



## Story of the Month: January 2010

### From Scholarship Recipient to an IT Professional – Deepa’s Journey



At first, Deepa Rawat, of Quarab village, comes across as a shy girl, who often breaks into giggles. But probe deeper and you’ll find a restrained, mature person. With a mentally ill mother, partially handicapped father and younger siblings to take care of, her success is nothing short of a wonder. After years of struggle to complete her studies, which she managed with the a scholarship that Chirag offered in partnership with Room to Read, she is currently working as an editor in B2R, a rural Business Process Outsourcing unit based in Orakhan village.

When she was in class 8, Deepa’s father, Madan Singh Rawat, who was a dealer of herbs, met with an accident, leaving him partially crippled. Having lost the primary source of livelihood, the family was faced abject poverty. At that time, recalls Deepa, this meant an end to her education. “I think if it hadn’t been for Chirag, I would have dropped out of school. We did not have any money and I had lost hope of studying further. Chirag offered me the Room To Read scholarship just when I needed it the most,” she says.

From 2005-06, when she was in class 9, Deepa’s education was completely supported by the programme. Sadly, in 2007-08, when she was in class 11, her mother was afflicted with a mental illness, which left the whole family distraught. This meant additional work. But somehow, with the unflagging cooperation of her father, she managed to finish her class 12 in 2009, with science and maths. At present Deepa is pursuing her Bachelors of Arts (with maths) as a private candidate from Kumaun University.

Deepa then applied for a job in B2R, which was hiring trainees at the time. Out of nearly 50 applicants, she was among those selected. After a three month training programme, she was appointed an employee in November 2009. She likes the environment in the office and finds her work “exciting”.

Today, she is a confident young woman. When asked how working with B2R changed her life, she says, “Earlier I was very shy and hesitant, but today I can talk freely with people and move about in the society more confidently.” The people in her village have been sympathetic and her teachers often cite her example to other children. “Even today they encourage me to achieve more and to never look back,” she adds.



Yet, some people aren't too happy about the fact that she has to stay out of home the whole day and Deepa often has to bear the brunt of unkind remarks. But she isn't disturbed by that. "I know the difficulty our family goes through. Now I've become indifferent to such remarks," she says.

While studying in school, Deepa gave tuitions to other girls. As part of her scholarship, she learned candle-making, tie-and-die and how to make soft-toys. She is now thinking of applying for a Room to Read scholarship for her sister.

Deepa now wants to complete her Masters and become a teacher. "While I was in school, I wanted to do a B-Tech or get into forensics. But now, since I don't have science as a subject in my BA, I want to become a teacher," she says.

Deepa feels strongly about women's place in the society. "I believe a woman is independent and should be treated so. She can take good care of herself and her husband, financially too. If I were to marry an unemployed man, I'd willingly feed and clothe him," she says, filling you with wonder at the passion that lies underneath the demure exterior.

*Contributed by Pawan Saluja*