

GONPA GAZETTE

How can February, the shortest month of the year, with an extra day this year, be over already? Because time flies? Because time is just a concept?

My US visit was half over on 25 February. Yes, I am now on the downside, leaving early 16 April. "Are you enjoying your stay?" "Yes. To not, would only cause suffering."

"Do you miss the monks?"

"No, that would only cause suffering...but I look forward to seeing them when I return."

I am seeing many changes in myself this trip: my priorities, my ability to relax and enjoy, my capacity for acceptance and compassion, and mostly how I use my mind. I am so grateful when I see positive changes in myself.

This month has been one of preparing seemingly endless cups of masala chai and Indian meals for friends. I am delighted to share my love of Indian food, and to see friends' delight in their appreciation for it.

This month has also been one of diverse spiritual experiences: attending the Serbian Orthodox Church, an Episcopalian service, and a Buddhist teaching in Olympia with my American teacher. Each time I have the good fortune to attend a religious event I try to do so mindfully: hearing the words and noting their meanings, making for a deeper experience. Never did I ever imagine I would choose to 'go to church' as a leisure time activity, but I must admit I actually like it!



A vague semblance of a Eugene sunset.



"My favourite Indian snacks!"

A highlight of the month was having Ashish Nayan come and visit. When are we both on the same continent at the same time? Since he has only been to my family's home in Maine, I invited him to visit me in Eugene, and to tour the University of Oregon and Lane Community College.

To Ashish's credit he navigated the bus from Bangor, ME to and from Boston, MA himself, as well as the direct flight to Portland, OR. I arranged his itinerary this way so he could practice traveling solo, as he will have to do this summer when he visits India.

First on Ashish's agenda was meeting my friends with teen children. I didn't realize I still any, since many are grandparents. Now he knows peers in Eugene!

The two days of college tours and meetings were informative but exhausting for me because I had to pay attention, comprehend and understand so I could help Ashish with his questions later. Each night friends/sponsors came over to meet him and have Indian dinner.



The start of the University of Oregon tour.

After, Ashish was speaker at my Rotary club. The club sponsored some of his travel expenses when he first came to Lee Academy in 2014. A dynamic speaker, he made an excellent slide show, 'My Life Journey from India to America', which was well received.



Exuberantly speaking to a group of over 25.

We never made it to the coast due to the weather, but we did make it to an Indian restaurant and to the Indian import store.

My deepest heartfelt thanks to all of you who have donated to The Puppy Project, Chauari Village Project, and to Ashish Nayan's 18th birthday on 12 March.

Although most donations have been unspecified as to their use, one sponsor is kindly providing new uniforms for all 165 students at Sun Rise Public School!

I am putting together a Walmart gift card for Ashish's birthday. Please let me know if you would like to contribute to the card or send him something on your own. His address is: Ashish Nayan, 26 Winn Rd., Lee, ME, 04455.

Below is the 2016 Chauari Village wish list. Checks can be made to Leigh Files; and mailed to 4059L Donald St, Eugene, OR 97405; or funds transferred into my Indian account.

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| • Boundary wall around school & clinic | \$ 5,341 |
| • Free standing, self-contained kindergarten classroom | \$ 4,871 |
| • Book bags (\$475) | \$ 475 |
| • School trip | \$ 176 |
| • Hand pump repair (8) | \$ 206 |
| • School roof repair | \$ 215 |
| • Multi-vitamins for 1 year | \$ 2,377 |
| • Menstrual pads for 1 year | \$ 115 |
| • 3 sewing machines to learn self-sufficiency skills | \$ 257 |
| • 1 lockstitch machine to learn self-sufficiency skills | \$ 103 |

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