

## The mission

of the Prajna Vihar School (PVS) is to give a value-based education to the economically and socially underprivileged children of Bodhgaya. This includes inter-religious understanding, arts, speech, sports, and general academics. Prajna Vihar School (PVS) provides free education, text books, note books, and mentorship for higher education to 550 students of the Dalit social castes in Bodhgaya. The PV School provides this opportunity and instills self-confidence, dignity, and a respect for higher education in the underprivileged children of the community. We depend on the kind generosity of people like you to run our school. US\$75 only sponsors an underprivileged child's quality education for one year.

**Please Donate!**



Dance practice in one of the new classrooms

## New School Building Finished!

In January 2015, students started using the classrooms in our new building -- a building which has almost doubled the size of the school. The new wing consists of three classrooms downstairs, and one upstairs along with an apartment and two small multipurpose halls. Last September the idea to have the Sisters move into the newly-built apartment was abandoned for a number of reasons and we have not yet formally decided how to utilize that space.

There is no wall between two of the classroom downstairs so they can also be used as a function hall for school events. This year the computer lab was shifted to the upstairs classroom, giving a lovely spacious teaching environment for the children to gather around the [continued](#)

## A Challenging Year for our Prajna Vihar School Family

This has been a most interesting, challenging and sad year for us. As you might have seen in our previous newsletter from 2015, Sr. Anicia took over as principal ago in June. She was full of excitement, ideas, enthusiasm and general passion to improve the school in so many different ways.

During her 4 months of service as principal, she accomplished many things, such as conducting teacher training, shifting the computer lab to a more spacious room in the new building, and painting all the rooms on the ground floor of the old building as well as meeting regularly with the teachers.

She also met with the parents talking to them about the health and welfare of the students. She advised them about healthy food and

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## A Challenging Year , continued

snack options discouraging them to allow their children to eat snacks from the vendors outside the school.

Then in October, during the holiday of the Hindu Dussehra festival, Sr. Anicia went to Ranchi, about 5 hours south of Bodhgaya, to the Sisters' provincial headquarters. When she went for a medical check-up there, it was confirmed that she had cancer of the blood. Sadly, she was never able to return to Bodhgaya to continue the work she had so enthusiastically started. After 6 months of suffering and treatment near her family in South India, Sr. Anicia died on 16th April 2016. On that particular day, the society members were gathered in Delhi for the society's annual meeting.

As there was no one among the Sisters' Order available to replace Sr. Anicia, the school was without a principal for 6 months after she became ill. Sr. Cresencia, the then vice principal, together with senior teacher, Mr Wajid managed the running of the school very well with the able assistance of Sr. Manisha (who is in charge of the Sisters' local nunnery), Kiran Lama, our erstwhile secretary, and Princy, our treasurer of the Society.

One of the main challenges concerning the continuation of the running of the school, was that Sr. Anicia's signature was still required at the bank to cash checks and withdraw money. Creative solutions were found, such as every few months, checks were taken all the way to Ranchi to be signed by Sr. Laila. Financial arrangements, including operating our bank accounts or chang-



Sr Anicia distributing books to students: July 2015



ing and updating signatories, are still on hold as we have only now just received a copy of Sr. Anicia's death certificate. For the past 3 months we've had to borrow money to pay the staff salaries' (Kerstin Liebchen-Meades on behalf of the Bodhgaya Development

Association (<http://www.bdainc.org.au/>) put together a brief pictorial record in memory of Sr. Anicia's work for the PV school: [Completing the Circle of Life.](#))



## From the Principal's Desk: July 2016

I am Sr. Rashmi Kerketta SRA, a catholic nun. My native place is Jharkhand. I completed my Bachelor of Education at St. Xavier Autonomous College in Ranchi. I have also studied Indian Classical dance, called Bharatnatayam. I have worked in many places including Jharkhand, Chattisgarh, Orissa and Bihar. I began my education ministry in Bodhgaya at PVS from 2009 to 2012 as Vice Principal under Sr. Shobha. After that, I worked as Headmistress for two years at a Catholic School in Bihar. I like teaching children because I want to impart my knowledge, especially to the downtrodden and under privileged children. My dream for the students of the PVS is to encourage every student to be a good citizen of India by building their good character and giving them the life skills to thrive in the world.

Why I became a nun?

I grew up in a large religious family where five family members are catholic priests and two are nuns. I was inspired by my uncle who is a priest and other nuns in the school where I studied. I joined the congregation of "Missionary Sisters of the Queen of the Apostles" because I want to work among the poor and needy. Through my 'life witness' others may experience God's love within them.



My dream for PVS:

- To provide good education for the students.
- All round development of students: physical, mental and spiritual.
- To be an ideal school in Bodhgaya.



## New building continued

computers. There is also a new library for the children in one of the classrooms vacated from the old building. We plan to open a new math and science lab in two of the other classrooms soon.

A great new toilet block with eight toilets each for the boys and the girls was completed in October. Before we had just four old toilets for 550 children.

We are very happy, proud, and grateful for our beautiful new building. We express our heartfelt gratitude to all those who made it possible.

In February of 2015 two guests filmed a tour of the new building as work was nearing completion; you can see their Youtube movie at <https://youtu.be/d4a4x2J4L8c>.



## Sr. Preeti, our new Vice Principal



Sr. Preeti, came to help with the running of our school on the 1st February 2016 until the new principal arrived in April. With the beginning of the new school year, she formally replaced our former Vice Principal, Sr. Cresencia who was then transferred to the Sisters' Amar Jyoti School on their campus in Bodhgaya.

PV school is the first assignment for this young Sister from Bombay. She approaches her responsibilities in an energetic and purposeful way. Sr. Preeti is a happy and loving person and the children and staff are

also very happy with her.



Sr. Rashmi(left) and Sr. Preeti(right) in their office at PVS



## Betsy Rose's message of hope and song comes to PVS

In January 2016, we were privileged to welcome a very warm and 'young soul lady' from America, Betsy Rose to our school. She is spreading the message of love, inner power and compassion through singing. Here is her account:

"In January of 2016 I was fortunate to visit Bodhgaya as part of an 8-month travel pilgrimage, singing songs of peace, justice and empowerment with women, children and human rights organizations, in Asia and Africa. I had heard about Prajna Vihar School from a friend. Their computer teacher, Jackie Vishwakarma arranged a music program at the school, and a lively room full of students joined me in song!

My primary message can be summed up in two songs: We Shall Overcome and This Little Light of Mine. The first allows for discussion, and the addition of new verses, about how humans overcome challenges, oppression, poverty, gender inequity, and more, through coming together non-violently,

standing up for themselves- and singing! The second affirms that each person has a special light within, and the world needs it! We can offer it, openly and wholeheartedly, and our light will help others to shine, and help us all overcome!"



Students enthusiastically singing along during Betsy Rose's performance



### Betsy's Reflection on the school . . .

PrajnaVihar was a beautiful community to visit! The well-constructed and visually inviting physical structures clearly reflected the strong international support that this school receives. But most of all, the lively and bright spirits of the students, their enthusiasm and participation, clearly reflect the quality of education and human relationship that the school is providing. I left the PVS on the back of Jackie's trusty scooter, with a huge smile on my face and true gratitude for the chance to share song and spirit with children who will be creating the future for India.

# Recapping the Year in Photos



Shobha's handover to Sr. Anicia as principal (from left to right: Sr. Cresencia, Sr. Shobha, Kiran Lamaji, Sr. Anicia, Sumitra)



Celebrating Independence day: August 2015

On August 15, 1947, India won its Independence from the British. In the photo above, our students are re-enacting a famous statue of freedom fighters.



September, 2015: Australian friends struggle to stay dry while coming to the school in monsoon

A group of volunteers from Australia came to our school. Sr. Anicia later had parts of the path and section of the school yard raised so that everyone can get to school a little drier in wet weather. For more on their visit follow this link: [Report of Australian S-L Tour 2015.](#)



Ms Julie, primary teacher from Australia with Mr Wajid in Ms Pushpa's Lower KG classes

# Teachers' Day at the Prajna Vihar School: September 2015



Girl students performing for the teachers on Teachers' Day



Sr. Anicia and Mrs Manju dancing on Teachers' Day



Students have prepared gifts for the teachers: September 2015



Class 10 girl, Nandita, leads the students in honouring the teachers



The students express their LOVE -for the teachers and Sr. Anicia

## Students compete with the best of schools in Gaya

In December 2015, our children participated in a SKIT competition which was organized by the Inter-Religious Friends' Associational one of the top schools in Gaya. Our PVS students' skit of "Victory over violence, the Story of Lord Buddha with Angulimala" was much appreciated and they came in third place.



Group photo with all 3 winning schools



PV students backstage



Celebrations continued with our supportive teachers and participating team



Group selfie with third place trophy

# Republic Day



Our students perform on Republic Day, January 26th, 2016



Sr. Cresencia, Sr. Manisha, Kiran Lama and Wajid who were running the school for 6 months before our new principal Sr. Rashmi arrived.



Senior students hand out Jalebi sweets, a tradition on Republic Day.



Our students prepare to offer flowers to the special guests





Our Class 10 students: March, 2016



Preparations for the distribution of books are underway: June 2016. Students of the PVS receive books free of cost for each of the offered subjects.



Sr. Rashmi and teachers handing out the books at the start of the new school year.



Children play in the monsoon puddles: June 2016



Students share their *rangoli*, a colored rice powder design traditionally made outside front doors during festival time.



PVS teaching staff: May 2016

## And, some good news from one of our students: Sajan Kumar



Hello, my name is Sajan Kumar and I finished PVS in 2011. I studied 11th & 12th in Sakya Muni college (Bodhgaya) and I was studying science there. After finishing my college, I enrolled myself at Max Mueller Bhavan at the Goethe Institute (New Delhi) to study German language and culture, hoping that after studying there for a year, I will be able to crack the entrance exam of JNU (central university in New Delhi) which will provide me shelter, food and good environment for shaping my bright future. Nowadays German language is in a great demand rather than other language like Chinese, French and the European and Asian language, because of Germany's strong economy. Hoping to find a good job after learning German and study at JNU.



Our newly constructed wing is on the left

## Please Consider Donating!

This year's total budget is 26,500,000 rupees, or US\$41,000 which equals \$75 for each of the 550 children who are studying in our school. All donations go solely towards their education; as administrative work is done by volunteers. Please give a child the education he or she needs to succeed in life.

In the **USA**, you can make a tax deductible donation at this link:

<https://support.oneworldchildrensfund.org/events/prajna-vihar-school-india/e78445>

In **Australia** you can donate at this link (paypal option) :  
<http://www.dharma.org.au/bda/contact-donations.html>

For **other countries**, please visit our website donation page:  
<http://pvschool.in/support.html>

Thanks for your kind generosity.

