



Indo-German Society

Affiliate Remscheid

since 1966

Congratulations from Germany on the 25th anniversary of the PVCHR - People's Vigilance Committee on Human Rights

**Greetings and contributions by Helma Ritscher, Chairwoman of the Indo-German Society e.V.
Remscheid/Germany:**

Dr. Lenin Raghuvanshi
His visits to Germany - a partner and friend
as guest of the Indo-German Society Remscheid
- And his project vision for 2022 -

This year, 2020, the PVCHR - People's Vigilance Committee on Human Rights - celebrates its **25th anniversary**. On this occasion, as the Chairwoman of the Indo-German Society Remscheid, I would like to offer my sincere congratulations and wish that this commitment to human rights will continue and grow in its successful and sustainable way, and may it never stop.

Since 2002 our society feels honored and is grateful to work with Dr. Lenin Raghuvanshi, founder and chairman of the PVCHR as a partner and to provide our support. But how did this happen?

In 1998 we were first confronted with the issue of children's rights through the "Global March" - organized worldwide by Kailash Satyarthi from Delhi. Vikash Maharaj, founding member of the PVCHR, and musician from Varanasi and a regular guest in Remscheid, invited me to PVCHR during the march to Varanasi. However, my first meeting with Dr. Lenin and the PVCHR took place four years later, in February 2002.

But in the meantime children's and human rights and the life of the Dalit were already on the agenda of our society. And I was ready to face this reality in Varanasi. And this has remained unchanged since that first meeting until today, 18 years later.

These years of intensive cooperation distinguish us as the **only long-term** cooperation partner of PVCHR. **From the very first day we complemented and valued each other equally.**

For this reason, it was also for the **first and only time** in Germany that a branch of the Indo-German Society – namely ours – celebrated its 50th anniversary **twice**. Unusual even for the Federal Head Office with its approximately 32 branches.

Thus in 2016, the 50th anniversary of our branch was celebrated not only in Germany but also with Dr. Lenin in Varanasi, India. On the day of the celebration, I personally expressed my gratitude for this appreciation of our cooperation with a commemorative publication we prepared under the title

**"PVCHR -People's Vigilance Committee on Human Rights and Indo -German Society, Affiliate
Remscheid as Partners and Friends for Human Rights, Equality and Dignity**

This commemorative publication lists all our joint activities, all projects at the educational level from kindergarten to university, and our exchange program between pupils from Remscheid and Dalit pupils



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of the PVCHR. Also the building of social and educational facilities for our Dalit friends are listed, from kindergarten to school to the weaver's centre in the village of Baghwanala.

With great joy I am always warmly welcomed there during my visits by young and old. There, where our cooperation has begun and mutual trust has grown. A trust, that still connects us inseparably as partners and friends today.

Through a wide range of activities supported by the press, schools, associations and institutions, up to the top of our city and the state government of North Rhine-Westphalia, we have succeeded in awakening the awareness of the population of Remscheid and far beyond for the problems of marginalized people in India, and to show our responsibility for them.

Are Dalit not equal people, like you and me? The answer to this are the loyal comrades-in-arms, our sponsors and friends who support our Dalit friends - until today. The city of Remscheid, with 20% foreign citizens, has always been a strong partner from the very beginning, due to our lively and lived understanding among nations and people.

However, in order to maintain the great trust of all these people until today, Dr. Lenin's visits to Remscheid and his personal acquaintance have made a significant contribution. Therefore it is also important to honour the 25th anniversary of the PVCHR by this contribution: **"The visits of Dr Lenin to Remscheid"**.

**And so it began - the first private visit of Dr. Lenin to Remscheid,
on June 19, 2007,
became, due to a lucky coincidence,
the first official visit of Dr. Lenin to Remscheid.**

In June 2007 in cooperation with the city and numerous partners, we were planning the "first International Remscheid Kite Festival" with a focus on children's rights. **For the first time** this was to include a public **"live Skype session"** between **Varanasi and Remscheid**.

The plan was to honour the Indian Independence Day with symbols of freedom on German and Indian kites. Those kites would rise into the sky, simultaneously in India and Germany, and thus spreading messages for children's rights, for Dalit and all other children in the world.

But the technicalities of the Skype session posed a big problem. And thus we wished if only Dr. Lenin were here to easily clarify the technical details. And sheer coincidence fulfilled our wish!

On June 19, 2007, Dr. Lenin was invited to a symposium in Gummersbach, a place not too far from our city. We seized this unique chance to invite him to **Remscheid for an unofficial visit**.

When Dr. Lenin arrived that evening, the cooperation partners from Remscheid were already waiting for him: The director of the Roentgen-High School Remscheid, Mr. H. Hammes, with students of the Dalit team of the school, Felicia, Henrik and Florian. Mrs. E. Ankay Nachtwein, head of the IKE - Society for Intercultural Education e.V. - from the "Kindergarten Exchange Project", and Mr. Charles Wessler from the Remscheid School for Music & Arts, to clarify the technical requirements for the Skype transmission from India with Dr. Lenin.

Late in the evening the press spontaneously also accepted our invitation to meet Dr. Lenin.



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On the next day the "First press report about Dr. Lenin and PVCHR" was published.

An excellent report, which for the first time publicly highlighted our Indian partner and previous cooperation, but also the Dalit team of the Roentgen High School. The report awakened the interest for the "1st Remscheid Kite Festival", the first action for children's rights which connected two continents live via Skype.

Press-Report *Remscheider General-Anzeiger*, Friday, June 22, 2007:

Strengthen the rights of the Dalits

Indo-German Society Various projects help to improve the situation of the so-called "Untouchables"

By Ariane Czerwon

It is no new perception that the increasing economical globalisation does not keep space with the extension of democratic principles and human rights. However, the importance of the pleading for such elementary rights was shown in a personal exchange. For this purpose Helma Ritscher, Chairwoman of the Indo-German Society of Remscheid (DIG), Dr. Lenin Raghuvanshi, Helmut Hammes, director of the Roentgen-High School, and two students met in the multimedia rooms of the local School of Music and Art.

Dr. Raghuvanshi as the head of the "People's Vigilance Committee on Human Rights" supports the rights of the Dalits, the so-called "Untouchables" living in the villages in the surroundings of Varanasi in the north-Indian Federal State Uttar Pradesh. He got support by the Indo-German Society Remscheid since 2002, which draws the attention to the continuous suppression of these people, who belong to the lowest class of the Indian caste system, by various actions mostly in the schools of Remscheid.

Young people from Remscheid-Lennep and India have become pen friends.

Since the beginning of the year, 2006 a "Dalit-Team" has existed at the "Roentgen-High School" whose members keep up pen friendships with young people of the same age from three Indian partner-villages. The Promotion Society for Intercultural Education (IKE) maintains also an exchange-project with two Indian Kindergartens for Untouchables. This year the DIG-Indo-German Society received financial support for their project work from the North Rhine-Westphalia Ministry for Family, Women and Integration, which is going to be invested in the building of two Dalit-Schools in the villages of Ayer and Shivrampur. The support from Remscheid was very important for all people concerned declared Dr. Lenin Raghuvanshi: "The moral backing which they receive by this project, gives the people there so much strength, that they are able to fight for the improvement of their living conditions rather self-confident. Let means a lasting pressure on the local authorities which should not be underestimated.

"**Henrik Sadlowski**, who visits the 10th class of the Roentgen-High-School, tells about his impressions: We knew already something about the situation of the Dalit-children in India, but by the written contact we directly learn about their individual destinies.

Kites as a symbol of solidarity between the nations.

As a sign of solidarity between nations, the students of the High -School let fly kites with messages for the rights of the Dalit-children on the kite-festival on the 12th of August. Simultaneously their Indian pen-friends let fly their kites in their home villages. "We will cultivate and intensify our relationship to



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the project partners in India furthermore in order to give our small contribution to the promotion of the "social democracy" emphasizes Helma Ritscher.

Statement of the Kite- Festival:

The 1st International Kite Festival from August 11 - 12, 2007 took place – and the Skype Conference which connected two continents and the hearts of many people in Remscheid and Varanasi, too.

The "Kite Festival" organisation was supported by the Lord Mayoress of the City of Remscheid, Mrs. Beate Wilding. It was a lively kite- and family celebration with a colorful program for clubs, schools, young and old "Kite fans" from near and far. On Sunday, August 12, the festival for children's rights was broadcasted via Skype, with our partner Dr. Lenin Raghuvanshi, PVCHR and Dalit-children in Varanasi.



Two continents were joined. We sent our greetings and messages of solidarity with Dr. Lenin, the Dalit children and all children in the world, to India.

From up right:

Press-Mrs. Bona, Mr. Lebfromm and Mrs. B. Wilding, Lord Mayoress of City of Remscheid, Mr. Kucharczyk, Member of Parliament of the Federal Republic of Germany, Mr. Wessler from the School for Music & Arts, Mr. Vaz, Vice-President, Mrs. Hager, board member and Mrs. Ritscher, chairwoman from Indo-German Society, as well as the kite-expert "Kite-Mike" Mr. Zähler.

„Together in friendship for Dalits' rights"

Logo and message of the "Dalit-Team from Roentgen High School Remscheid"



Picture from left up:
Students skype
with Dr. Lenin and
their friends in
India,...
watching their
patangs, flying
symbols of
freedom and
liberation, too...



An emotional moment for all of us! After the official greetings to Dr. Lenin, both Dalit teams sent their "patangs" to heaven at the same moment, attached were slogans for children's rights, with the hthat their message will be seen and heard. Flying symbols of freedom and liberation for the children in their deprived lives – and to commemorate Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar, Dalit father for all Dalit of India. For the honor of the imminent "Independence Day" of India, as a symbol of freedom and liberation from the English domination, kites and "patangs" rose ...

Will it simply remain a dream for our Dalit-friends – how to fly without "Saadi"?



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The first official visit of Dr. Lenins in Remscheid on June 4-5, 2009. A varied program awaits Dr. Lenin:

For the first time Dr. Lenin was warmly welcomed as an official guest in Remscheid, together with loyal sponsors and supporters of our society, by the Lord Mayoress Mrs. Beate Wilding. The personal acquaintance of Dr. Lenin Raghuvanshi and the lively exchange about the projects supported by the attending sponsors, confirmed the trust that had been placed on each other until now. Due to the mayor, who had spontaneously endorsed our meeting in the town hall, we got the opportunity to officially thank our sponsors. After all, the sponsors already donated funds for the urgently needed construction of a school for Dalit children in the village Baghwanala near to Varanasi. Through a benefiz concert in late 2008, the *cornerstone of the school* had already been laid.

The objective: This school should only be built with donations from Remscheid and under the direction of Dr. Lenin in Baghwanala – *The heart of our city should take precedence in this case!*



The first official visit of Dr. Lenin took place in the “tower room of the town hall”, with a great view over the city.

In View of the school in the village Baghwanala, we all were happy today for the children – from now on even the city stood behind Dr. Lenin.

For this, we sincerely thanked Mrs. Lord Mayoress Beate Wilding.

This visit of Dr. Lenin and getting to know the people involved did significantly contribute to the fact that we could rely on the support for the construction of the school and other projects. Thus during the planning of the school an extensionm of one floor was made possible.

After his visit in town hall, Dr. Lenin also visited his other partners from Remscheid – the Roentgen-high school and the *IKE, partner of the kindergarten* project with Ayer. At the Roentgen-high school, he discussed with students about current issues and met Marius and Florian from the Dalit team. Today Marius is already working – but is still connected in friendship and “their project” with Dr. Lenin and India. In *IKE-kindergarten* Dr. Lenin was very impressed by the atmosphere in which the children were looked after. They had no fear, and knew how to surprise Dr. Lenin with the Indian greeting “Namaste”.



Sponsors & friends of Baghawanala

Baghawanala School 2010

For the children of Baghawanala village in India, donated by sponsors, friends and the Indo-German Society in Remscheid/Germany. Constructed and supported by the PVCHR.

Baghawanala Schule 2010

Für die Kinder aus dem Dorf Baghawanala in Indien. Ermöglicht mit Sponsorengeldern von Förderern, Freunden und der Deutsch-Indischen Gesellschaft in Remscheid/Deutschland. Gebaut und unterstützt durch das PVCHR.

भागवानला स्कूल 2010

भागवानला स्कूल के निर्माण पर, दृष्ट से
प्राथमिक, प्राथमिकी, टीकाकारों, मित्रों तथा
भारत जर्मन सौसायटी रैमसचैड और
PVCHR की और से दृष्टि शुभकामनाय



2009 Official reception with sponsors and friends in the town hall of Remscheid.

Sozialfond Rotary Club e.V.
www.rotary.de

Lions Hilfswerk Remscheid e.V.
www.lions.de

Soroptimist - Club Remscheid
www.soroptimist-du.de

Stadtsparkasse Remscheid
www.stadtsparkasse-remscheid.de

Helft uns helfen In Remscheid

**Deutsch - Iranischer Freundeskreis
Remscheid e.V.**

Deutsch - Indische Gesellschaft e.V.
Zweiggesellschaft Remscheid
www.digrs.de

Anke & Gösta Mennenöh

Drs. Ingrid & Henning Paur

Franz Lebfromm

Salvatore Lerose

Wirtschaftsjunioren Remscheid
www.wjremscheid.de

reprosatz neumann GmbH
www.reprosatz.de

Röntgen-Gymnasium Remscheid
www.roentgengymnasium.de

VISIPRINT GmbH
www.visi-print.de



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We engage in two activities for enlarging the Baghwanala School

At the first action, on September 20, 2011, Dr. Lenin was among us for the second time via Skype, and at the second action, his second official visit to Remscheid, he was our guest of honour.

Dr. Lenin built the Baghwanala School in foresight so that an enlargement would be easily possible. Because more and more Dalit children wanted to go to school, the Indo-German Society Remscheid initiated a cooperation with the Roentgen High School and its *student Dalit-Team*: Two activities under the motto "More space for education" for enlarging the school. The first activity was ideal for all citizens, who knew nothing about our society and the disadvantaged Dalit children in India, and what could be done against it.

The first activity – Dr. Lenin is greeting all present via Skype

On September 20, 2011 **Lady Mayoress, Mrs. Beate Wilding** opened an exhibition in the "*Stadtsparkasse Remscheid*" with presentations of the school project and their work and commitment to their Dalit friends under the motto „**Together in friendship for Dalits' rights**“.

Dr. Lenin greeted and thanked the mayor, sponsors and all those present via Skype for the great support from Remscheid. He personally thanked everybody on the Charity Concert!



In the foreground:
Lady Mayoress
Mrs. Beate Wilding,
with personalities of the
city from politics and
integration.

The second activity – Dr. Lenin's second official visit to Remscheid

On October 7, 2011, the director of the Roentgen high school opened the charity concert for the construction of the "Baghwanala School" in the auditorium of the school. The concert with its various musical performances, the framework program and the intercultural snacks were organized by the Dalit team, students, teachers, and parents on their own initiative.



Patron of the concert:
Herr Sven Wolf, member
of State Parliament
North-Rhine Westphalia

Guest of honor:
Dr. Lenin Raghuvanshi
from Varanasi/India

The music group „Flavour“ with Florian, Marius and Oliver, members of the Dalit-team, also contributed to the success of the moving concert.



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**The commitment was worth it – the “second floor” could be built
In July 2013 – The second floor of the school building
“Raja Suhail Dev Jan Mitra Educational Centre” was constructed**

In Remscheid we call the school our “Remscheid School” because it was almost exclusively financed with funds from Remscheid. Thanks to the great commitment of students from Roentgen High School, friends and sponsors of our Indo-German Society. It was built in India, under the supervision of Dr. Lenin and PVCHR.

When I first met Dr. Lenin Raghuvanshi in 2002 and whilst standing on a hill in Baghwanala with a view over the small river Varuna he told me, that he cherishes the secret intent of building a school for the Dalit children one day. He wanted to devote this school to his dead sister in her commemoration. Girls and boys should have the same chance to go to this school. At this time we never even assumed that we, the PVCHR and the Indo-German Society Affiliate Remscheid, would build a school together just 10 years later and even expand it with a second floor just another two years later. To provide more space for education in Baghwanala village today – for every girl, boy and adult. *A dear wish of Dr. Lenin has been fulfilled.*

March 8, 2010: The inauguration of the school - *dear Shruti* and the poster with greetings from Remscheid



In July 2013 - the school has grown by one floor - how the children looked forward to it!

Statement Dr. Lenin Raghuvanshi:

Thanks to a large joint initiative of the Indo-German Society Remscheid, Roentgen-Gymnasium with Dalit-Team and several and faithful sponsors from Remscheid to pay, the construction costs for the *Raja Suhail Dev Jan Mitra Educational Centre* and second floor on the top of the school building, too. PVCHR realized the project 2013 on site. There is no school for children of Baghawanala, so this support from Germany is so vital for future of Baghawanala in particular and India in general. There is much collaboration to sustain the other cost of teaching and teaching materials with support of Global Fund for children, USA, Sir Dorabji Tata trust and volunteers from Germany.



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May 5, 2015: Dr. Lenin Raghuvanshi's third official visit to Remscheid

Mr. Burkhard Mast-Weisz, Lord-Mayor of the city, welcomed the guest from India in the city hall of Remscheid to a lecture about *Pluralism, inclusion and human dignity*.

Because of the 3rd official visit of Dr. Lenin Raghuvanshi in Remscheid Mr. Burkhard Mast-Weisz and the Indo-German Society Affiliate Remscheid invited to a discussion panel on May 5, 2015 with special guests of the city, the society and the press in the big boardroom of the city hall. The topic of the discussion:

Pluralism, inclusion and human dignity – the pillars of a peaceful world?

Do these “great words of our time” lead to the “greatest wounds of our world”? After his statement Dr. Lenin invited everybody to a discussion from the eastern Indian and the western European view of the top



From right to left:

Mr. Thomas Neuhaus,
Social department of the city,
Helma Ritscher, chairwoman
The Lord Mayor Mr. Mast-Weisz, r. Lenin Raghuvanshi and
Tobias Grote-Beverborg,
translator and moderator of the discussion panel.

After the welcoming of the mayor and the words of thankfulness to Remscheid by Dr. Lenin they exchanged their gifts. The guest gift from Dr. Lenin surpassed the expectations of the Mayor and the guests:



Mr. Mast-Weisz marveled speechless at the Remscheid crest, created by the weavers of Varanasi, woven out of silk and framed, and with lines of thanks to the solidarity and support to the city of Remscheid and the Indo-German Society affiliate Remscheid, from Dr. Lenin and PVCHR provided. Mr. Mast-Weisz thanked warmly!



Wednesday May 6, 2015: Discussion with students in Sophie-Scholl Comprehensive School

The proposal of the society for Dr. Lenin Raghuvanshi to initiate an exchange with interested students in the Sophie Scholl Secondary School, ignited the teacher Mr. Oliver Heltewig and his two English classes a great interest to participate in the discussion. There was a lively discussion concerning Indian culture and the reality of life in India with Dr. Lenin Raghuvanshi, based on the previously acquired knowledge of the class. Particularly great was their interest in current issues about India like forced marriages and human right issues that certainly could not be answered better, than by Dr. Raghuvanshi – and left the pupils deep in thought!

*Statement by Dr. Lenin Raghuvanshi on the subject of the discussion
board: pluralism, inclusion and human dignity*

**“Confident pluralism is based on inclusion, positive
conflict resolution and human dignity”**

5th May 2015 in the town hall of Remscheid



My learning from our work on grass roots is very similar to concept of Diana L. Eck, Pluralism project, Harvard University.

- First, pluralism is not diversity alone, but *the energetic engagement with diversity*. Diversity can and has meant the creation of religious ghettos with little traffic between or among them. Today, religious diversity is a given, but pluralism is not a given; it is an achievement. Mere diversity without real encounter and relationship will yield increasing tensions in our societies.
- Second, pluralism is not just tolerance, but *the active seeking of understanding across lines of difference*. Tolerance is a necessary public virtue, but it does not require Christians and Muslims, Hindus, Jews, and ardent secularists to know

anything about one another. Tolerance is too thin a foundation for a world of religious difference and proximity. It does nothing to remove our ignorance of one another, and leaves in place the stereotype, the half-truth, the fears that underlie old patterns of division and violence. In the world in which we live today, our ignorance of one another will be increasingly costly.

- Third, pluralism is not relativism, but *the encounter of commitments*. The new paradigm of pluralism does not require us to leave our identities and our commitments behind, for pluralism is the encounter of commitments. It means holding our deepest differences, even our religious differences, not in isolation, but in relationship to one another.
- Fourth, pluralism is *based on dialogue*. The language of pluralism is that of dialogue and encounter, give and take, criticism and self-criticism. Dialogue means both speaking and listening, and that process reveals both common understandings and real differences. Dialogue does not mean everyone at the “table” will agree with one another. Pluralism involves the commitment to being at the table – with one’s commitments.

Confident Pluralism takes both confidence and pluralism seriously. Confidence reinforces the convictions we hold. Pluralism recognizes and reinforces the differences that exist. Confidence without pluralism misses the reality of difference. It suppresses difference, sometimes violently. Pluralism without confidence ignores and sometimes trivializes our stark differences for the sake of feigned agreement or false unity. Confident Pluralism allows genuine difference to exist without suppressing or minimizing firmly held convictions. Confident pluralism is based on inclusion, positive conflict resolution and human dignity. Our model village process and Banaras Convention are our initiative based on same concept.

<http://www.pvchr.net/2014/08/recommendation-of-banaras-convention.html>

Remscheid

RGa MITTWOCH, 6. MAI 2015

Dr. Lenin dankt Remscheid

FÖRDERUNG Spenden bringen indische Dalits auf den Weg zum Abitur.

Von Gerhard Schattat

Enge Beziehungen gibt es zwischen dem indischen Dorf Baghwanala bei Benares, in dem Angehörige der untersten Kaste der Dalits leben, und Remscheid. Mit Spenden aus Remscheid werden seit 2002 dort Schulen gebaut und gefördert, entstand ein Frauenzentrum. Jetzt gehen die ersten Dalit-Schüler auf das indische Abitur zu. Ein enormer Erfolg.

Weber aus Indien schufen Remscheider Wappen aus Seide

„Wir danken unseren Freunden in Remscheid“, sagte gestern bei einer Gesprächsrunde im Ratsaal der indische Arzt Dr. Lenin Raghuvanshi – kurz Dr. Lenin genannt – und überreichte ein besonderes Präsent an Oberbürgermeister Burkhard Mast-Weisz: Als Zeichen der Verbundenheit hatten die Weber seiner Heimat, die als wahre Künstler gelten, das Remscheider Stadtwappen mit Löwe und Sichel aus Seide nachgebildet.

Der Inder, der in Benares ein Menschenrechtskomitee führt, arbeitet seit 2002 eng mit der Deutsch-Indischen Gesellschaft Remscheid und ihrer Vorsitzenden Helma Ritscher zusammen



Dr. Lenin überreichte ein gewebtes Remscheid-Wappen aus Seide an OB Burkhard Mast-Weisz. Foto: R. Keusch

und besucht derzeit neben Remscheid auch andere deutsche Städte, die die Arbeit des Komitees für die Dalits engagiert unterstützen.

Der indische Menschenrechtler, das war gestern auch Thema im Remscheider Ratssaal, setzt sich dabei für einen Pluralismus ein, der „nicht einfach Vielfalt, sondern vielmehr die aktive Auseinandersetzung mit Vielfalt“ bedeutet. Der Arzt betonte:

„Während religiöse Vielfalt real existiert, ist Pluralismus etwas, das es noch zu erreichen gilt.“

Einfach nur Vielfalt ohne wirkliche Begegnungen und Beziehungen zwischen den Menschen werde zu vermehrten Spannungen in unseren Gesellschaften führen. Es gehe letztlich auch um „das Schaffen fester Vereinbarungen“.

■ DR. RAGHUVANSHI

VITA Dr. Lenin Raghuvanshi wurde am 18. Mai 1970 in Varanasi (Benares) geboren und machte 1994 seinen Abschluss in Medizin, Ayurveda und Chirurgie an der Universität Gurukul Kangari mit Auszeichnung. Er ist verheiratet und hat einen Sohn.

EINSATZ Seit 20 Jahren setzt sich Dr. Raghuvanshi für die Rechte der Dalits, Angehörige der untersten Kaste, ein. In diesem Zusammenhang gründete er 1996 das People's Vigilance Committee on Human Rights (PVCHR). Dieses Komitee hilft benachteiligten Bevölkerungsgruppen wie Kindern, Frauen oder Minderheiten, ihre Grundrechte einzufordern.



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The next day the press praised the bond between Dr Lenin and the city:

Press-Report: Remscheider Generalanzeiger, May 7, 2015

Dr. Lenin Thanks City of Remscheid

Funding – Donations allow Dalits to graduate from secondary schools

by Gerhard Schattat (translated into English by Sven Andresen)

There are close relationships between the Indian village Baghwanala next to Benares in which the Dalits live and the city of Remscheid. The Dalits belong to the lowest of all castes. Since 2002, schools are built and promoted with the help of donations originating from Remscheid. Now a center for women has been established. The first Dalit pupils are going to graduate from secondary schools, which is an enormous success.

Weavers from India made the emblem of Remscheid from silk

The Indian doctor Dr. Lenin Raghuvanshi – briefly called Dr. Lenin – said in yesterday's talk in the city hall: "We do thank our friends in Remscheid". After that, he presented the Lord Mayor Burkhard Mast-Weisz a very special gift: As a sign of gratitude, the weavers of Dr. Lenin's home city weaved the city emblem of Remscheid from silk. The Indian weavers who have the reputation of being great artists wove the emblem of Remscheid consisting of a lion and a sickle.

Dr. Lenin, who presides a human rights committee in Varanasi works closely together with the Indo-German Society of Remscheid and their Chairwoman Helma Ritscher. After Remscheid, he is also visiting other German cities, which support the work of the Dalit committee.

The Indian human rights activist Dr. Lenin is pleading for pluralism, which was also the topic in his talk at the Remscheid city hall. He said: "It is not only diversity but the active debate on diversity." Dr. Lenin emphasized, "While religious diversity already exists, pluralism is something which is still to be achieved. Simply diversity without encounters and relationships among the people themselves will lead to more tensions in our societies. After all it is about creating resilient agreements."

Dr. Raghuvanshi

Vita: Dr. Lenin Raghuvanshi was born on May 18, 1970 in Varanasi (Benares) and made his degree on medicine, Ayurveda and surgery in 1994 at the Gurukul Kangary University with distinction. He is married and has one son.

Work: Since 25 years, Dr Raghuvanshi is engaging himself for the rights of the Dalits who belong to the lowest cast in India. In this context, he founded in 1996 the People's Vigilance Committee of Human Rights (PVCHR). This committee helps backward sections of the society like children, women and minorities to claim their rights.



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But one thing should not remain unmentioned from Dr Lenin's last visit in 2015

Though Dr. Lenin for the PVCH R and me for the Indo-German Society Remscheid are the official mediators between the cultures and for the people - young and old, especially for our Dalit friends - from our point of view all these people are **equal mediators** like us.

Exemplary - the weavers from Varanasi:

When Dr. Lenin held his lecture in the town hall of Remscheid on the occasion of this visit, he presented the Lord Mayor of the city with a special guest gift. It was from a group of Dalit weavers from Varanasi. For more than three weeks they had joyfully worked on it. The gift was a framed thank-you present with the coat of arms of the city of Remscheid woven in silk.

The Lord Mayor emotionally thanked them with deep sincerity. It was more than just a gift, it was an expression of the solidarity from person to person, from India to Germany.

A wordless gesture and message of the heart – no matter what position.



The weavers' gift has found a place of honour in the office of the, lord mayor.

When I travelled to Varanasi in 2016 for the 50th anniversary of our society, I also had a gift for the weavers in my luggage.

A thank-you from the city of Remscheid, signed by Lord Mayor Mast-Weisz, and by myself on behalf of the Indo-German Society Remscheid.

The joint work with **mutual visits** since 2002, whether from Dr Lenin on behalf of the PVCHR, or my regular visits, have led to a deep and lasting exchange for both sides. The same applies to the promotion of intercultural competence in the educational and social sectors, both here and there. Due to the years of dealing with the living situation of the Dalit and the struggle for their rights, the Dalit were provided with the necessary facilities, whether kindergarten, school, weaving centre or women's shelter.

On top of the women's shelter, named after the first Dalit teacher Savitri Bai Phule, a further educational centre was built on top of it, the "Helma Ritscher Center for "Human Dignity", which corresponds to the global digital standard.

And on February 12, 2020, the first "Health Center" was integrated in the women's shelter. It was urgently needed in Baghwanala, also for the people in the surrounding area.

I had the great honour to inaugurate the Health Centre.

When I left, the question of the next joint project was still open.



Indo-German Society

Affiliate Remscheid

since 1966

What was important to us as mediators between the cultures?

With his lecture in Remscheid, Dr. Lenin had inspired the attendees to discuss his vision of "Diversity and Pluralism". Currently and publicly, he is repeatedly campaigning globally for this, one of his most important concerns, in India.

The profile of the Indo-German Society has been shaped by my view of what connects us as human beings and not what separates us. The contribution our society has made to date to international understanding, in particular the unique collaboration with Dr. Lenin and the PVCHR, testifies to our efforts to return to ethical values by finding ways of reaching out to our neighbours, regardless of culture, nation or religion.

Dialogue was and is a strong medium for our society. It has become a medium, whether between managers or everyday people - it leads directly to the people themselves - **to humanity**. Dialogue challenges us and it challenges us to treat each other with respect and tolerance and to exchange information on a friendly basis. In our work we try to act according to our principles, and to contribute to the appreciation of different people and cultures, and thus to work **a little bit** for a peaceful coexistence on this earth.

Since our views, those of Dr. Lenin and mine are pointing in the same direction, I gladly agreed to the new project proposal of Dr. Lenin.

Our next project should be a **centre for dialogue and exchange** and the return to the universal values of our humanity. And it will be built on the women's shelter under the direction of Dr. Lenin and the PVCHR.

The Indo-German Society would seek funding for the project from its proven partner Engagement Global gGmbH of the Ministry of North Rhine-Westphalia in Germany.

The title and content of our application for the 2020 project will be named after the great Indian poet and humanist Mirza Ghalib:

"Mirza Ghalib Global Center for Diversity and Pluralism"

Request for an extension by one floor, on top of the "Women's Center", for building a meeting place for the rapprochement of cultures through innovative exchange of their universal values.

My final wish is to inaugurate the "Mirza Ghalib Global Center for Diversity and Pluralism" in 2022. And then to be able to join Dr. Lenin, interested guests, and spiritually and secularly oriented speakers in the first round of discussions.

But not only the fulfillment of my wish depends on the grace and blessing of God alone - also our cooperation.

Undeterred, with this trust in God's blessing, we continue to work, and work...

- US TOGETHER

„PVCHR -People's Vigilance Committee on Human Rights and Indo -German Society, Affiliate Remscheid as Partners and Friends for Human Rights, Equality and Dignity