

FRIENDS OF LAKSHMI ASHRAM

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**NEWS FROM LAKSHMI ASHRAM
SANCHAR 127**

August 2016

Dear friends,

I hope you have enjoyed this summer. The new Sanchar brings the following articles:

- This year's Holi was the very best! By Mamta Koranga
- My Experiences by Jaya Nainwal
- Celebrating the Pūnya-Tithi of Kasturba Gandhi by Neha Joshi & Hansi Didi
- Minutes of the General Meeting on 13th March 2016 by Ruth Sillemann.

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, we receive money from someone. This also applies if you send amounts that are not earmarked. So all will pay the same amount in subscription and receive the Sanchar.

We use very little money for administration, **but now it is more expensive to copy the Sanchar. Before I have copied it free, but I can't do it anymore, so please send me your email address if possible.** 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.

Thank you for all the money. Any amount of money is received with pleasure. Contributions that are not earmarked are also very welcome. 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 – see the top of this letter.

Best wishes,

Lone Poulsen

Friends of Lakshmi Ashram can save money, if you would be satisfied to receive a mail with the Sanchar. You can also see the Sanchar in the homepage. If you want to get a mail instead of receiving a letter, then please send your e-mail address to: ***lone-poulsen@comxnet.dk***

SANCHAR 127

This year's Holi was the very best!

Mamta Koranga

*Nava Utsav kā Nayā Tyohār,
Holī khelne men hogī nahīn hār.
Abīr-gulāl ke sāton rang,
Holī khelī ham sabne sang.*

The new festival of new rejoicing,
There will be nothing lost in playing Holī
The seven colours of powder
We all played Holī together.



I enjoyed this year's Holi the best of all, because this time everyone joined in and played with great joy. The ashram family celebrated Holi over three days, from 22-24 March. During these three days we played Holi and also sang Holi songs. In my village we did not celebrate Holi, but when I came here and celebrated the festival of Holi with the ashram family, then I enjoyed it very much – and still do! In the beginning there was a feeling at the back of my mind that there would be a lot of colours thrown on me, that it would take a lot of time to clean it off, and that small spots might come on my skin. However when I started to play Holi, then I became totally carefree, immersed in the fun.

This year at Holi we welcomed twenty guests from the USA, including fourteen students, five teachers and a photographer. All of us were therefore even happier that our community grew in size, and were very pleased with this. They stayed with us each day from 8.30am until after evening supper about 8.30pm. The students joined with us in our morning work, dividing



themselves in ones and twos with us. They were studying in classes XI and XII, and in the ashram school there were fourteen students in classes XI and XII.

They all became our best friends, something that both we and they really liked. We learned to speak English with them, and taught them to speak Hindi. I also taught my two friends a little Garhwali song. They were very enthusiastic. Throughout the three days of Holi they really enjoyed themselves. On the first afternoon we all sat together in the courtyard of the hostel, sang Holi songs and danced. On the second afternoon we celebrated Holi in the courtyard of the '*Pathshala*', the cottage where Hansi Didi lives, put a lot of colour on one another, danced a lot and really enjoyed ourselves.

Then around 4pm, after enjoying a snack, all the girls went to the forest to search for firewood to bring down to the ashram, because in the evening we were to have the programme of '*Holi Dahan*' (The burning of Holikā). This day we had evening prayers at 6pm, immediately followed by supper and then sat together in the ashram courtyard, which was full of people sitting around the fire burning in the centre. The stars were twinkling in the sky, while a cool breeze was gently caressing us, and the flowers in the beds on the wall alongside the courtyard were spreading their fragrance. What an enchanting scene!

This evening we presented a cultural programme, and, in between the items presented by the ashram girls, our American friends also presented their items. We really enjoyed the programme. This evening Radha Didi and Kanti Didi, after returning from their long journey, were once again among us, and we had a very good feeling. This programme went on until after half past nine, and then everyone went off to sleep.



The third day was *Chhalarī*. We were working until nine o'clock, and then everyone gathered in the hostel courtyard to play *Chhalarī*. Everyone's faces, coloured with green and pink, looked really beautiful! Our American friends were dressed in white clothes, and when colours went on these, then all their clothes were looking really colourful. Their hair too was mostly blonde, and their clothes, their hair and faces all were looking most colourful.

That morning we really coloured one another a great deal. The colours too were very thick. We played *Chhalarī* until almost half past ten and then bathed. Now we faced the problem of getting rid of the colour!

From three o'clock until five o'clock we celebrated '*Holī Milan*'. This day has a special importance – those people who otherwise may not speak to one another, on this day happily talk together, for who knows where each of us will be a year hence. Therefore following the '*Holī Milan*' each and every one hugs all those around them and wishes them best wishes for Holi. Then in the evening work each of our classes went to their fields and sowed seeds of cucumber, pumpkin, *laukī* (bottle gourd) and *torāī* (ridge gourd). The American students joined us and they also learned how to sow the seeds. We had no idea how quickly these three days of Holi had passed.

Then on the afternoon of 25 March the American students said their farewells to us. Sitting together in Shanti Bhavan, our prayer hall, from one o'clock until two o'clock we had a farewell gathering. All of us ashram girls felt very sad, as did the American students. There were so many tears in their eyes that they could not stop them, and their sadness brought tears to our eyes too. Truly we all felt very sad that they were leaving us. We pray to the Almighty that these friends will come again. There was so much attachment between us that it did not seem that they were foreigners. I was thinking that they had come to India and had come to our school. How we wished that we too could go to their country and see their school! – And I was dreaming other things also. They will probably never forget us and we too will never forget them. They really enjoyed this festival of Holi!

*Dūr ho Dosto āp hamse,
Karīb samjhenge tumhen dil se.
Kartī hūn swāgat tumhārā,
Pyār rahegā hameshā hamārā.*

Friends you are far from us,
Yet we feel you near in our hearts.
We welcome you,
Our love will always remain.

My Experiences

Jaya Nainwal



Jaya has just joined the ashram this year, and wrote this little essay for the students' handwritten magazine, "Vijay". She has presented a very detailed description of her village.

My name is Jaya Nainwal. The name of my village is Galli Basyura, which is in Hawalbag block in Almora District.

In my village we find mangoes, peaches, sugarcane, pomegranates, grapes and *kaphal*.

In the forest we find pine, oak, *bhimal*, *timil*, *utis*, *kaphal*, *mehal* and other trees.

There are four *naulas* (springs), from where all the people in the village fill their vessels with cold water and take them home.

In my village the people grow wheat, barley, rice, maize, millet, black beans, *masoor* and *gahat* lentils, *rajma* beans, etc.

There are two schools – the school in which I had studied until class five is now closed.

We can see Almora from our village, and at night we can see its lights twinkling.

The paths in the village are made of cement. In the summer time it is very warm.

In March 2016 I came to study in Kausani, and I am studying in class seven. I like my classmates very much. Now I am slowly learning everything.

Celebrating the Pūnya-Tithi of Kasturba Gandhi

Neha Joshi & Hansi Didi

The Ashram students and workers celebrate a number of festivals and special days throughout the year. One such day is the Pūnya-Tithi or death anniversary of Kasturba Gandhi, popularly known as Ba, which falls on 22 February. This year was no exception and everyone gathered in our meeting hall, Shanti Bhavan that afternoon.



Today at one o'clock in the students' prayer meeting the students of class X led the singing of "Bā kā Garvā", a Gujarati song about Kasturba, the other students repeating the lines. This was followed by community spinning until two o'clock, the students of each class sitting with their class Didi, spinning merino wool on their spindles. Then after putting away the spindles, the attendance register was read out – everybody was present today for this meeting. The students of class XI took responsibility for organizing the programme, selecting Bharati as chairperson and Meenu as presenter respectively.

The agreed programme was as follows:

1. The programme to commence with the garlanding of a picture of Kasturba, and the lighting of a wick lamp in front of it.
2. The students of class XII to release the first issue in 2016 of the ashram newspaper, and also sing a song.
3. The young students of classes IV and V to present a play based on the life of Kasturba.
4. The students of classes IX and XI to present the calendar that they had made for 2016.
5. The students of class VI to present a play.
6. The B.A. students to present a song.
7. The students and teachers to recite some sentences that would give glimpses of the life of Kasturba.



The written material for this issue of the ashram newspaper and its publication was done by the students of class XII. The name of the newspaper was 'Nav Pallav', meaning 'New Leaves'.

Seeing the new leaves and buds opening all around before their eyes at this season, the students had given this name to this issue of their newspaper. The issue contained up to date news of the ashram, poems, pictures, riddles, and jokes – a real mixture of every type of item. Everyone got a lot of inspiration from the contents and their enthusiasm also increased. This issue was not simply entertaining but the quality was also very high. Some items were read out and then it was hang on the wall of the prayer hall, so that everyone could see it and read it. It will remain there until the next issue is brought out.

The students of class XII then sang "Shāntī ke Sipāhī Chale" (Go Forward Soldiers of Peace) which was very enjoyable as they all sang together in harmony.

The young girls of classes IV and V then presented a very inspiring play. The costumes that the different parts wore were also very attractive and appropriate. They presented in a very fine way an incident in the life of Kasturba. Two of our young teachers, Seema and Kavita had assumed full responsibility and gave of their all to prepare the young students.

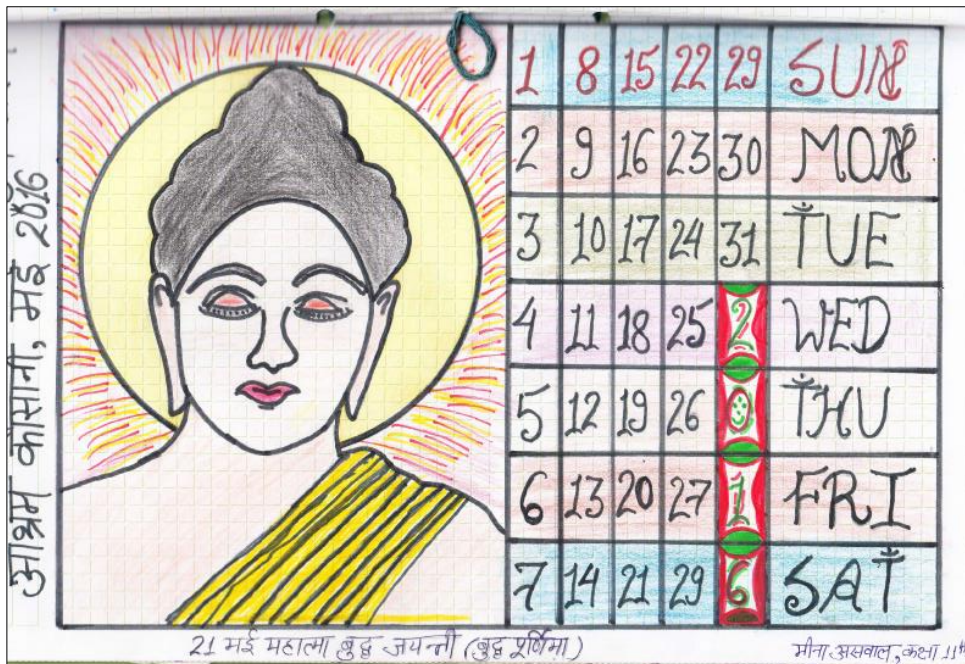
Class VIII presented a play also based on an incident from the life of Ba. Another young teacher, Tulsi, had worked very hard to prepare the students, and each of the characters in the play acted very well. This play too was a great source of inspiration for all of us.

Following this play the girls of classes X and XI presented the 2016 calendar that they had prepared, each month portraying a great person from Indian history. Drawing portraits is always very difficult, nevertheless the girls had made a very good effort.

The girls of class VI then presented a play, this time not based on an incident from the life of Kasturba, which gave an inspiring message of the merits of good sense and intelligence. Chandani, another young teacher, had done very well to prepare the students for this play.

Following this item the young teachers, all preparing for BA exams, sang a song, "Isliye Rāh", a very enjoyable and inspiring song that speaks forcefully of the need for us to work together to eradicate differences in society, especially poverty.

On this very special day the ashram didis and the young girls had together given today's programme a very special format, presenting plenty of inspiring thoughts. A good number of those present, according to their abilities, stood up and explained the ideas expressed by Kasturba and the incidents in her life. Finally the chairperson for today's meeting concluded the programme with a few words. Today's programme went off really well.



Minutes of the General Meeting on 13th March 2016 for Friends of Lakshmi Ashram

This year the meeting took place in Lone's home.

Chairman: Lone Poulsen. **Keeper of the minutes:** Ruth Sillemann.

The Committee's Report

Since Lone started she has sent out 58 Sanchars. Nowadays she sends three Sanchars a year – normally in March, August and November. It gives a little extra money every time when the friends receive the Sanchar. In January 2016 Lone visited Lions Club in Tune, and they gave an extra donation. She is writing articles to a magazine in the net – a magazine started by senior citizens in Albertslund. The first article is about Lakshmi Ashram generally. The next two are about climate and Basanti's village work.

A little about Lakshmi Ashram etc.

Basanti, the active worker in the villages, has unfortunately gone home to look after her old mother. (*Now in August she has come back, and her mother stays with Basanti's brother*).

Neema is in Ahmedabad to work with finishing her PhD.

The students sit for their exam in Garur 19th and 20th March.

David is in Danya to a course: "Training Programme for the Dairy Women".

They are celebrating Holi 22nd to 24th March (*see the article in this Sanchar*).

Radha Bhatt was in Scandinavia and Mexico from 20th November 2015 to 18th January 2016. She started in Denmark, went to Sweden where she on behalf of Mahatma Gandhi should receive The People's Peace Price in memory of the Testament of Alfred Nobel (*described in Sanchar 126*). Lone, Hanne and Ruth participated in the ceremony. Afterwards she went to Bergen in Norway to visit her sister and then to Mexico to help some groups there. She was back in Denmark for a few days before going back to India.

The Account and the Subscription

The account was approved. The subscription is still 75 DDK (about 10 Euro) yearly per member.

Proposals Received: No proposals were received.

Elections

The committee was re-elected and consists of: Lone Poulsen (chairman), Hanne Stenager, Lene Rasmussen and Ruth Sillemann. Substitute: Peter Kristensen.

Auditor and substitute were also re-elected: Claus Broskov Soerensen and David W. David.

Afterwards we saw slides from the Ashram, from the village work and from Radha's visit.

At last we saw a film "Gandhi's Daughters" about Lakshmi Ashram – made by an Indian film director.