

**FRIENDS OF LAKSHMI ASHRAM****Lone Poulsen, Praestehusene 6, 2620 Albertslund, DK Denmark****Telephone +45 43 96 13 71 – e-mail: lone-poulsen@comxnet.dk****Bank Account IBAN no: DK0330000003141861****Lakshmi Ashram's homepage: <http://lakshmiashram.dk>****NEWS FROM LAKSHMI ASHRAM  
SANCHAR 117**

Marts 2013

Dear friends,

Now we are looking forward to seeing all being green in springtime after a cold winter. Already the days are much lighter, and the sun has some power now.

This time the newsletter brings:

- Self-Sufficiency in Practice – The Vegetable Garden in Lakshmi Ashram – by Hansi Behn
- Our Experiences of Ashram Life during the Winter Holidays – by five students in class XII
- A Few Experiences of my Research Project – by Neema Behn
- The Account of 2012 from Friends of Lakshmi Ashram.

**We hold the yearly general meeting in Denmark on Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> April 2013 at 2 pm.**

Report of this meeting will be sent in the next Sanchar.

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, and others divide the amount during the year. Therefore we will put 75 kroner into the administration account the first time of 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.

We use very little money for administration, and the money is sent directly from our bank to the Ashram's bank in Kausani, so no money will be lost – only bank charges. The surplus from the administration account will of course be sent to Lakshmi Ashram. This time we have sent 5.000 Danish kr. (about 670 Euro) from this account.

Thank you for all the money. 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.

Best wishes,

Lone Poulsen

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. 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***

# Sanchar 117

## Self-Sufficiency in Practice The Vegetable Garden of Lakshmi Ashram By Hansi Behn

*Hansi Behn is one of the senior workers of Lakshmi Ashram. While she is primarily responsible for maintaining the ashram accounts, she has always had a love of gardening, and devotes a great deal of time and energy to working alongside the younger workers and ashram students in the garden.*

The past year saw our vegetable garden give us good yields of vegetables. We successfully raised seedbeds of aubergines, capsicums and tomatoes in the polyhouse, and these were transplanted on time in the open fields. Before that we had also purchased some seedlings from the market and planted them in the garden. However a heavy hailstorm in mid-April destroyed these.

We also planted marrow seedlings outside, but because of extreme heat and drought there was a lack of water for two months in May and June, and it was with great difficulty that we managed to save our seedlings. Nevertheless we enjoyed eating marrow three or four times. The yields of aubergines and capsicums were also satisfactory, and we had an increased harvest of onions and garlic, both harvested in the early summer.

Production during the autumn and winter of different varieties of lai (Indian mustard) was also good, and we regularly got green vegetables from the garden. During the monsoon we raised seedbeds of cabbage and cauliflower in the polyhouse. When the seedlings were ready for transplanting outside after the monsoon rains had cleared away, we dug small pits, half-filled them with natural compost, mixed in the soil and planted the seedlings. These days we are reaping a good harvest. We did not plant the seedlings in many fields; however those seedlings that we did plant are now giving us beautiful large heads of cauliflower and firm-hearted cabbages. This is the very first time that we have grown cauliflower, and we are very pleased with the results. It would seem that their seed was very high quality.



We had also sown peas in the open, and these were coming along nicely, the plants covered with lots of white flowers. However the monkeys and langurs attacked the peas and totally destroyed them. Inside the polyhouse though the peas are coming along well, have plenty of flowers, and we are anticipating a good harvest of peas.

This year we had an excellent harvest of pumpkins and large cucumbers, which doubtless benefitted from the prolonged heavy monsoon rains, and several times we enjoyed eating lauki (bottle gourd). Benefiting from a source of high quality seeds of mooli (white radish), we have been able to harvest really large roots throughout the year. In recent months spinach, mooli leaves and lai have provided us with a regular supply of greens for the ashram kitchen, so that the children get to enjoy a wide range of vegetables. This year however the harvest of French beans was not good, with firstly a lack of rain and then very heavy monsoon rains.

This year we have prepared our own seedbed of onions in the polyhouse and planted out the young seedlings in the garden. They were very small and thin, the frosts in January flattened them and their growth stopped. Now though, with some warmer days recently, the seedlings are looking healthy. Even now as I write in mid-February the gardens are looking lush and green with lai and mooli, while scattered throughout the garden the yellow flowers of mustard are flourishing.

In the past couple of weeks a large polyhouse has been erected, and we plan to grow a wide range of vegetables inside it. The polyhouse is large and spacious, and we were very eager to go ahead and sow seeds inside it.



On 13 February we have sown spinach, carrots, peas and beans in the beds prepared inside, and have also made seedbeds for tomatoes, aubergines and capsicums. We have sown pumpkin, marrow, turai (ridge gourd), cucumber and lauki, and are looking forward to watching them grow. I hope that they will give us good yields.

Despite the beating we have taken from the weather during the year – hail in April, heat and drought in May and June, excessive rains in July and August – the gardens have given us a good range and quantity of vegetables. The garden has been well managed and kept in very good order. The children and the two ‘didis’ responsible for the garden, Saraswati Behn and Poonam Behn, have actively participated in every aspect of the work involved in keeping the garden in good order and raising vegetables. Everyone has worked hard and with great commitment, and the older workers have also given good guidance to the younger students.



## Our Experiences of Ashram Life during the Winter Holidays

By Renu, Seema, Kavita, Chandani and Janaki – Students of Class XII



As we do every year, this year too we celebrated Christmas on 25 December. All the girls were really excited that they were going to spend the winter holidays with their families. We celebrated Christmas Day in grand style, and each and every one of the girls completed their preparations to go home. From 26 December the girls began to set off for home along with their guardians, leaving just us five girls here, along with five didis, Bapuji (*David Bhai*) and Pooran Dajyu (*Dajyu = Big brother*). We were all feeling very sad, wondering how we would pass the winter holidays. As one by one the other girls left for their homes, so the ashram seemed to get ever more deserted.

From 27 December we began our special daily routine. For some days we kept remembering and missing all the ashram family, but then quickly our small family came to feel more and more lovely. Busy in our work we passed the days full of joy.

New Year's Eve came, and in the evening we celebrated it with great enthusiasm. We dressed up as comic characters and sang and danced, staying up until midnight. So many people also phoned the next day to give their New Year greetings to everyone. We took a New Year resolution to try and work as well as possible.

Being such a small family during the holidays we shared out all the work. In this way we celebrated together the winter festival of Makar Sankranti, (*marking the winter solstice in the traditional Indian calendar*). On the afternoon of 15 January we all sat out in the sun and had great fun making the dough for the traditional Kumauni *ghughute* and then shaping the dough into different shapes, before deep frying them. Early the following morning we placed a variety of these for the crow, and then called the crow:

***“Kale Kauwa Kale Kale – Ghughuti Mawa Khale Khale”***

This tradition goes back a long way, that the crow will respond to being called, and will eat the food that has been offered in his name.

Now there were not many days left until the didis and girls would return. The weather was turning cold. The meteorologists had several times forecast that there would be rain and snow. We were in really high spirits that the following day snow might fall, that we would play in the snow – Oh, how our imagination was running riot! However the snow only fell on the higher hills to the west and we had to be content with just looking at it from afar. We would have had quite different fun if the snow had been right where we were!

Then 26 January came, celebrated in India as Republic Day. This is celebrated with great enthusiasm in the schools and in many public places. In Delhi floats of different states take part in a big parade. On 26 January 1950 our Constitution came into being, and India became a republic. Thus every year this day is celebrated as Republic Day. We hold dear to our hearts the opening words of our Constitution, “We the People of India”, and recall these words especially on this day.

In this way during the holidays we had enthusiastically observed all the festivals and enjoyed ourselves very much.

It was the night of 20 January, when we heard from Indira Didi that a leopard had killed a villager's cow in the forest, very close to our cattle shed. We felt very saddened that a leopard had

come so close to our home, and became very alert to the possible danger. This was a very tragic event.

All five of us had our own personal experiences. Chasing the monkeys away had its own special fun. All of us would join together to chase the monkeys away, shouting for joy at the top of our voices. All the didis joined together with us to do all the work, which made it good fun. The holidays went by so quickly, we could not believe it.

The ashram didis began to return from their holidays from 28 January. The first to arrive back safely were Sonu in class V and Bimla Didi. We were all full of joy as one by one people returned. On the 31<sup>st</sup> the smallest member of our Ashram family, Khushbu, and her mother, Saraswati Didi, arrived back, and then we were even more overjoyed. As everyone returned so they found several changes. A large polyhouse had been constructed and we will grow a great deal of vegetables in it.

By 10<sup>th</sup> February all the didis and girls had returned, and now we are enjoying having them all around us. We had spent the winter days in a very enjoyable way.

*Renu, Seema, Kavita, Chandani and Janaki finish in sending Lone Didi very many 'Jay Jagats'.*

## **A Few Experiences of my Research Project**

*By Neema Behn*

On the last day of my M. Phil study course in Gujarat Vidyapeeth in Ahmedabad in the year 1998-99, the Principal of the University asked me,

“What is your plan after finishing this course?”

I replied that I would return to our Lakshmi Ashram and work there as I had been working for many years. He immediately said,

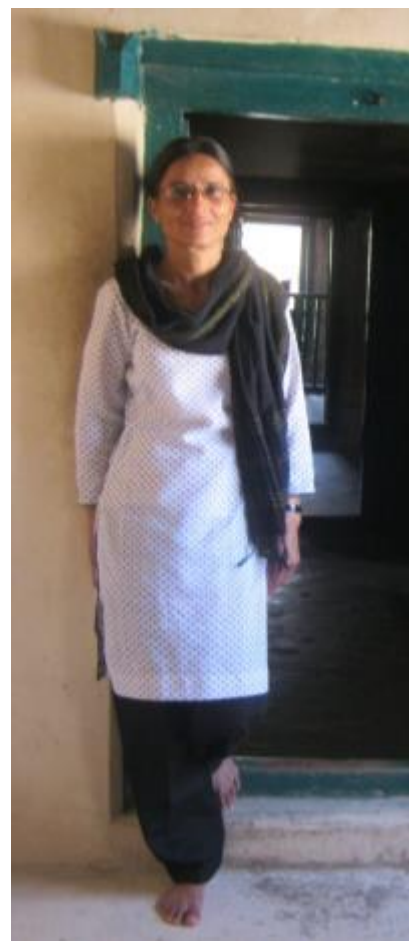
“You should stay back here and work with the university as a lecturer, and beside that you can do your PhD.”

I replied, “No, this is not my aim.”

Many of my friends and professors also tried to make me understand that my M.Phil was no use if I was not going to do a PhD. And they were thinking that I was a really poor girl who did not know the purpose of her study. But I was very clear that I was not doing that study for any professional benefit, and so I returned to the Ashram and again engaged in my work there as before.

In between I really developed an interest to do my PhD either on Gandhi or Sarala Behn and I made efforts to contact the people in Kumaun University, Nainital, in this regard, but when I came to know that they did not have a Department of Gandhian Studies in their University then I gave up the idea or thought from my mind.

During my work as a secretary of the Ashram I had been trying to understand the aim and objectives of the Ashram, because at that time many questions had been rising in my mind regarding the aim of the Ashram and the work that we have been doing. I had been discussing with the older people, but many times I had been feeling confused myself. During this time I felt a strong need that an evaluation should be made of the outcome of the work of the Ashram after more than five decades, but the question arose as to how, and who, can do this? I could not find any answer for a long time, but the question was always in my mind.



Then the thought my mind that if I can take this project as a research topic and do my research on it, that it will be a very useful study for the Ashram. At the same time I was very lucky to meet with the Vice Chancellor of Gujarat Vidyapeeth and I told him that I was interested to do my research from his University.

“Will you be able to guide me?”

He said, “Come to Gujarat Vidyapeeth and we will discuss that and then we will decide.” He himself also suggested a topic, while I said that I already had a topic in my mind, and then I explained to him the problem or question that I wished to undertake research on.

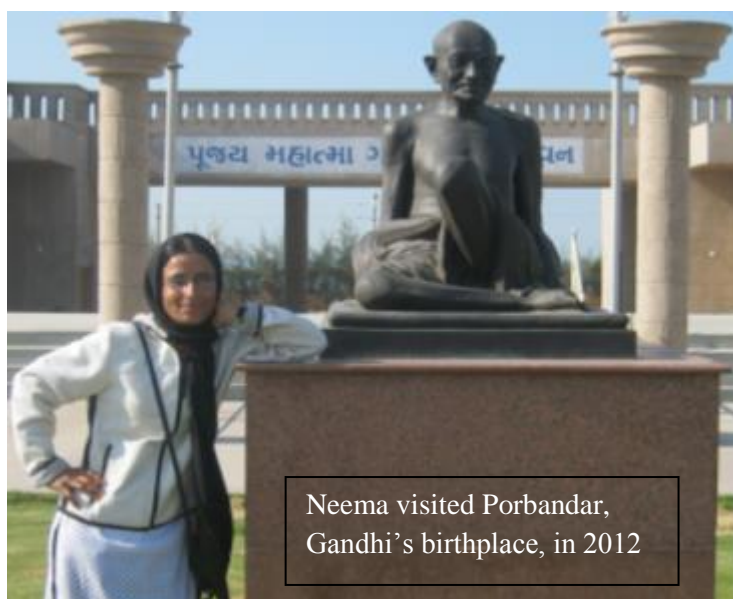
I shared my thoughts with the Lakshmi Ashram workers and requested two years leave from my work for this project. I was granted leave and I am so thankful to my people in the Ashram that they gave me that opportunity and freed me for this work. From September 2011 I started the research process - it is a case study based work. The evaluation of the effect of the aims and objectives of any institution can only come out through the method of case study. This means that the researcher has to conduct personal interviews and also carry out individual case studies of the former students of the institute. So I am also following the case study method.

I started the interviews last year in the summer and until now I have made contact with 29 former students of the Ashram from different decades. It is really interesting to meet the people of different ages, talk with them and personally feel and see the effect of the Ashram education in their individual lives, their family life and social life. All of those who I have met so far are firstly so happy to see me, to feel that someone from their Ashram has come to meet them. It is very interesting for me as well. They warmly welcome me and make me feel as if I am a member of their family.

Most of the students have a nice and happy life, whether they are with their family or alone. They are pleased to have had their education in the Ashram where they could develop as a whole person, even though sometimes they feel that they are not very capable of guiding their children so far as modern schooling goes. However with regard to values they are putting in a lot of effort for their children and getting a great deal of satisfaction. This I can see and feel while I am observing. Their family members also seem pleased to have an Ashram educated girl. I am looking forward to meeting many more students. But the only difficulty is that we lack complete records of the former students.

Since both the researcher and the respondent are belonging to Lakshmi Ashram, it is also difficult to get the true answer because, firstly most of them are so much attached to the ashram, and then when the talk has started they can become strongly emotional and cannot give a direct answer to the question. So I need a lot of time and dedication for each and every person. Nevertheless I am very much looking forward to meeting many more girls.

When I came again to the Gujarat Vidyapeeth and people came to know that I was going to register for my PhD, they were very surprised and thought that I was even madder now than before. Once again I have to make them understand that I need to make this study for my institute, and not for any professional benefit, but still they do not understand because modern education has become only a job oriented education and it is like a tool for getting a job, and nothing else.



Neema visited Porbandar, Gandhi's birthplace, in 2012

# FRIENDS OF LAKSHMI ASHRAM

## STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS 2012

### ORDINARY PROFIT AND LOSS ACCOUNT

#### Income

Contributions received	97.001,56 DDK
Subscription: 68 members à 75 DDK	5.100,00 DDK
Interest and yield	86,51 DDK
<b>Total income</b>	<b>102.188,07 DDK</b>

#### Expenses

Administration	3.063,75 DDK
Paid to Lakshmi Ashram	108.066,07 DDK
<b>Total expenses</b>	<b>111.129,82 DDK</b>

Net result of ordinary account	<b>- 8.941,75 DDK</b>
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### BALANCE SHEET at 31.12.2012

#### Assets

Danske Bank: Giro	5.393,63 DDK
Danske Bank: Danish Deposit	38.738,20 DDK
<b>Total bank deposits</b>	<b>44.131,83 DDK</b>

#### Liabilities

Ordinary net capital, beginning 2012	53.073,58 DDK
Net result	- 8.941,75 DDK
<b>Net capital, end 2012</b>	<b>44.131,83 DDK</b>

Albertslund, March 2013

Lone Poulsen

The accounts have been audited.

Albertslund, March 2013

Claus Broskov Sørensen