

FRIENDS OF LAKSHMI ASHRAM

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NEWS FROM LAKSHMI ASHRAM SANCHAR 116

November 2012

Dear friends,

Even if it is a bit early I want to wish you all *a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.*

This time the newsletter brings:

- Our Hay Making Experiences in 2012
- Gandhi Peace Foundation – Activist Conference in Lakshmi Ashram
- Some Facts about Gandhi Peace Foundation

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.

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



Father Christmas in LA

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

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It is often said that the most important reason for raising livestock in the hills is not for milk, but rather for the compost that they provide, without which the fertility of the terraced fields could not be maintained. The biggest challenge in raising animals in the hills is that of fodder. While during the monsoon months there is abundant green grass, for much of the winter and spring there is very little green fodder available except for the leaves of certain trees such as the Himalayan oak (Banj) and bhimal. Thus the grass that has grown luxuriantly on the open hillsides is cut in the autumn after the rains have cleared and dried for hay, which provides sufficient dry fodder for the cattle right through until the next monsoon.

In the ashram calendar the annual haymaking is a highlight of the year. All the older students and workers are busy from early to late slowly working their way across the hillside, cutting the grass with small sickles, drying it in the warm sunshine, tying it into sheaves, and carrying the sheaves down to be built up into high haystacks. At the same time the younger students assume responsibility for the kitchen and hostel. It is a very busy time for all concerned.

Our Hay Making Experiences in 2012 **Nirmala Pathak and Lalita Negi - Class 9**

After evening prayers on 2nd October (Gandhi's birthday), the teams for haymaking as well as the teams of the small children, who would look after the hostel, were announced. This year there were four teams for haymaking, nine of us in each team. Next day early in the morning we started cutting the grass. Everybody was full of energy and enthusiasm. First of all we cut the grass below the 'pathshala', the cottage where David Bhai and Hansi Didi live. Being the first day this work was quickly done, and we had finished cutting by 10.30 am. Then we set off for the higher part of our land, which we refer to as the 'Old Boundary', for it has been in the Ashram's possession for a very long period. This area has a dense forest, but very few pine trees. It does have a large number of trees of oak, rhododendron, cedar, kafal (bay berry), kankoo, sweet chestnut, mehal (wild Himalayan pear)



etc. This place is very beautiful, but the land here is very uneven and very rocky. We also had great fun cutting the grass on the steep slopes. There was some level land also. We were making good progress in our work as the days went by, but then some girls started falling sick while some others were sitting their half-yearly exams. However we did not lose our courage and we continued quickly cutting the grass as enthusiastically as ever.

After some days the grass in the 'Old Boundary' was completely cut, and we then went to cut the grass in the "New Boundary", which lies in the forest. The New Boundary area is isolated and peaceful, which is why we call it 'Shantiban' or 'Forest of Peace'. It does not get so much sunshine there, and so cutting the grass is an enjoyable experience. There are tall pines there as well as some rhododendron trees. The land here is quite level when compared to the 'Old Boundary'. From the 'New Boundary' the Himalayan peaks to the north are clearly visible. However early in the morning it is quite cold here. The Katyur Valley below is quite mesmerizing. The different coloured big and small cottages scattered across the landscape make it very colourful. We love the scenic beauty found here. Packs of jackals also sometimes wandered in the Shantiban. While we were working they would roam around freely and we used to shout out their name – “Siyar – Siyar!”.



It had now started to get much colder so we hurried to finish the haymaking. On Saturday 20th October we completed cutting the grass there after some ten days of hard work. That day we had lots of fun and enjoyed ourselves a lot. Now all that remained was to gather the dried hay from the remaining half of the 'New Boundary', so we decided to do this the following morning. While some of us tied the grass into sheaves, others carried the sheaves down to be built up into haystacks. We enjoyed ourselves no end tying up the grass, but at times were a little work-shy! How our cows will love eating this hay!

But now both the boundaries looked very bare, and it was getting colder day by day. All of us took a well-earned rest on 21st October, and then the following day our regular programme of afternoon classes began again.

Gandhi Peace Foundation (GPF) - Activist Conference Lakshmi Ashram, Kausani, 2-5 November 2012

The annual conference of the state level centres of the Gandhi Peace Foundation (GPF) was inaugurated by the lighting of the wick lamps, and the singing of activist songs by the girl students. Basanti Behn of Lakshmi Ashram and Basant Pande, representing the Kausani centre of Gandhi

Peace Foundation, welcomed the delegates from various centres. Kanti Behn told the participants about the conference location – Lakshmi Ashram, and about Sarala Behn, the founder of the ashram. Basanti Behn then described the work being done by the Ashram in the surrounding villages.

In her keynote speech the respected Radha Behn discussed the programmes being undertaken by the GPF and various aspects of the areas of activity, including the constructive work done with children to strengthen their system of values. She laid emphasis on the need to take up long-term programmes, in particular such programmes that are common for both the urban and rural areas. She added that the centres should also pursue national issues along with local ones.

The conference was conducted under the able guidance of Mr. Ramesh Sharma – the national coordinator of various centres of Gandhian Philosophy. He told about the centres of Gandhi Peace Foundation across the country, and especially about the peace and relief work being done at the present time in Assam under the leadership of Mr. Chandan Pal.



During the three day meeting the issue of communal violence in Assam was discussed in length along with the possible efforts that can be taken up at the national level, both in terms of constructive work as well as movement work. The renowned social activist of West Bengal, Mr. Chandan Pal, who is leading the peace efforts in Assam, said that responding with violence against violence cannot be the solution. For peace and a new era the desire for revenge must be replaced by the desire for change. He expressed his anguish against the organisations that are provoking the riots. He described how hundreds of people had been killed during the riots between the Bodo community and the Muslim community, and how thousands of houses from both the communities had been either pulled down or burned to ashes. In describing their efforts for bringing about peace in Assam, he told that they had conducted separate meetings with both the communities, and had inspired local social activists to participate in the relief work being undertaken. He also called for the participation of the activists in the Gandhi Peace Foundation.

Mr. Surendra Kumar, Secretary of the GPF, echoed the same feeling, saying that the Gandhi Peace Foundation is committed to constructive work and establishing peace and harmony wherever there is unrest in the country. The issue of Assam was taken up as the national agenda in the

conference, and each centre is expected to send at least two volunteers to Assam for peace work.

On 5th November all the participants visited Lakshmi Ashram's area of field activities in the valley of the Mansa Nali, a tributary of the Kosi River. Here they were able to see the efforts being undertaken by Lakshmi Ashram for forest preservation, as well as promotion of alternative farming practices, and had the opportunity to interact with the women working there in those villages. On returning to Kausani, the older girls from Lakshmi Ashram along with the activists from the Gandhi Peace Foundation took out a rally in the main market in Kausani. Activists from different states raised slogans in their mother tongue in support of preservation of forests and in opposition to alcohol. They appealed to the people to work together for these issues. The rally culminated in a street meeting in the centre of Kausani.

Gandhi Peace Foundation

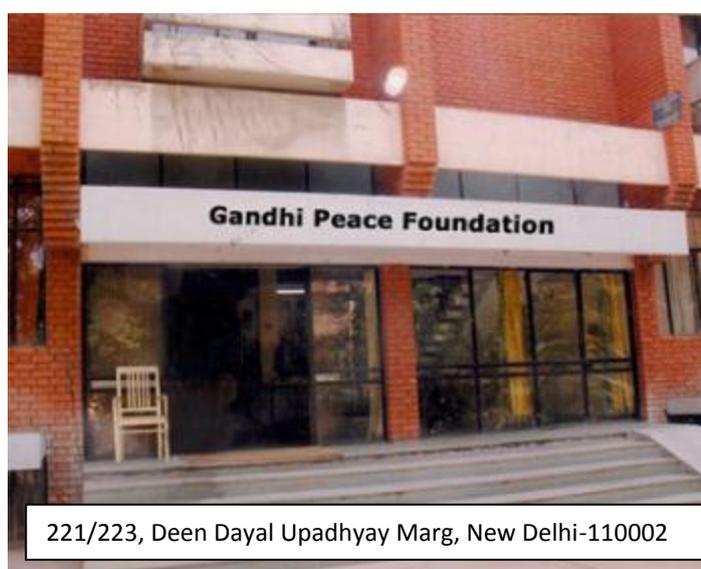
Some facts about Gandhi Peace Foundation, where Radha Bhatt from Lakshmi Ashram is the chairperson:

The Gandhi Peace Foundation (GPF) was born in the late 1950s when an escalating nuclear arms race threatened man and civilization. For Gandhi, peace in the ordinary sense was never the first imperative. As a relentless fighter for truth (the law of life) and justice, his actions often brought suffering and sacrifice, although he always fought without

violence. GPF represents an attempt to synthesize the Gandhian imperatives of truth, justice and nonviolence with the atomic-age imperatives of universal peace and human survival. It marks the beginning of a long quest — the quest for peace with justice through nonviolence.

In his unique and inspiring leadership of the struggle for freedom in India, Mahatma Gandhi showed the way for a new life based on the values of Satya (truth) and Ahimsa (nonviolence), with the inevitable corollary that good ends can be achieved only through good means, both in individual and group life. He applied these methods to the national struggle involving millions of people and thereby helped them to achieve freedom without hatred or armed conflict. The peaceful struggle ended in a settlement which achieved the object aimed at and yet left behind no trail of bitterness. Although Gandhiji applied these methods in India, he held that they were applicable everywhere for the solution of any kind of conflict, social, national or international. Though Gandhiji's teachings and example have so far touched the mind and life of only a few, there is the faith that in course of time they will affect the thoughts and actions of millions throughout the world and usher in a new way of life for mankind.

The Gandhi Peace Foundation is being formed for the furtherance of this objective and to promote the acceptance by all people of the principles of truth and nonviolence in the conduct of social, national and international affairs.



The objects of the Gandhi Peace Foundation are:

- to arrange for the study and research on the teaching and practice of Gandhiji in the first instance and of allied thought and action, with a view to affecting the thoughts and actions of millions throughout the world and thereby helping them to attain or maintain peaceful, harmonious, and happy social relations without hatred or violence of any kind;
- to further and promote the way of life as reflected in the precept and practice of Mahatma Gandhi, based on the values of Satya (truth) and Ahimsa (nonviolence), with the inevitable corollary that good ends can be achieved only through good means, both in individual and social life in the broadest sense of the term;
- to make attempts to show that the peaceful methods and means used by Gandhiji in South Africa and India are capable of being applied for the solution of any kind of conflict, social, national or international;
- to promote and propagate the acceptance by all people of the principles of truth and nonviolence in the conduct of social, national and international affairs;
- To establish an international centre or centres of study and research in Gandhian thought and techniques of action — Satyagraha — with special reference to the principles of nonviolence as evident from the study of the history and philosophy of India and of the world;
- to investigate and study in cooperation with other agencies, where necessary, methods for the application of nonviolence in social, national, racial and international affairs;
- to provide information, counsel and assistance in this field to teaching institutions in the form of research fellowships, travel grants, library books and equipment, and act as a coordinating centre;
- to assist in developing an informed public opinion on the principles and techniques of non-violence among all peoples;
- to collect, preserve and publish in various languages Gandhiji's writings and speeches;
- to publish the approved research material including the theses of the research scholars or such other material collected or obtained from other national or international resources;
- to publish journals, books, booklets, literature, etc., and such other communication media material for the propagation of Gandhiji's teachings with special reference to their application to the current social, national and international problems;
- to establish and maintain contacts between institutions and persons in India and abroad working on the basis of Satya (truth) and Ahimsa (nonviolence);
- to collect and keep for study, literature on the various aspects of Shanti (peace), Satya (truth) and Ahimsa (nonviolence) and to encourage the creation of a group of thinkers and writers on these subjects;
- to take up projects for study and research on basic social, economic and political problems affecting our country or other countries with a view to the proper understanding and solution of these problems in a peaceful and nonviolent manner;
- to make provision for the training of selected persons for the purpose of the fulfilment and carrying out of the objectives of the Foundation; and
- generally to take all necessary action decided upon by the Governing Body to attain the objectives of the Foundation.