



*From little things big things grow...*

## Message from the Chairperson

*By Kerstin Liebchen-Meades*

The news update you are about to read covers the activities of the BDA over the past 18 months. Our small committee of eight people (including four founding members of this NGO) has been supporting and fund raising for educational and empowerment projects in and around Bodhgaya for the past 26 years.

We pride ourselves on having pursued a vision that follows the song title "from little things, big things grow." They can however, take time to grow! This newsletter celebrates these achievements and recognises the positive impact on the communities and projects we support.

Our fundraising activities are purely small scale and have as their focus not only the raising of funds but also a wish to bring the community together. Most of our donations are generously given by friends and acquaintances, who greatly appreciate that 100% of their money goes directly to our five projects (all work and administrative costs are donated by the committee members).

You will read reports from our 'flagship' project, the inter-religious Prajna Vihar School—now in its 27th year—and from past-students who are making an impact on society in their own right. A timeline visually supports the impressive history of the school's existence (see pg.3).



PVS Silver Jubilee 2015

Kailash, who coordinates Jeevan Deep reports on the development of basic health and women's empowerment projects. The report by Sr Manisha, for Amar Jyoti's Development projects, highlights the need for Dalit women to gain some basic sewing skills for self-confidence and so that they can support their families with extra income. Asha Seva Kendra is the only organisation supported by the BDA in the neighbouring state of Jharkhand. These extremely well-run and inspirational suites of projects, run by a small group of sisters highlight the need for community-based and grass-roots outreach activities.

Additional developments since our last newsletter:

- Victor von der Heyde, founding member and chairperson for many years has stood down from the committee. We are extremely grateful for his efforts over the years.
- A new and updated BDA website and ongoing presence on social media sites.

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- Scholarships for past PVS students
- Small Service-Learning tours started in 2015 are now a yearly occurrence.
- Individual and school students volunteer visits to PVS.
- Inaugural Di Farmer community award nomination as recognition for BDA.

Thank you for your readership and for your ongoing support of the Bodhgaya Development Association. You will appreciate the significant outcomes we have achieved in an increasingly challenging context for small community-based organisations. Your commitment and vision allows us to continue helping communities which otherwise would be unable to access this support.

The committee wants to sincerely thank Debbie Winfield from [The Layout Place](#) for creating this newsletter.

## Those who guide and shape the education of PVS students

The Sisters of the Queen of the Apostles (SRA) have been overseeing the day-to-day wellbeing of staff and children since 1993. Two sisters, a principal and an assistant principal, have administrative responsibilities including for time tabling, staffing and all educational matters. The unique nature of our inter-religious school has been growing and developing for 27 years. The staff and student community hail from all the major religions represented in India, and work together for the one main aim: empowerment via the vehicle of education and learning. The past 20 months has seen some

significant and unforeseen changes in the leadership of the school. **Sr Shobha**, principal for many years, retired from her school duties at PVS in June 2015. She was instrumental in many significant improvements and developments, including the 25th Silver Jubilee celebrations. The reigns of the school were passed on to **Sr Anicia** who guided the school in her role as principal for less than six months before resigning due to illness. Following the sad



25th Silver Jubilee

passing of Sr Anicia in April 2016, **Sr Rashmi** was appointed as the new principal in May 2016.

Sr. Rashmi Kerketta envisages providing a good and holistic education for the students in all matters physical, mental and spiritual. Together with her assistant **Sr Preeti Soni** she has already instigated many wonderful initiatives.

For details on all matters PVS, head to our website: [www.bdainc.org.au](http://www.bdainc.org.au).



Sr. Rashmi



## News from Prajna Vihar School BY SR RASHMI

The 2016/2017 school year has flown by in another magnificent flurry of activity, celebration, cultural enrichment and academic achievement. All students were happy to pass the 2016 school year with strong results and entered the new academic year in April 2017.

### Academic recognition

Students continue to participate in events in and around Bodhgaya, proudly representing their school and consistently securing outstanding interschool awards. Here is a list of interschool achievements:

- **Archaeology Museum Day Drawing Competition:** 1st prize (Abhinandan, Class IX), 2nd (Alpha Kumari, Class VIII) and 3rd (Raksha, class IX).
- **Archaeology Museum Day Quiz (G.K.) Competition:** 1st (Sanjeet Kumar, Class IX), 2nd (Prabha Kumari, Class IX) and 3rd (Punam Kimaro, Class VIII).
- **Inter-Religious Friend Association Essay Competition:** 2nd place (Sanjeet Kumar, class IX).
- **Mahabodhi Society Inter-school speech and drawing competition:** 1st and 2nd place.
- **Inter-school essay writing competition:** 2nd place in the Mahabodhi Society
- **Inter-Religious Association's Inter-School Speech competition:** 1st (Sagiya Praveen, class X) and 3rd (Sanjeet Kumar, class X).

These exceptional achievements are testament to the quality of teaching and dedication of students at the PV school.



Mr Rahul Kumar, our classical dance and music teacher.

### Staff changes & visiting guests

The PV school continues to be a place of welcome, hosting local and international volunteers and guests. In January in 2017, 300 Tibetan devotees turned our classrooms into dormitories where they stayed for two weeks during Kalachakra Puja. Even His Holiness the Dalai Lama, came to visit. Last year in April, we welcomed our new principal Sr Rashmi. This April, we farewelled Mrs Manju Sinha, who began her retirement after a commendable 26 years at the PV School. We appointed a new assistant teacher, Miss Priyanka Kumari, a proud class X graduate of the PV school to replace her.

### Cultural calendar

The PV school plays a strong role in enriching the cultural fabric of the region through participating in and promoting key cultural events throughout the year. During 2016/17, these included celebrating the Buddha Jayant, the environment and tree-planting program, Teacher's Day, Children's Day and the 10th anniversary of Jeye Shri Mahabodhi Vihara.



Some of the competition winners



Sr Rashmi, PVS society executive members Mr P. Dwyer and Mr Kiran Lama at Mrs M. Sinha's farewell

### Student Enrolments

Thanks to generous sponsorships, student enrolments have increased to 650 students for the 2017 school year. The cost of educating one child for one year is AUS \$100. This covers tuition, books and stationery supplies, and is supplemented by occasional donations such as new note books and text books distributed in June 2016.

### ENROLMENTS FOR THE CURRENT SCHOOL YEAR BEGINNING APRIL 2017

CLASS	GIRLS		BOYS		TOTAL	
	2017	CHANGE SINCE '16	2017	CHANGE SINCE	2017	CHANGE SINCE
LKG	32	-5	34	-1	66	-6
UKG	40	11	25	-10	65	1
1	42	16	33	-1	75	15
2	31	6	39	7	70	13
3	23	-12	34	1	57	-11
4	35	8	34	10	69	18
5	33	16	25	0	58	16
6	18	-7	25	5	43	-2
7	23	1	19	-1	42	0
8	22	10	17	-4	39	6
9	6	-9	23	4	29	-5
10	15	4	22	9	37	13
Total	320	38	330	18	650	58





*From little things big things grow...*

*p.3*

*...from previous page.*

## Information about our new teacher:

Name: **Priyanka Kumari**  
Father's Name: Shri Lakhan Paswan  
Date of Birth: 3rd April 1997  
Village: Mastipur, Bodhgaya

Miss Priyanka joined our school on 11th May 2017 as assistant teacher. She completed her class X studies from Prajna Vihar School, Bodhgaya. Her qualification was Matric 1st Div. and I. Sc. 2nd Div. Other qualifications: Computer (DCA), Tally Diploma in Tabla (music) and Sewing. Her hobbies are singing, dancing, painting, reading books and cooking. She is happy in her new position.



## Building Projects Bring Vast Improvement to PV School

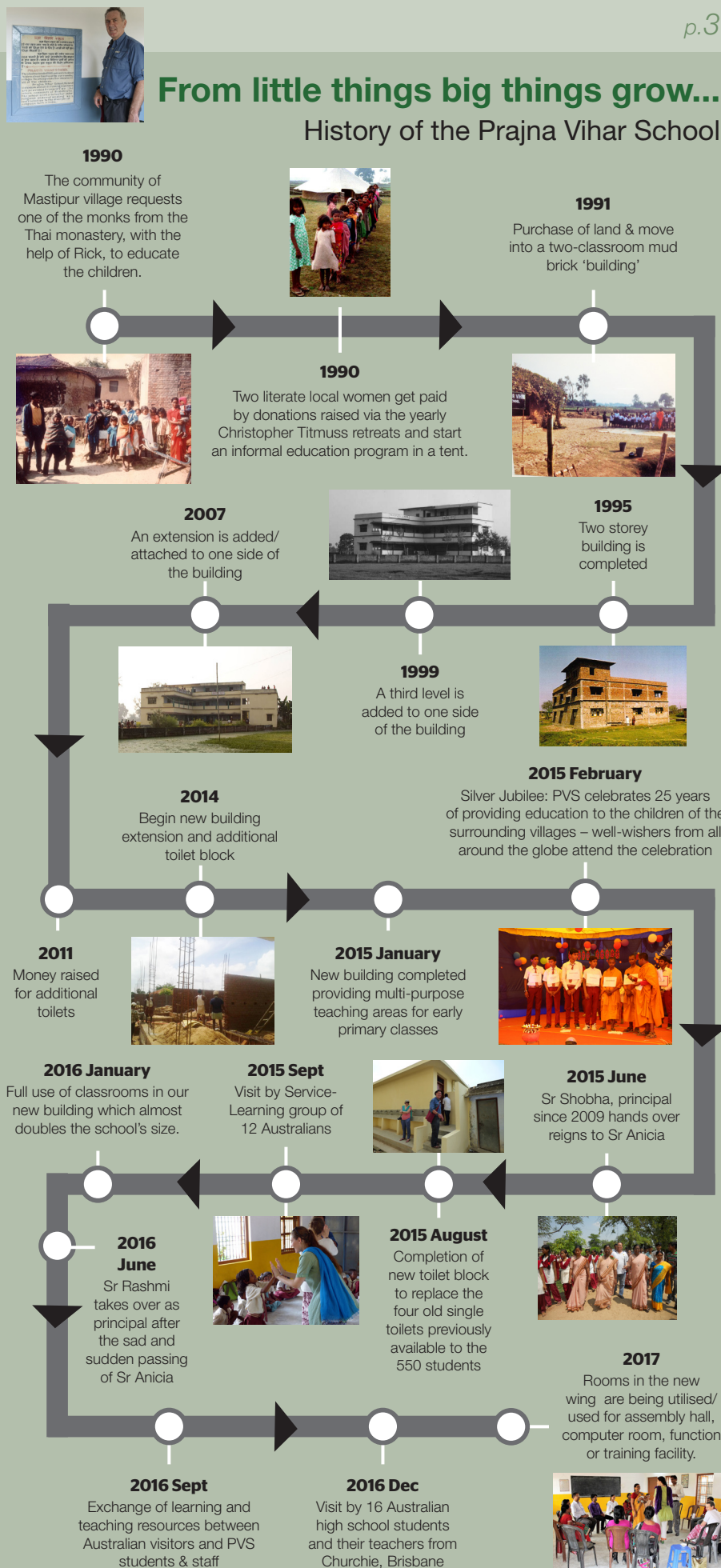
A long-awaited new toilet block for our 550 children was finally completed in October 2015. The new block has eight male and eight female toilets, which is a vast improvement on the old toilet block which housed just four toilets. We are very happy, proud and grateful for our beautiful new building. 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>



New water taps and toilet block

## From little things big things grow...

### History of the Prajna Vihar School







## Jeevan Deep – 2016/2017

2016 has been a hard year for the villagers living in the rural areas circling Bodhgaya, which are supported by the team from Jeevan Deep. Year after year of drought puts pressure on everyone. Limited water, regardless of its quality, effects everything.

The amount of food, time spent carrying water and the poor health issues that go with low quality water, have all been steadily increasing as the drought bites. BDA supporters responded with donations, specifically for the drilling of two new wells. These wells were to be commissioned in early 2017, but we are still waiting to hear if construction is underway.

Thankfully this year's monsoon, in mid-June, 2016, proved to be drought-breaking – for the first time in four years. But for all of the relief from the dreadful heat, flooding has added to the villagers' difficulties – bringing more bad water, with the usual diseases. Nevertheless, the new wells will be significantly deeper, helping to drought-proof some of the villages in coming years. The wells will be constructed using modern methods, increasing the working life from ten to thirty years.

Kailash, Dr Prasad and the nursing team work tirelessly in support of the villagers' micro businesses, making clothes with sewing machines. They also run village schools for basic education of the children.

As transport options are few, many villagers would have no access to health care without Jeevan Deep's Clinic staff. The BDA currently supports the provision of medical services to rural villages like Arjunbigha via Jeevan Deep.

BDA is in discussion with local providers to increase the quality of services available for villagers. It is our aim to ensure that professional skills and medicines are available to those in need.



Jeevan Deep's Clinic regularly visits Bodhgaya's outlying villages.



*As transport options are few, many villagers would have no access to health care without Jeevan Deep's Clinic staff.*



Jeevan Deep's Clinic staff provide basic medical care to people who would otherwise have no access to medical services.



*The new wells are significantly deeper, helping to drought-proof some of the villages in coming years.*



An outdoor informal classroom in one of the villages allows these children to receive education.



Village women learning dress-making.





## Amar Jyoti Developmental Centre for the Empowerment of Women

For the past 2 years, in Bodhgaya, Bihar, Sr Manisha has been establishing and supervising women's groups and tailoring classes for Dalit women and non-formal education centres for children. The groups and classes empower Dalit women and provide them with additional knowledge and skills that help prevent illness and provide future job opportunities. The children's classes reinforce their studies at government schools and help students achieve.

### Tailoring centres and Education & Awareness Raising project

Currently there are two tailoring centres operating at Amar Jyoti and Khajwati Village. At the tailoring centres, women learn how to sew, which enables them to earn a living. In addition to completing a one-year training course in tailoring, the women also receive education and training on a range of important topics including:

- Women's health issues, including proper menstrual hygiene and management
- Personal hygiene and environmental sanitation
- Nutrition and health
- Immunisation awareness for children and pregnant mothers
- Knowledge of different illnesses, their causes, symptoms, prevention and cure
- Awareness of the healing properties of local herbs and how to use them
- Social justice issues, including human trafficking, rape, dowry deaths
- Information technology.

Educating village women on health, hygiene, nutrition and manners empowers them to take care of themselves.



Sr Manisha checks regularly that classes are happening

Women at the tailoring centres also receive support and assistance to gain admission to beautician, computer, painting and Mehendi courses in nearby centres. There has been great success with many of the tailoring graduates also completing additional courses. Sr Manisha's Program for the Empowerment of Very Poor Women has overwhelmingly received positive feedback, with participants sharing that they were constantly encouraged and motivated by

Sewing Classes for village women



Sewing Classes for village women

the teachers to keep going even when they found it difficult. Participants' families say that their way of life has improved.

### Non formal Education centres

Currently there are three non-formal education centres located in nearby villages. Each centre caters for 30 to 40 children. These centres aim to help those facilitating education, and to be part of capacity building programmes. Last year 30 children were subsequently enrolled in government schools. These children receive a scholarship, school uniform and textbooks for free.



## Asha Seva Kendra in Gomia

Women of Gomia improving health, providing training and building community

In the remote heart of Jharkand, India, is a dense forest, rich in natural resources, which once shared a harmonious existence with the local Santhal tribe. This socio-ecological system is being disrupted by the rapid pace of development. Now known as the semi-rural, semi-industrial town of Gomia, the community is facing huge challenges of poverty, unemployment, malnutrition, alcoholism, brutal atrocities against women, child labour, human trafficking and extreme violence.

In the face of this situation, a collective of Catholic nuns fierce and fabulous are determined to turn things around, one capacity-building initiative at a time. Meet the Asha Seva Kendra program.

ASK is an entirely women-led development program centred on the people who most accutely feel the destructive effects of the poverty cycle; the marginalised women of the Dalit and tribal communities in Gomia. where 40% of Jharkand (798,347 people) live below the poverty line, nearly 4% die of Tuberculosis each year and co-occurences of TB and HIV are on the rise, ASK

*"We see women taking the microphone, expressing their thoughts on stage. This is a big achievement. Women feel united and strengthened. They are encouraged to use their abilities for the betterment of the society and are convinced that they are the means of bringing changes in their own life and family and at large in the society. We know it is a long way to go. But we go with hope,"*

Sr Louise Mary.



International Women's Day march, 2016

prioritises three clusters of work delivered through a Community Health project, a Residential TB Centre and an ongoing program of Non-Formal Education.

**During the 2016/2017 year the women and children of Gomia have participated in an impressive suite of ASK training and events:**

- Leadership training program for 62 women
- Savings and credit groups
- Self-Help Group Training Program
- Cross-learning trips including exposure visit to the Poultry Co-operative Society

- of SHG women in nearby Cho Village
- Training on scientific cultivation methods
- Vermi-Compost training
- International Womens Day attended by nearly 1000 women

**After training and project experiences:**

- Two women Shanti and Sabita from Dhawaia have started their own poultry farms.
- Women from Sharartola with their own savings and two groups from Parsabera have started pig rearing with women from Chano also bringing pigs for the group.
- Women from Parsabera have started cultivating vegetables.

### Final Word from Sister Louise Mary

We have been able to reach out to and accompany these marginalized people when they are feeling weak and fragile because of the BDA's generous support, goodwill and encouragement. Your supportive help has made the ASK's dream come true and we still need your support in future. The constant selfless service of yours builds a wholesome community and sense of gratefulness to God, to you and to others. Thanks a million.

#### COMMUNITY HEALTH

The Community Health Project delivers health education and TB awareness programmes in 25 villages and runs 50 women's self-help groups catering to 900 women.



#### TUBERCULOSIS CENTRE

Each month, this residential health centre accommodates 15-20 in-patients coming from remote villages in very advanced stages.



#### NON-FORMAL EDUCATION

Non- Formal Education covers 15 nearby villages with 300 children.

The regular classes are curbing school drop outs and creating awareness of the need for basic education and health care.







## Fundraising Activities 2016 – 2017

### Doris Day Story – Fundraiser 1st April 17

Thanks again to Twelfth Night Theatre's Gail Wiltshire for another successful fundraising opportunity. This time we extended the raffle drawing date to 8th June 17, and were rewarded with a big bonus. Particular thanks to Sakshi for another stunning handcrafted mala.



BDA Committee members at Doris Day fundraiser.

### Backyard concert – Kerstin & Eoin's place 11th Jan 17

The spiritual messages on the fence inspired visiting UK musicians, Deborah Rose and Mari Randle, to perform a concert in the back yard. Their beautiful music serenaded the neighbourhood as well as raising funds for both BDA and the musicians.

### Menopause the Musical – Fundraiser 22nd May 16

The world-acclaimed "Menopause The Musical - Women On Fire" provided the setting for a wonderful fundraising opportunity at the TNT. Special thanks to students from Churchie, Lourdes Hill College and Cannon Hill Anglican College, who worked tirelessly to sell raffle tickets. We raised \$7,364 and brought awareness of the BDA to over 200 people.



Deborah Rose and Mari Randle concert.



Successful fundraiser: Menopause the Musical.

## Scholarships for PVS Graduates

The complexities of the economic, cultural, political and ecological challenges that contribute to extreme poverty have prompted the BDA to support past PVS students with scholarships enabling them to receive higher education.

So far, the BDA has sponsored two young women who have received degrees in nursing and teaching, a young man who finished his masters degree in Chinese and a past student who has completed a basic German language course. Shakuntala, a PVS graduate is currently starting her two-year nursing degree in neighbouring Jharkhand in a nursing and training school run by the Sisters of the Queen of the Apostle or SRA.

Students undergo a comprehensive scholarship application process and all applicants are carefully assessed before a scholarship is granted. The BDA has a scholarship fund for assisting PVS graduates to go on to promising futures. If you are interested in contributing to the scholarship fund, please contact us on [bdainc.au@gmail.com](mailto:bdainc.au@gmail.com) or indicate your intention on our donation form.



## BDA Financial Report 2016 – 2017 *By Loris Neff (Treasurer) July 12, 2017*

We wish to acknowledge all the generous donations from BDA supporters. Many of you have been giving generously for many years. We would like to welcome our first-time donors as well. **Your support is greatly appreciated.** There are minor running costs associated with transferring money to India but all other administrative costs are gifted by the committee members. **We would like to acknowledge the very generous support of our Auditors, GCY Accountants and Auditing Pty Ltd. in East Brisbane.** Their assistance has been invaluable.

We are lucky to have many regular donors who continuously support BDA projects. Sadly, with increasing costs it is becoming more difficult to meet our commitments. We would love any feedback or ideas for attracting new donors so we can continue to help all of our worthwhile projects into the future.

BDA		Year ending 28Feb16	Year ending 28Feb17
<b>Donations received</b>			
	General	14,116.70	6,758.35
	Sisters Assumption Society	2,000.00	
	PV School	7,302.90	2930.35
	Jeevan Deep		2000.00
	Theatre Fund Raiser		
	Net of ticket costs	2,228.30	5,136.30
	Interest	2,913.98	2,034.43
	<b>Total donations received</b>	<b>\$28,561.88</b>	<b>\$18,859.43</b>
<b>Funds spent</b>			
	Prajna Vihar School	20,884.05	8,946.87
	Scholarship	1,400.00	850.00
	Amar Jyoti Society	1,500.00	3076.84
	Assumpta Society	3,000.00	2831.63
	Jeevan Deep	2000.00	4000.00
	Bank fees	192.40	192.94
	<b>Total Funds Spent</b>	<b>\$28,976.45</b>	<b>\$19,898.28</b>



## Visitor Report

Visting Prajna Vihar School leaves a profound impact on the lives of the visitors and the school community alike. In addition to the transformative Service-Learning Tours each September, the PV School welcomed Julianne Eng, a retired school teacher from San Francisco, in November, its first group of students from Churchie (an Australian secondary school) last December as well as Alice Barsanti (a psychology student from Italy) in February.

The benefit of inviting visitors is to create a mutually respectful relationship between the visitors and the students, teachers and the wider community. By learning and sharing knowledge and experiences with one another, participants engage in the process of creating community and new connections.

In total, over 40 participants, aged 13 to 71, were challenged to step outside their own culture and reflect on new ways to make sense of themselves and their world.

Visitors participated in English conversation sessions, reading, games, creative drawing, singing and rehearsals of traditional Indian dance. Other activities included a whole



Alice Barsanti, Italian visitor, 2017

*Prajna Vihar school is a place where children learn not only subject knowledge and content but also how to behave in daily life. Children taught me how to smile every day, in every occasion and despite everything that might be challenging in their lives...I would suggest this activity to any person who wants to experience happiness. Children have the power to give you more than what you give them.*

Alice Barsanti

school Rangoli (Indian sand painting) display, a concert, a visit to outlying villages and making donations or personal commitments to places and projects of the BDA.

All visitors agreed they had achieved what they set out to do and expressed a desire to return in future. John Collins, Director of Service at Churchie, was extremely impressed with the manner in which the school was organised and the professionalism of the staff, reporting that, "It was very rewarding being with the children who were so responsive and very eager to learn and have fun...the boys said it was an experience they will never forget."



## Donation Form – Bodhgaya Development Association

Name:	
Address:	
Email:	Phone:

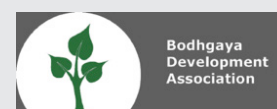
**Bank:** Bank of Queensland **Branch:** Cannon Hill

**Account Name:** Bodhgaya Development Association Inc. **BSB:** 124-001 **Account Number:** 10142193

☐ I would like to regularly donate to the BDA with a monthly transfer of \$5 As little as \$5 per month can educate one child for 8 months!

If you do transfer funds directly please let us know who you are and how we can contact you.

Cheques can be made out to the Bodhgaya Development Association Inc. and sent to 147 Richmond Road, Morningside Q 4170



### My preferred charity

- |                     |                          |
|---------------------|--------------------------|
| Prajna Vihar School | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Jeevan Deep         | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Asha Seva Kendra    | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Amar Jyoti          | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Development project | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| At BDA discretion   | <input type="checkbox"/> |