

ABSTRACT: KRISHNA'S STORY

– A CASE STUDY OF AN AVERAGE ILEAD-ALUMNI

Krishna Sharma Singh is a 21-years-old woman, who lives in a big Indian city. In her family there are her father, mother, little sister, two older brothers, sister-in-law and her 3-years-old son child. They live in a poor slum area sharing the same flat, which has two medium-sized rooms. Krishna isn't married yet, though her parents are planning her marriage.

“There were nothing to do”

Krishna has done 11th grade in school. After that she has just mainly been sitting at home, when not helping her mother in household tasks. She was very shy and calm person. Krishna didn't know what to do with her life – or actually, she didn't know much about life outside her family and local community. As after school, she mainly stopped going out and remained indoors in the family house.

“We should do something, not waste our time at home”

One day her father brought her a brochure he had been given by one of his friends. The flyer was about “iLEAD” training, which included training in beautician, IT or automobiles. Also training on computers and personality development were included. “Why are you sitting here – go take this opportunity and go do something with your life” her mother and father encouraged her. And she did – she did join the iLEAD. Her family's support of her joining was important to her, though her brothers were a little worried about her movement to the training centre alone. Though Krishna convinced her brothers that it is a good training and she wants to join. So at first they accompanied her travel to the centre, but then during the training as she gained in confidence she began to travel to the training centre just by herself.

“They have changed from cocoon to butterfly level”

In three-months-long iLEAD-training Krishna learned about facial massage, skin treatment, hair-styles, waxing and other basics of a job of a beautician. Her teachers become idols to her and they cheered up and boosted her energy. As did the other iLEAD-students around her. Although not only beautician related knowledge, Krishna gained in skills on use of computers and learned some basic spoken English as well. While participating Gossip Circle for Empowerment -sessions Krishna become more aware of issues on women rights and gender equality. Although, the most important she built up during iLEAD is the shining in her eyes for a brighter future and smile on her face, as she has gained in self-confidence. As the other girls built up in self-certainty too – and Krishna made new friends during the training. Now she is able to do anything – and she has the confidence to do so as well.

"Best is that I am earning a salary and interested in this field I am working in"

Now, after four months of iLEAD-training Krishna is working in a beauty parlour. She is still learning new techniques in a job of a parlour, though she isn't a fresher either. Her salary is quite average, Rs. 5308 per a month. Most of her pay she gives to her family to use it for household purchases. The Family's economical situation has got a bit better now, when Krishna is also working. The situation isn't the worst, though the money isn't burning in the pockets either. Krishnas's views are recognized and usually the family has a conversation together before purchasing anything. Finally, the mother and father have the last word on family's economy.

"I love my culture and I follow my culture"

Krishna works for six days a week. On Monday, when it's her day off, she studies via correspondence her 12th grade exams. On a typical weekday Krishna wakes up at 6:30am. Then she helps her mother to prepare breakfast and to clean the house a bit. She helps her sister-in-law in other household tasks and washing the laundry before leaving to work at 9:30am. She reaches her workplace at 10am and stays there until 7pm. When she get back home. Krishna either helps her mother cooking the dinner and then watches some TV or sees her friends. She goes to sleep 10pm. Krishna's brothers do help in some minor household tasks, for example in cutting the onion or making the chapati, but the household tasks are mainly done by the women in the house.

"Mind-concentration"

Now after iLEAD Krishna feels she is more free and independent – and so do her family feel about her as well. They say Krishna is now more open, talkative, and taking responsibility of the family's well-being. Taking responsibility and doing her part for the family is what Krishna wants to do – now, before getting married. After getting married she wants to continue working – and if her husband refuses it, she has courage to persuade him to let her go working. Employment and working means to Krishna that she is able to be self-depedent and make choices of her own. Krishna thinks a man and a woman are equal. She believes what men are able to do, so are women as well – and the other way around. She thinks that in the future she is able to combine family and work life. She wants to make choices of her own and be independent in the future as well.

"Don't stop this kind of course, people are not getting it from anywhere else"

Krishna wants to give something back to the society and her family, so she is helping her family at home and aiding the family with the salary. She feels she is doing a good thing – and she feels more important now. Working gives her good self-confidence, as well as her family's support. In work she is certain, because she knows what she is doing when a client asks for a certain treatment. Krishna has recommended iLEAD to her friends and she has also participated a few time in CMD – Community Mobilization Drive to promote iLEAD in the centre's neighbourhood. One could say that Krishna has become empowered.

"Business first, then marriage"

Although most of Krishna's community members appreciate her working, all do not. Mainly other, older women are questioning her working by saying "why do you work? You are mature – get married!" Although, Krishna doesn't want to. First she wants to form a parlour of her own and then look for marriage. She will name her own parlour after her parents. Krishna feels that her opinions and speech is now betterly listened to in her family and in the neighbourhood, as she has become better in persuading people. People do respect her working and being independent as well – and so, she has become a rolemodel to her little sister and her friends in the community. They also want to join the training and begin working!

"A lot of change has happened!"

This case study of Krishna's is fully production of imagination. It is how things could go or could be. Even though this story is not true, it could be. A case of Krishna's is an example from a typical case study that were encountered in the field during the time of research and interviewing various persons and listening to their lifestories. Krishna could be a general example, how usually an iLEAD student's life has been before the training – and how it went after the training. As an average, or an abstract, even though Krishna story is work of imagination, at the same time it is very true.

The minor titles used in Krishna's case study are actual quotes from the interviews.