Indian Museum.

In early **December**, the Karuna-Shechen Organisation invited our female students and staff to a two-day yoga seminar.



For teachers, pictured above, and for students pictures below: The focus was placed on yoga asanas and pranayama for improvement of health and concentration.



The school also celebrated Christmas in **December** and even had someone looking a little like Santa Claus making an appearance.

The entire month of **January**, was dedicated to academic study and preparation for exams as well as planning and rehearsing plays and dance routines in readiness for the 25th Jubilee celebrations. All these activities coincided with the near-completion of the new building adjacent to the existing structures.



After six months of construction work, the new building had taken real shape and the foundation for desperately needed additional toilets had also been laid.



The construction progressed quickly as the workers were doing their best to complete the building for the Celebration day. From left to right: back view of the building – prior to painting; toilet block foundations; toilets nearly complete; sculpting the school's name on the building-first coat of paint.

These links to short video clips depict the various building and construction stages of the new classrooms:

<https://youtu.be/BKd1ytg0FXU> or <https://animoto.com/play/CDTcPMbUGHp1omBLqkKUg>

The purpose of the extension has been to build extra class rooms and a small apartment for the sisters. The older class rooms are quite small and we needed three extra rooms for our library, science lab and maths lab, which we will be converting now that the lower classes have shifted. Providing a living space for the sisters, enables the school community to extend their learning and training activities throughout the day and into the evening.

Tom Riddle, our volunteer film maker filmed his friend and collaborator Trishna as she takes us on a video tour of the school: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d4a4x2J4L8c>



The additional classrooms and residence for the Sisters of the Prajna Vihar School from the front and the view of the school from afar looking at the back of the entire school building.

26th of **January** marks Republic Day. In Bihar, this is celebrated and recognised by all schools as a day of importance. In 1950, the Constitution of India came into force. This date is especially important for these castes as the constitution drafted under the chairmanship of Dr B R Ambedkar (himself a member of this caste and community), gave and gives this caste rights and status for the first time in India. Traditionally, people who have had much involvement and contributed in a very significant way to the PV School are being honoured and thanked.



Our School Director, Most Ven. U. Nyaneinda watches as the children perform beautifully this aerobatic flag dance to a lovely song celebrating India on Republic Day.

The flag was raised by senior students and a dance performance showcasing the talents of our students concluded the celebration. On their way home, every boy and girl received a traditional sweet called Jalebi.



Jalebi being passed out to the students.

Pilgrimage travel to Bodhgaya, has some wonderful positive impact on the PV School. Apart from the fact that many of these visiting pilgrims support the school via donations, it allows the school community to 'show off' the school and the activities the students are involved with. This year, these visits provided a wonderful opportunity to have a receptive audience whilst rehearsing the various dance routines for the 25th anniversary celebrations.



Shantum Seth (of Buddhapath Pilgrim Travels) and his group enjoy as the children perform beautifully in rehearsal for the big day.



Volunteers & visitors (here from Australia, Brasil, Canada, Germany & Italy) interacting with students, admiring performances & viewing the new building.

In **February**, our Year 10 students prepare for their final exams. Once their exams have been administered, students will either continue with Year 11 and 12 at another school or seek a different educational/vocational training pathway. Traditionally, the Year 9 class holds a farewell party for the 10th year students with some singing and other performances. This year, invited guests Rick and I, Ven. Bodhipal and Kiran Lama enjoyed the speeches and sentiments of the graduating students.



Each student received an English dictionary from the school as a parting gift and expressed their gratitude for the education they have received. For many of the students, possibly particularly our female students finishing Class 10, it may also mean the end of their childhood. As Nandita Sakya (currently in Class 10) so aptly put in the following video: *"Here I have spent my childhood, my golden childhood and I don't want to leave this school"*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E-IUCo6NyPc>

The first two weeks of **February** were also filled with daily rehearsals, beautifying and cleaning the school grounds as well as completing big displays of students' science and art projects.



Every year in early **February**, the Mahabodhi Society of Bodhgaya organises a number of activities to coincide with the display of very sacred Buddhist relics. The culmination of this is a parade of which 10 schools are invited.

More information and images can be found here: <http://kliebchen.edublogs.org/2015/02/08/one-elephant-two-camels-and-over-500-school-students/>



25th Anniversary of Prajna Vihar School

With the big day finally being held on Sunday, 15 February, past and present principals, society members, staff, teachers, and community members assembled for the big event. This was a powerful experience as it brought home how much 'had been achieved'. Perhaps even more importantly, the visual representation of 25 years of teaching, learning, interacting and being with the Bodhgaya community seemed so much more tangible when looking at the rows and rows of photos separated out from 1990 – 2015.



Rick & I had the pleasurable task of sorting through 100s of photos to create a display of photos reflecting 25 years of PV School history.

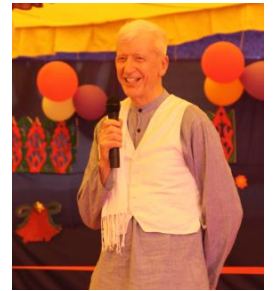
PVS has made a name for itself as a school excelling in both classical and modern dance. Our music teacher accompanies and rehearses with the students and several staff prepare and teach students for various dance competitions. Many of the dance costumes have been purchased over 10 years ago and are being looked after incredibly well. Appreciating valuable resources is commonplace for the school community.



These colourful costumes are purchased by the school and given to students for performances

Many of the past principals and assistant principals attended the Jubilee celebration:

Sr Udit (1993-97), Sr Cicilly (1997-99), Sr Anjali (1999-2003), Sr Yogita (2003-2004), Sr Bindu (2004-2008), and Sr Shobha (2008- 2015)



Invited guests enjoying the performances; Rick Peterson congratulating Sr Udit and Christopher Titmuss delivering a speech.

Other invited VIP guests were Society committee members, Mrs and Mr Bhandari, Mr Princy Dwyer, Mr Kiran Lama, Christopher Titmuss, as well as Sr. Laila, Sr. Imelda, Sr. Sheela, Sr. Lucina, Sr. Rashmi, Sr. Deepika and many other sisters from communities nearby and further away



Guests from near and far in India as well as from overseas (America, Australia, Germany, UK) were welcomed for the celebrations.

The program on Sunday, 15 **February** included ceremonial blessings of the new building, speeches, plays and dances. Those members of the community who had been involved with the school over the years were officially thanked and staff received gifts and recognition of their service to the school and student community.



Our students start the celebrations by announcing the order of events, Society members light candles; Sr Laila and Sr Shobha partake in the blessing of the celebrations and new building.



The school's history is acted out: every year of significance has a little story to go with it.



Classical and modern dance performances to very catchy tunes are enthusiastically performed.



Performance dance to the song: *buddham saranam gacchami* ([BSG Song 1960](#))

The following day, students and parents were invited to another rendition of dances and school plays, as we had not been able to accommodate everybody on Sunday. With only performances by the children and a Hip Hop group of past students on display, the atmosphere was festive and uplifting. Throughout the event Tom Riddle who is a video artist spending much of his time in Asia, and India in particular, filmed the dance performances. Over the years, a meditation student of Christopher Titmuss', Tom has volunteered to make many videos and supply endless photos of our children, school, staff and the surrounding communities: [Movies, Pictures, and Stories from Around the World](https://www.flickr.com/photos/thomasriddle/sets/72157632954806118/) and more specifically his work for our school: [Bodh Gaya and the PV School & https://www.youtube.com/user/thomasariddle](https://www.flickr.com/photos/thomasriddle/sets/72157632954806118/)



Tom Riddle, Ven. Bodhipal, Ven. Kabir, Christopher, Rick and Trishna enjoy dinner after the big day

Passing out gifts to the teachers and staff



Nandita leading the dance



Traditional dances – male and female dancers



Festive sentiments: dances, filming and speeches

In **March, April and May** the school was involved with various activities and participated in competitions. Reports on these can be found here:

Students' project and art work on display: [Display Posters Projects March 2015](#)

Outing to the local museum: [MuseumDayOuting April 2015](#)

Drawing Competition: [DrawingCompetition May 2015](#)

Year Level & House Structure: [HouseStructure July 2015](#)

Besides having very hot summers and very cold winters (where the local authorities often have to close schools due to these extreme temperatures), Bihar still has many challenges to overcome: illiteracy, poverty, corruption, and a crippling dowry practice. Prajna Vihar School is one of the solutions to these problems. Please help us continue our work by clicking on one of these links and making a donation to our cause. If you are already supporting the school, we wish to extend our heartfelt gratitude and appreciation.

[Rick Peterson](#) & [Kerstin Liebchen-Meades](#)



Supporting the PV School:

The [**Prajna Vihar School**](http://www.pvschool.in/) official website: [**www.pvschool.in/**](http://www.pvschool.in/) **Direct link for donations:** [**http://www.pvschool.in/support.html**](http://www.pvschool.in/support.html) (this link includes various places and contacts for making donations)

[**One World Children's Fund**](#) Donations to this fund are generally tax-deductible in the US. The Prajna Vihar School is supported by Shaila Catherine and the [**Insight Meditation South Bay**](#) community, through the One World Children's Fund. **Direct link for donations:** [**https://co.clickandpledge.com/sp/d1/default.aspx?wid=70714**](https://co.clickandpledge.com/sp/d1/default.aspx?wid=70714)

The [**Bodhgaya Development Association**](#) in Australia has been supporting the school for over twenty years and accepts cheques and funds transfers. Specify if you'd like donations to go to the Prajna Vihar School. This website has information and photos of the school from the early 1990s to the present. It also has a detailed annual newsletter. **Direct link for donations:** [**http://www.dharma.org.au/bda/contact-donations.html**](http://www.dharma.org.au/bda/contact-donations.html)



[PV School-History & General Information](#)
