

Two Blossom Bus Graduates ask their Fathers: "Can we go to college?"

By Wesley Samms - Grants Manager



Renu (left) and Priyanka with their fathers

It is now March, and in Haryana, India winter is thawing, festivals are beginning, and spring is coming to blossom. In India, this is the time when students take final exams and move on to the next grade. And so it is that Lotus Outreach's own spring blossoms are blooming- the Blossom Bus girls are graduating high school!

In the next month, the very first group of Blossom Bus riders is finishing the twelfth grade. Many of the 34 young women who are finishing this spring are the very first women in their families to complete high school!

Two such young graduates are Priyanka and Renu. Although they are excited for their achievement of graduating high school, they feel disheartened that their parents will probably soon ask them to marry after they have completed school examinations. For many girls in this area of India, marriage is common as early as age 14, but these young adults still yearn for independence and further learning.

With no interest in marriage, Priyanka and Renu asked us to approach their fathers about continuing their education at the women's university 20 kilometers away.

Twenty years ago in Mewat, only two percent of women belonging to the minority Muslim "Meo" population even attained literacy, but now Priyanka and Renu women want to continue to forgo marriage so that they can go to college – a level of education even their fathers have not seen.

The local women's college is 20 km away from the Durgapur village, and given the dangerous conditions for women travelling alone, as it is for the other Blossom Bus riders, it is too dangerous for young women to be riding public buses alone.

The two young women hesitate to ask their fathers if they should be allowed to take this almost unprecedented first step towards a post-secondary education. Priyanka's older sister was married after she had completed high school at age 18, an exceptional enough achievement in a young Meo woman's life, but Priyanka doubted that her father would allow her to remain unwed and in school. She and Renu both asked us to speak to their fathers on their behalf.

Speaking together with the two young women and their fathers, we proposed that should the girls be allowed to attend college, the Blossom Bus program would assure their safe transport to and from the college. Without any hesitation, both fathers nodded in agreement!

Our surprise at the fathers' answer must have been obvious, because the fathers explained that they enthusiastically support the education of girls, but they had only been concerned for their daughters' safety in transit. Their progressive mentality is part of a cultural shift that might not ever have happened in this area if not for Lotus Outreach's Blossom Bus!

Lotus Outreach is beginning to move the Blossom Bus program forward, providing college transportation to as many of the 34 Blossom Bus graduates as possible.

You can support these girls in shattering the glass ceiling by donating to support the program! Just \$10 can cover the transportation costs of one of these girls for her first month of college!

Thank you for everything you do to support Lotus Outreach and women's education!