

A Profile of Dr Barbara

Born:

28th February 1949 in Linz, Austria

Education:

1977 University of Vienna – Graduated as Doctor of Medicine in 1977.

Professional Experience:

1980-84: Internship University Hospital, Vienna 1980-84

1984-89: Medical Superintendent at Major Somnat Memorial Charitable Hospital, Dadh, Distt. Kangra H.P.

1989 Founded Krishan Nath Baba Memorial Charitable Trust Health Clinic

1998: Founded Nishtha Rural Health Education & Environment Project

Family & Home

1978: Marriage to Krishan Nath Baba – established her home in Rakkar village, Himachal Pradesh

2 children: Annapurna & Shankar

Brother Fredrich lives with her

Special Interests:

Alternative medicine – practicing homeopathy, acupuncture and herbal remedies.

Indian Classical Music – vocals & harmonium

Indian yoga

Community enhancement

Gardening & agriculture



Tying friendship bands on Women's Day



I was born in Lintz, Austria in 1949 and grew up there. When I graduated from High School I joined Vienna Medical University and graduated as a medical doctor in 1977. Prior to starting my internship in the University Hospital, I decided to travel and chose to come to India. At that time we were all fascinated by Indian culture and I decided to study yoga. In fact, when I got here I was delighted by Indian music and so joined the music school in Dharamsala run by Pandit Desh Bandu. He introduced me to my future husband, Baba Krishan Nath who lived under a tree in a nearby village and was a wonderful singer. I used to visit him to study singing and found myself enmeshed by Indian life and so stayed here for three years. My daughter Annapurna was born in Banares in 1979.

In the autumn of that same year I returned to Vienna with my little daughter and her father, Baba-ji. I took up my internship and continued my studies while he looked after the baby. I was able to gain a great deal of general medical experience working in the hospital which I knew would serve me well when we returned to India. With this in mind I also studied homeopathy and acupuncture under two of the most excellent teachers, Professor Dorcsi and Professor Brisko. My son, Shankar was born during this time.

In 1984 I returned to India because Baba-ji was very ill and wanted to die in his home country. We had two little children and so established a home in Rakkar and began to form a relationship with the local people. Realising how important it was to know the local language, I made efforts to study Hindi. My husband in fact died a year and a half after our return when Shankar was 5 and Annapurna was 7.

When I first arrived back in the village I worked three days a week at the Tibetan Delek Hospital in Dharamsala. That was very interesting and gave me good insights into local diseases and the facilities available to treat them. Some time later I was invited to work as a doctor at Major Som Nath Memorial Charitable Clinic in Dadh, a village around 15 kilometres from Rakkar. This was more in line with what I really wanted to do work with the poorest local people who have very little access to health care and treatment. This clinic was set up and run by a major rich industrialists Trust and distributed medicines free of charge to the patients. I worked there steadily for five years, travelling backwards and forwards by local bus. Through this experience I learned a great deal about how to set up and run my own clinic but by the end of that time I felt it was time to do so. However,

taking the step on my own was a difficult one. Without any support I found it hard to let go of my job, stressful though it had become due to the hours of daily travel by bus and problems with one of the other staff. I consulted a Tibetan lama who recommended that I have a Tara ritual done to ease obstacles. He warned me that these rituals are very powerful but things do not always work out as you imagine they will. A few days after the ritual, when I had already written my resignation letter and was about to hand it in, I received a letter asking me to leave. It so happened that on that very day my friend Felitzitas Fischer, who had a visitor from Germany with her, had arranged to pick me up from work so we could go for lunch together. When she arrived with a taxi we were able to fill it with all my things: coffee maker, books, medical equipment and so on and leave without looking back. That visitor turned out to be a key person in Care, Austria, who, realising my situation and hopes to set up my own clinic put me in contact with Gerlinder Weingartner, a member of Action Regen who have become my long time sponsors and support agency in Austria. It also happened that during the last week I worked in Dadh, my Swedish friend Uffer, who is a professional photographer, came to the clinic with me and took some wonderful pictures of my work. These became the basis for my presentation to Action Regen and subsequent fund raising efforts. It is quite incredible how all these circumstances came together like this.



Within a few weeks I had contacted a few local people especially Mrs Ghosh, a long time resident of the area, who helped me to register a Trust. At Christmas I came to Europe and met Gerlinder Weingartner and in one month raised 150 thousand rupees with which to set up my own clinic. Returning to Rakkar, I set about organising space and in February, Ram who had worked as dispenser in the Dadh clinic joined me and together we opened a small dispensary in my house. We now operate from a bigger facility which we built next to my house designed by Didi Contractor, a well-known innovative designer who works with the local masons and natural materials to create ecologically friendly buildings.



I work with Dr Kusum Thapa, a trained Ayurvedic doctor from the local Nepali community who I have trained in allopathic medicine, homeopathy and acupuncture. She runs the clinic when I am in Europe on my bi-annual fund raising tours which remain the mainstay of our support. Ram, our dispenser is assisted by Suresh, a young man who used to work in the mines but has become a good clinic assistant in charge of the production of various herbal remedies including calendula ointment and cough linctus which we make ourselves.

Padam Nath runs a child nutrition programme for the local school children which is a project very close to my heart having realised the terrible effect poor nourishment has on child development, performance in school and ultimate potential in life. Together we focus on prevention as well as cure. Offering a welcoming medical service within the rural community gives us access to the people here and enables us to raise their awareness of issues such as hygiene, water, nutrition, reproductive health and gender. For the past four years we have been holding workshops for women and youths and more recently meetings with alcoholics and their families, since alcohol induced domestic violence is a real problem in this community.

As our work has grown so too have the people who have become a part of our Trust. I am indebted to many friends for their sustained friendship and support. In particular, Dr Kishwar Shirali, a retired professor of Psychology from Shimla University who has a great deal of valuable experience and knowledge. She is not only a long suffering mainstay of the board of Trustees but is also an active participant running our workshop programmes and



making herself available in a myriad different ways including counselling patients and entertaining important guests. Abha Bhaiya, founder member of Jagori, a Womens Centre based in Delhi is also an essential friend and Trustee, source of invaluable assistance and inspiration.

As Rakkar becomes more developed and our clinic is established as a well-known centre I find myself drawn towards more remote and needy areas of the district. Villages up on the side of the mountain above Rakkar are still severely depressed and especially the women there suffer a great deal for lack of support and empowerment. Recently I have become aware of an area towards Palampur called Lala which holds around 5,000 voters and as many children in a 10 sq kilometre radius. This area is typical of those in between scattered agricultural communities which occur all over this state which have little or no medical or community facilities and therefore issues such as womens reproductive health and adolescent health education have never been addressed. I would like to set up a small homeopathic dispensary in Lala and create an outreach programme from our centre in Rakkar to reach into some of these neglected rural communities. Whilst the dispensary in Lala can be done relatively inexpensively as there is an existing building there which we can renovate, the outreach programme is a much weightier task. For this we are drawing up a three-year funding proposal, which we hope to get fulfilled, by one of the big funding agencies operating in India at this time.

For more information about how to help please visit our website: <http://nishtha.4t.com> or e-mail: barbara@vsnl.com

Please send your donation for Nishtha to:
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