

FRIENDS OF LAKSHMI ASHRAM

Lone Poulsen, Praestehusene 6, 2620 Albertslund, DK Denmark

Telephone +45 43961371 – e-mail: lonepoulsen2620@gmail.com

Bank Account IBAN no: DK0330000003141861 – SWIFT-BIC: DABADKKK

Bank reg. no: 4434 – account no: 0003141861

Lakshmi Ashram's homepage: <http://lakshmiashram.dk>

NEWS FROM LAKSHMI ASHRAM SANCHAR 147

July 2024

Dear friends,

Here is news again from Lakshmi Ashram.

This Sanchar has the following articles:

- An Account of Two Ashram Students by Radha Didi
- Girls' Education in Lakshmi Ashram by Neema Vaishnava
- Visitors from Göttingen (Germany).

Neema Vaishnava was planning to visit Denmark this summer, so therefore we wanted to arrange a meeting for Friends of Lakshmi Ashram. But Neema did not get a visa.

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. 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. All will pay the same amount in subscription and receive the Sanchar.

We use little money for administration. The money is transferred directly from our bank to the Ashram's bank, 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 donations. Any amount is received with pleasure.

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: lonepoulsen2620@gmail.com (new mail address)

Sanchar 147

An Account of Two Ashram Students

Radha Didi



For many years you have, through your financial assistance from Denmark and elsewhere, been supporting those young girls who come to Lakshmi Ashram for their education. Through this generous assistance over the past decades hundreds of girls have completed their academic education, and at the same time have developed their individual skills, personal qualities and philosophies, thus achieving an integrated development. Today I am writing the story of two such girls, whose weddings were celebrated here in the ashram on 28 April. These two girls, Neha and Jyotsana, came as very young girls to live and study in Lakshmi Ashram. Both their families were normal farming families of a very simple economic background. From the very beginning they were studying in the same class, and both of them were very bright in their academic studies. At the same

time they very enthusiastically and diligently participated in and learned all the practical activities in the daily life of the ashram – cattle raising, agriculture and horticulture, spinning and knitting, etc. Thus living in the ashram their all-round development - intellectually, practically and spiritually – took place, and they achieved various skills to truly live a good life. They were both very good in cultural activities – singing, dancing and drama, and proved to be talented and capable students. Both the ashram teachers and their families were very pleased with their development.

When they had completed their academic education until class XII and had successfully passed their Intermediate board exams, they then took the one year Gandhian Thoughts study programme organised by Lakshmi Ashram. This gave them the opportunity to study Gandhian Thought, gain a deep understanding of it, and also during the course of the year to understand the use of these ideas in the present day context, visiting various parts of the country and meeting various people, seeing these ideas being put into practice through their social service. They also participated in various youth conferences and camps, and on the basis of this year's experiences they developed a solid conceptual understanding of Gandhian Thought. They were very much inspired by Gandhi's thought and experiments with Naturopathy. They decided to work for the health of mankind and took formal diploma training in Delhi in naturopathy. They both were adamant in wishing to pursue this new opening of naturopathy, which is more relevant for mankind, nature and the environment, but as the field of naturopathy is separate from the mainstream of health services it is not easy to find work in this field. However Neha and Jyotsana's decision and commitment was well grounded in Gandhian Thought. They were fully committed to their training and pursued this, and while pursuing the training course in Delhi they built up contacts with people working in Nature Cure across the country. As a result of this, even before completing the diploma they were invited to work in a Nature Cure hospital in the state of Haryana. There they spent a full year working, getting firsthand experience of the practices of naturopathy. They gained good experience of naturopathy, but found that the behavior of the management and the staff was not good. Thus they went to work in a different nature cure centre, this time in Rajasthan. While working there they expanded their experience significantly,

and also studied in depth the theory and practice of naturopathy. This led them to develop a strong belief that naturopathy was not just an ordinary method of medical treatment but an integrated way of life as well as an effective method of medical treatment that goes to the very root of the illness, not having any adverse on the body but rather giving more health energy.

Neha and Jyotsana found in the Rajasthan natural health centre that the institution sought to earn as much money as possible from Naturopathy, and paid little attention to the underlying philosophy and atmosphere of Naturopathy. Thus they were not satisfied by this and decided to leave there. The people there were very happy with the thinking and attitudes of the two of them, and were fully satisfied with their thinking and their work. However the two of them searched for a centre which would prioritise the underlying thinking of Naturopathy. We were continuously in contact with these two students, always seeking thorough dialogue to give a strong form to their thinking, helping them in any way possible. Finally through the combined efforts of all of us they found a nature cure centre in Barodara, Gujarat, where they found an atmosphere fully centred on the underlying thinking of Naturopathy, and where they gained an integrated practical knowledge of the methods of treatment in nature cure. They found that in this centre priority was not given to money, rather the entire focus was on the thinking and philosophy of nature cure.

We have heard from the management, doctors and patients of this centre nothing but praise for Neha and Jyotsana. People were extremely pleased with their thinking, behaviour and methods of treatment, and said that these two girls were very special, that they had received a very good education. Because of this all of us in the ashram, along with Neha and Jyotsana's families, had total confidence in their well-grounded decisions and their well-developed sense of judgement.

During this time both of them found gifted, sympathetic and talented life partners, one of whom himself was a nature cure doctor. It was natural that neither Neha nor Jyotsana believed in the expensive and ostentatious kind of weddings prevalent in Indian society, and both of them persuaded their families to accept a simple form of marriage ceremony. Both the future bridegrooms accepted this wholeheartedly.



The ashram happily came forward and decided to arrange for their weddings in the ashram along the ideas of Gandhian Thought. Both Neha and Jyotsana wanted that both their weddings would take place on the same day and beneath the same marquee. Thus on 28 April their weddings took place in the ashram. All four families – Neha and Jyotsana, Hem and Dilip – were present, as well as friends of the ashram, local residents and all the ashram family, some 250 in all, and in their presence the two weddings took place in a very happy, gentle and peaceful atmosphere. A number of those present expressed how pleased they were with this kind of marriage ceremony, and those present all had the opportunity to see for themselves a new kind of wedding.



In the future both Neha and Jyotsana want to devote their lives to nature cure and yoga, and both their husbands have agreed, according to the personal abilities, to give their time to making this possible. All of you friends will surely find this account of these two students' personal development very

interesting, for your hard-earned contributions to Lakshmi Ashram have played an important role in making it possible. We extend our grateful thanks to you all.

Girls' Education in Lakshmi Ashram

Neema Vaishnav



Lakshmi Ashram provides a place to acquire an education for every kind of girl. By and large those girls coming here to Lakshmi Ashram come from ordinary farming families with a low income. The economic level of most people living in Uttarakhand is not so strong, even so they do not face the lack of those basic necessities of food and shelter. These days in the state schools midday meals are provided to the students, and there are various other benefits also. Nevertheless Lakshmi Ashram is unique in offering those single mothers supporting themselves through small enterprises the chance for their daughters to receive an all-round education, both academic and practical.

Thus most of those girls coming to the ashram have faced a lack of true and good education, which is a big issue facing all the government schools in India. There is no lack of schools, however a lack of teachers means that not all the subjects are able to be taught, and very often also the post of principal is vacant. Very often it seems that the most neglected area in India is that of education, in other words the children. Thus on one side there are many shortcomings in the government schools, while on the other hand private schools have become a business. Every year there are great increases in their fees and other expenses. Thus there is bitterness between the parents and the school management.

Some two years back the state government introduced a new educational scheme named Atal Utkrisht Vidyalay (Atal School of Excellence) for classes IX to XII. In selected schools across Uttarakhand the medium of education was made English rather than the mother tongue, Hindi, and the schools renamed as Atal Utkrisht Vidyalays. How could those children who until class VIII had studied in the Hindi medium be expected to be able to study in English? We are unable to understand this thoughtless decision of the government. This was a sudden injustice brought about on the students. Many students are finding themselves failing their annual exams in class IX twice in a row. Other students are dropping out of school. Students who have failed in two consecutive years find that they cannot get admittance to any other school either. This strange situation has arisen in the government education. Here we wish to say that a number of girls who have failed their class IX exams in the past two years are now coming to Lakshmi Ashram to pursue their education. Their academic level is very low. Thus it is a challenge for us to include them alongside our present



students. However they deserve to have the opportunity to study and so we are admitting them to the ashram. We are pleased to be able to say that such girls coming to the ashram have been achieving good passes in their annual exams, thus also showing us the success of the ashram education.

Six new girls in uniform of the Girls' High School that they attend in Kausani.

So far eight new girls have joined the ashram for the new session of classes in 2024, of which two were students who had failed their exams at one of

the Atal Utkrisht Vidyalays. We can already see that in the ashram atmosphere and the education being given to them in their classes, along with the continual encouragement given to them, is already bringing about changes. These girls, feeling downhearted after failing in their education, are now looking happy after coming here. Their interest in their studies and other daily activities is slowly increasing. In this way a new impulse can be seen in their lives. Besides the eight new students who have joined the ashram it is very possible that more will come in the near future.

This time in 2024 saw good exam results for our students in classes VI to XII. In classes X and XII the students take Uttarakhand board exams, for which a great deal of effort is required. As a result of the efforts of the teachers and students the exam results were very good and most of the students achieved first division grades. Two students from class XII will pursue their BA studies and also participate in the one year Sadhana course in Gandhian Thought.

During these days we are inviting applications for girls to join the Sadhana course, and are discussing the various aspects of the course with them. So far six girls who have passed their class XII exams have expressed a positive interest in the course. The new session of this course will formally start in June 2024. The length of the course has been extended and will now run for one year. As always this course will strengthen the conceptual skills of the girls, at the same time teaching them various skills that will strengthen them when seeking employment or enable them to be self-employed.

Visitors from Göttingen (Germany)



During our journey to India in March 2024 we, the Otto-Hahn-Grammar School from Göttingen, had the fantastic opportunity to spend two great days with the girls at the Laxmi Ashram in Kausani. The girls and their teachers invited us in their lovely home and we felt more than welcome.

During those two days we helped the girls with their various tasks in the garden and around the house: we helped cleaning the cowsheds, raked up dry leaves in the forest, sorted rice and helped in the kitchen. It was very interesting to get to know their everyday life, because it is so very different from ours.

Despite the language barrier we were able to communicate and exchange ideas. We asked each other questions about school, our future plans and everyday life. The girls also showed us some Indian dances and we sang some German songs. In their freetime



the girls took the time to teach us some Indian children's games and we really enjoyed playing, running and having fun together.

All in all, we can say we learned a lot on that journey and treasure those meaningful memories. We are grateful that we were part of your community, even if it was just for two days!