

**FRIENDS OF LAKSHMI ASHRAM****Lone Poulsen, Praestehusene 6, 2620 Albertslund, DK Denmark****Telefon +45 43 96 13 71 – E-mail: [lone-poulsen@comxnet.dk](mailto:lone-poulsen@comxnet.dk)****Bank Account IBAN no: DK0330000003141861****Lakshmi Ashram's homepage: <http://lakshmiashram.dk>****NEWS FROM LAKSHMI ASHRAM  
SANCHAR 109**

August 2010

Dear friends,

I hope that you have enjoyed the summer. Here in Denmark July has been very hot, but now the weather is more unsettled. This time the newsletter brings:

- My year in Lakshmi Ashram by a German trainee Magda Klemp
- Teaching Computers at Lakshmi Ashram by Anuradha Joshi
- Personal Experiences in Learning Computers by Lalita Rana
- Three-day Sanskar Camps by Tara Koranga
- The Account of the Year 2009.

As I wrote in March we normally have a Lakshmi Ashram general meeting in March/April with the yearly report, annual accounts and election of committee members. This year we will hold the meeting on 12<sup>th</sup> of September, because Krishna and Gopal Bisht visit Denmark at that time. Krishna is a committee member in Lakshmi Ashram. There will also be arranged two public meetings in Copenhagen with Krishna and Gopal.

It still costs 1725 Danish kroner and the subscription 75 Danish kroner to be a sponsor (about 230 Euro and 10 Euro) = 1800 Danish kroner. Some people send money once a year for a sponsorship, and others divide the amount during the year. Therefore we will put 75 kroner in the administration account the first time in the year, when we receive money from someone. This also applies if you send amounts that are not earmarked. So all will pay the same amount a year to be a member and receive the Sanchar. I assume one membership per household, club, society etc., unless otherwise instructed. The surplus from the administration account will of course be sent to Lakshmi Ashram. Thank you for all the money for sponsorships and other contributions. Any amount of money will be received with pleasure. Contributions that are not earmarked are also very good. The money will be used for educational material, study tours, education of the teachers, etc. You can send money by a crossed cheque or by bank transfer – the IBAN account number can be seen on top of this letter.

Friends of Lakshmi Ashram can save money, if some of you would be satisfied just to receive a mail telling that you can read the Sanchar in the homepage. Because of the photos the Sanchar is often too big to send directly by mail. If you want to get the message in a mail instead of receiving a letter, then please send me your e-mail address to: **[lone-poulsen@comxnet.dk](mailto:lone-poulsen@comxnet.dk)**  
Thanks to the members who have accepted this.

Best wishes,  
Lone Poulsen

## SANCHAR 109

### **My Year in Lakshmi Ashram** **Magda Klemp**

Now my year in Lakshmi Ashram is almost over. Never in my life can I remember any period of time so clearly and in such detail as the last few months in this green and peaceful place – the rooms, the courtyard, and the cowshed – all are so close and familiar. I know exactly what the girls do after their work, when they go to bed, what things make them happy. And my own ‘home’ is so very far away, both in actual kilometres and in my mind.

But what did I do for a whole year? The best word to describe my first few weeks is ‘different’. The people and their clothes were different. I had no plan in my mind – what looks nice, what is fashionable, what can I wear? Next were the smells. The wind brought with it a mixture of different, unknown smells. In the cities every step brings new smells. Normal things like milk, sugar and tea taste in a special Indian way. My ears listened to different voices, words that I did not understand. All my senses were confronted with a lot of new information. So I felt very excited during the first few weeks – all of you know how one feels when on holiday in another country!

Then slowly, slowly, things began to fall into place. I came to understand how it was that all the children knew every morning what work they had to do, what is the best way to wash my clothes, why we wake up so early.

Not so easy was learning the language. I needed a long time to understand simple sentences. However after a long break in January I found that I could understand more and more, and felt much better. There was a big motivation for me to understand and also to speak a little bit, because it is so much easier to work with the children when you can say, “Sit down” or “Be quiet”.

So after the winter holidays I started a small project and made a small programme for the children every Sunday. One time we played nature experience games together, at other times we played volleyball, made ‘ball birds’ with wool, watched a film in English or acted small plays. The rules of every European game had to be changed into an Indian version. I could not say beforehand whether the girls would like the game or not, whether they would understand it or not. I had to try everything. Sometimes we had a lot of fun together, while the next time we all lost our nerves!



Once we played a game where one person stands in the middle of a circle. In my own country everyone sits in their place and the game works well. Here everyone wants to stand in the middle of the circle, and a lot of games did not work out so well. It was a very practical experience for me, and we found rules to play the games well. I like the nature of the children very much. They are very friendly and simple, smiling and singing a lot, doing their work very conscientiously, and are very concerned for the small things in life.

I had more experiences like this in the art lessons. I taught this subject to class four to eight. We experimented with a lot of different materials, and worked on different topics. I want to take some of the drawings back home to Germany as a very lovely gift, and to remember the small girls.

One highlight for me was sharing Holi, the festival of colours, with them. All the time I had no idea what exactly was going to happen. But I had a lot of fun catching them with colours and water.

I will remember a lot of small events very well, and I will take some of them back home in my heart.



## Teaching Computers at Lakshmi Ashram

### Anuradha Joshi

*Anuradha Joshi's sister, Arpana, is an assistant professor in Delhi, and has twice brought parties of students to Lakshmi Ashram. It was through this connection that Anuradha came to spend some six weeks in Lakshmi Ashram, and contribute so much to the ashram school.*

I have been teaching Computer Basics to the students of class ten here in Lakshmi Ashram from 27 May 2010. It has been an exciting and a valuable experience for me. I am sure that the girls of this class will also have their own experiences to narrate

I came here as a volunteer teacher to teach mathematics and science. I began teaching these two subjects from my very first day. However, within a week of my arrival a suggestion came from Radha Didi and Neema Didi that I could also teach Computer Basics. I was happy to take this class. The senior teachers selected eleven girls to take part in this new computer class. The classes would be held in the late evening after all the normal daily activities of the ashram had ended.

I am a software developer and have worked in the United States for the past seven years. I have helped end users understand new features of programmes developed for them. However teaching the basics of computers was an experiment that I was undertaking here at the Ashram for the first time.

As I planned and taught the first few lessons it quickly became clear to me that language was a barrier in explaining many terms about the computer architecture. I would speak all the terms in English in the class, for example – file, mouse, keyboard, memory, etc. I also wrote the same words on the blackboard in English. The students had a limited knowledge of the English language. However they have all seen and used cell phones, and they slowly picked up these new words. Progress in the class was slow, and I would repeat the terms and concepts in many classes. Sometimes the class could not be held because of power outage. The students have shown a remarkable desire to learn and continue with the class.

After a few days taking classes I felt that the students did not get enough practice time on their own. After consulting with Neema Didi and the students we planned an extra practice before the Ashram evening prayers. These classes have been going on for the past one month. So far the students have learned to type, albeit it slowly, in both English and Hindi. The students can open and save a file. Most of the students like the “Paint” software, and they have surprised me by drawing some beautiful colourful pictures in “Paint”.

The students were given an assignment of typing one page each in English and Hindi. Besides this they had to make a picture in “Paint”, a Power Point presentation of two slides, and an example of adding numbers in Excel. The students have completed this assignment. These students also participated in their regular daily activities and the camps that were held during this month. I feel that this is a commendable achievement for the students. I hope that these students will continue their quest of learning this new technology. I personally feel that some of the students can teach younger girls in the ashram. I express my best wishes to all the students of the ashram in all their future endeavours.

## **Personal Experiences in Learning Computers**

### **Lalita Rana**

Our first computer class took place on 27 May. For some time we older girls had wanted the opportunity to learn the use of the computer. With the help of our older teachers a programme was arranged, and it was decided at what time we would be taught how to use the computer.

To begin with Anuradha Didi introduced us to the names of the main components such as the monitor, keyboard and mouse. Of course all of us had seen a computer before but we knew nothing whatsoever about it, and even felt afraid to lay a finger on it, worried as to what might happen. Now however we quickly began to look upon the computer as our friend. If there was anything that we did not understand, then we could always ask one another. Even though in the beginning we knew nothing whatsoever, Anuradha Didi explained everything to us and taught us with so much love and affection that we very quickly came to understand the basics.

We learned a great deal, and what we had at first thought would be very difficult we quickly found to be very easy. Before our classes had begun we had imagined all sorts of things that we thought over amongst ourselves, things that we were very keen to learn. Although we have learned a great deal about the computer, yet we still want to learn a great deal more. Our interest has been awakened; we have learned new words in English relating to the computer, how

to make a file, how to type in both Hindi and English using the keyboard, how to paint and how to create a new folder. I personally feel that we must carry on this effort so that our practice will continue, until we will reach a level where we can use the computer to contribute to the ashram activities.

## Three-day Sanskar Camps

### Tara Koranga

*The Hindi word ‘sanskar’ is one of those philosophical concepts that are hard to convey the meaning of in English in one simple word. In the context of the camps organised for the students of Lakshmi Ashram it suggests developing and refining those inner qualities that underline our daily thinking and actions.*

It was the Ashram teachers who had first expressed their wish to organise Sanskar Shibirs this summer. Similar camps had been organised from time to time in the past, in particular for the new students, but it had been a very long time since such camps had been organised on a class wise basis. A great enthusiasm was generated among all the teachers to organise these camps, and likewise among the children to take part.

Class-wise groups were drawn up and all those teachers running the camps decided upon the subjects for discussion for each of the camps and also the methods of instruction, depending on the capacity of the students’ understanding. When the teachers had decided about the organisation of the camps, they then explained to all the students in the evening meeting about the proposed camps – how they would include games and singing, also meditation, concentration and silence.

There were a number of underlying objectives behind organising these camps, including:

1. Making each and every student aware of what constitutes good habits.
2. Not telling lies.
3. Maintaining both inner and outer cleanliness.
4. The consequences of positive and negative feelings.
5. Behaving in a modest and polite way with both our elders and those younger than ourselves.
6. The importance of prayer, meditation and yoga in our lives.
7. Making the students aware of matters relating to health and digestion.

The six camps, beginning with that for the smallest children, were held between 12 June and 1 July. During the three days of each camp all the arrangements for the participants were separate from the hostel – living, eating, studying etc. These arrangements were made in the Ashram workshop, the Udyogshala. Everyone enjoyed very much working apart from the rest of the ashram community in small groups. They had a busy schedule arranged for them every day from morning to evening. At the start of each new day the participants sometimes went to the Anasakti Ashram for group prayers, and sometimes went to the forest to ‘Behnji ki Kutiya’, a spot much loved by Sarala Behn, to watch the sunrise over the Himalayan peaks. Throughout the day all the participants were kept very busy – drawing pictures, playing games, writing their diaries or having group discussions with their teachers. Every day there were classes on relevant subjects to exercise their minds.

On the final evening of each camp, those taking part told of their experiences and the inspiration that they had gained during the three days to the entire Ashram family after evening prayers. The camp participants also presented a cultural programme of dance, drama, etc. in which they all took part. Class nine gave a demonstration of yoga exercises in which they displayed great concentration.

Following the conclusion of the Sanskar Camps some changes also came to be observed in the Ashram activities:

1. Meditation and prayers are better than previously, and there has been an increase in the level of concentration during meditation.
2. There has been a marked increase in interest among many of the students towards yoga exercises.
3. There has been a noticeable improvement in being more punctual for activities such as prayers and meals.
4. Bearing in mind the consequences of positive and negative feelings and attitudes, there has been a visible improvement with people speaking to one another in a more loving way.
5. Each and every one of the girls is paying even more attention than ever to cleanliness in their immediate surroundings; moreover their attention to their personal tidiness has increased.

This was the outcome from camps of just three days. If such camps could be organised for an even longer period, then the girls would get even more inspiration. All of those who took part want to see even longer camps being organised. Everyone had been greatly inspired and these three day camps were extremely valuable for one and all.



Lakshmi Ashram group photo by Magda Klemp

# FRIENDS OF LAKSHMI ASHRAM

Lone Poulsen, Præstehusene 6, 2620 Albertslund – Denmark

## STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS 2009

### ORDINARY PROFIT AND LOSS ACCOUNT:

#### Income

Contributions received	117.373,61 DDK
Subscription: 89 members à 75 DDK	6.675,00 DDK
Interest and yield	364,59 DDK
<b>Total income</b>	<b>124.413,20 DDK</b>

#### Expenses

Administration	3.637,00 DDK
Loss by sending money to India (note 1)	1.730,17 DDK
Paid to Lakshmi Ashram	125.764,86 DDK
<b>Total expenses</b>	<b>131.132,03 DDK</b>

<b>Net result of ordinary account</b>	<b>- 6.718,83 DDK</b>
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### BALANCE SHEET at 31.12.09

#### ASSETS

Danske Bank: Giro	3.170,56 DDK
Danske Bank: Danish Deposit	48.625,20 DDK
<b>Total bank deposits</b>	<b>51.795,76 DDK</b>

#### LIABILITIES

Ordinary net capital, beginning 2009	58.514,59 DDK
Net result for 2009	- 6.718,83 DDK
<b>Net capital, end 2009</b>	<b>51.795,76 DDK</b>

### SECONDARY PROFIT AND LOSS ACCOUNT (the inheritance):

#### Income

Interest and yield	6.938,11 DDK
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**Expenses**

Paid to Lakshmi Ashram (kitchen)	60.160,75 DDK
Administration (bank charges)	200,00 DDK
Loss by sending money to India (note 1)	1.810,51 DDK
<b>Total expenses</b>	<b>62.171,26 DDK</b>

<b>Net result of secondary account</b>	<b>- 55.233,15 DDK</b>
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**BALANCE SHEET at 31.12.09****ASSETS**

Danske Bank: Agreement Account	252.930,03 DDK
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**LIABILITIES**

net capital, beginning 2009	308.163,18 DDK
Net result for 2009	- 55.233,15 DDK
<b>Net capital, end 2009</b>	<b>252.930,03 DDK</b>

## Note 1:

The year of 2009 has been a nightmare as regards sending money to Lakshmi Ashram. India introduced a new system that demanded an IFSC code (Indian Financial System Code), but no one – neither the Danish Bank did know anything about it. That meant that money was sent back and forth between Denmark and India – unfortunately with the result of loss on exchanges. We hope that this won't happen any more.

Albertslund, 2010 The accounts have been audited.

Albertslund, 2010

Lone Poulsen

Claus Broskov Sørensen