

# Stories from Blossom Bus

By Alexandra Land - Executive Assistant



Lotus Outreach's Blossom Bus service, unique in the State of Haryana, was recently featured by Gov't of Haryana at a presentation of best practices in Education to the Indian Ministry of Human Resources and Development (MHRD). The program addresses lack of safe forms of transport to school for girls. Lack of transportation is one of the root causes of poor attendance and drop outs for girls across India.

**In this quarter we continue to carry 254 girls to all levels of secondary schooling as well as 20 young Blossom Bus women, now in their 20s that have graduated high school and are now attending Colleges some 10 kms from their homes. These girls are from poor villages and many are the first in their family to be achieving a secondary and/or college education.**

Here below are stories from three Blossom Bus community role models and one story from a father of two Blossom Bus girls.

**I am Ritu**, resident of village Bhanguri in Hathin block and I am studying in Saraswati Mahila College Palwal. I was travelling to college by Auto rickshaw and was facing problem like harassment by boys. It was not safe to walk to college as it is too far from my village and I was not able to reach college on time. Due to this problem villagers hesitate to send their daughters to college and the girls have to leave studies after school. The girls have two options in these situations, either face the harassment if you want to go to college or drop out. Now with Blossom Bus made available, we do not have to wait for Auto and we reach college on time and we are all very happy.

**My name is Sapna, daughter of Sukhbir.** The Blossom Bus being provided by Lotus Outreach is very useful for us. We are able to save a lot of time which was wasted earlier waiting for Autos which is not a regular feature and we were not able to reach college on time. This time we can utilize for our studies. We used to reach college late without the Bus and the teachers refused to mark our attendance, this problem is now solved because of the Bus. Our parents also were worried when we used to come home late due to no public transportation. Now our parents are also happy and feel comfortable because of the Blossom Bus. We are able to continue our studies due to Blossom Bus and request that the service be continued in the interest of girls who are prone to drop out in absence of a safe transport.

**My name is Sarita, daughter of Birbal**, resident of village Bhanguri. I passed grade 12 three years ago and could not go to college as there was no safe public transport available from the village. The buses between Bhanguri and Palwal

were badly crowded and arrived at irregular times. My parents were not satisfied with the situation and I was forced to sit at home though I wanted to go to college.

Last year after my younger sister Babita passed her grade 12 exam, we came to know that there is a safe bus being made available by Lotus Outreach to transport girls to college for free. We both then enrolled in Saraswati Girls College in Palwal and now we both are studying in 2<sup>nd</sup> year graduation course.

The Blossom Bus is a blessing for us, we hope to complete our graduation with this facility and we are hoping to study further also. Therefore, we request that this facility may be continued and even enhanced to accommodate more girls as there are many more girls who have dropped out after passing school and are willing to attend college for further studies but are sitting at home as there is no bus facility available to cater to the demand.

**My name is Birbal**, resident of Bhanguri and **father of Sarita**. I am a poor man and earn my livelihood through working as laborer doing odd jobs in village in Palwal. I feel happy because both my daughters are now studying in college. I could not have sent my daughters to college because of meager earnings and my elder daughter dropped out after passing school. She could enroll in the college after losing one year only because the Blossom Bus. Blossom Bus encouraged me to get both my daughters enrolled in the college and they are now studying together and are happy. I would like to allow my daughters to even study for Masters Degree if the Blossom Bus will be available to them in future also. **Thank you.**

*From these sincere stories we can be sure that Blossom Bus is providing hope and safety to the lives of girls in India. Thank you to all that support this important cause. With your*

*partnership we continue to make a difference in these young girls' lives.*



*From left to right, Sarita, Babit, Sapna and Ritu*



*Blossom Bus riders jump for joy!*