

**FRIENDS OF LAKSHMI ASHRAM**

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**NEWS FROM LAKSHMI ASHRAM  
SANCHAR 144**

May 2023

Dear friends,

Here is news again from Lakshmi Ashram.

**This Sanchar has the following articles:**

- Short Films Festival – a great source of learning and inspiration by Class XII Students
- Save the Suyal River Padyatra by Class X
- Board meeting for the Lakshmi Ashram friends 6.11.22 by Ruth Sillemann.

It still costs 1725 Danish kroner and the subscription 75 Danish kroner to be a sponsor (about 230 Euro and 10 Euro) = 1800 Danish kroner. Some people send money once a year and others divide the amount during the year. We will put 75 kroner into the administration account the first time of the year, we receive money from someone. This also applies if you send amounts that are not earmarked. All will pay the same amount in subscription and receive the Sanchar.

We use little money for administration. The money is transferred directly from our bank to the Ashram's bank, so no money will be lost – only bank charges. The surplus from the administration account will of course be sent to Lakshmi Ashram.

Thank you for all the donations. Any amount is received with pleasure. Contributions that are not earmarked are also very welcome. The money will be used for educational material, study tours, education of the teachers etc. You can send money by a crossed cheque or by bank transfer – see the top of this letter.

Best wishes,

Lone Poulsen

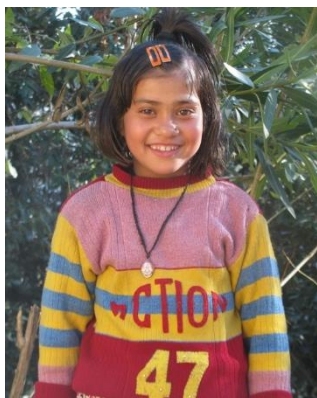
Friends of Lakshmi Ashram can save money, if you would be satisfied to receive a mail with the Sanchar. You can also see the Sanchar in the homepage. If you want to get a mail instead of receiving a letter, then please send your e-mail address to: [lonepoulsen2620@gmail.com](mailto:lonepoulsen2620@gmail.com) (*new mail address*)

# Sanchar 144

## Short Films Festival – a great source of learning and inspiration

### Class XII Students

*In September a very special programme was presented through the efforts of Dr. Parashar, who arranged with the well-known film activist, Sanjay Joshi, to organise a Film Festival with Lakshmi Ashram and the Central School in Kausani. Unfortunately inclement weather prevented the showing of films at the Central School; however our students benefitted immensely from being introduced to the world of the short film over two days and appreciating their power for conveying a simple message very effectively. Some of our class XII students have shared their reflections on this festival and some of the films that they saw. (The photos are taken years ago).*



#### **Diksha Bora:**

A two-day Children’s Film Festival was organised on 16-17 September, and Sanjay Joshi was invited from Delhi to present this programme. For a good many years Sanjay Joshi has been showing a wide range of films in the schools. During these two days we were shown a good number of short films which were very interesting and inspiring. One film Pee = Shit (Amudhan R.P. 2003) was a documentary on the manual scavengers of Madurai in Tamil Nadu, made not so long ago. In this film we had seen how in some parts of our country, because of a lack of toilets, people were defecating in the open. Then the manual scavengers came along to clean up the mess. Seeing the film depicting the daily life of such a worker I felt very distressed that she had to clean up the mess caused by others, and that too without the necessary protective equipment. Seeing this film I felt that we should be raising our voices against this problem, that we must speak out strongly that this practice is wrong and this system must be changed. This film helped us to understand the state of our country.

Another film that inspired me immensely was Neighbours (Norman Maclaren 1952). Its story is as follows – a flower is growing on the border of their two lawns, and both of them claim it as theirs. To stake their claims they start to fight one with the other, and in the end die. We learn from this how limited is man’s understanding. Man wants to stake his claim to everything, and there is no limit to what he will do to achieve this. People are not ready to learn how to relinquish their claims, indeed they will continually try to claim what is not even rightfully theirs.



#### **Puja Kabdaula:**

While the film ‘Neighbours’ in one sense was simply a story, but in real life we can see how two brothers find themselves fighting over some minor issue as a result of their selfishness. All the films that Sanjay showed us were very inspirational. If I was at home then I would never have the opportunity to see such fine films full of inspiration. These films helped greatly in increasing my personal understanding of the world that we live in.



**Payal Mehra:**

I particularly enjoyed one of the films in the series of Open Doors films. This particular film that greatly inspired me was the story of a Mongolian boy. We learned how any child sees a particular object in his own personal way and makes use of it as he sees fit. This boy had found a helmet like hat, which he took to the river, filled it with water and carried it back to his family yurt. Then he saw a similar hat on someone's head, and enthusiastically went up to this man, who gave the child the hat to wear. This made the small boy really happy. The unknown item that he had made use of to fetch water in, he was now wearing! This he found really amusing. Now he realized that this unknown item was actually something to wear on the head! This short film had great depth to it.



**Tanuja Pilkhwai**

In today's dazzling world these short films play the role of giving inspiration. In these days hundreds of thousands of films are being made in the country but in most films it does not seem that we gain inspiration or knowledge.

We enjoyed watching films just a few minutes long and then had the opportunity to discuss together what we had seen, the chance to understand the reality of our country and the world. Before this all of us had seen many films, but the reality is that a true film is one that fills the watcher's heart with knowledge. From these small films we gained an insight into our environment and surroundings, into the attitudes of society. If we have the opportunity to see such films, then they can have a deep impact on our mind and on our surroundings. Living in the ashram we are fortunate to have the chance to see, hear and understand so much.

**Payal Mehra and Diksha Bora:**

Films are immensely helpful in developing our powers of thinking, understanding and expressing ourselves. This film festival was extremely beneficial for us. We are all indeed very fortunate in living here in Lakshmi Ashram, and thus having many such opportunities. We express our heartfelt thanks to Sanjay Bhai, who presented each of these films to us in such a fine manner, and through him our powers of thinking were greatly enhanced.



**Riya Upadhyay:**

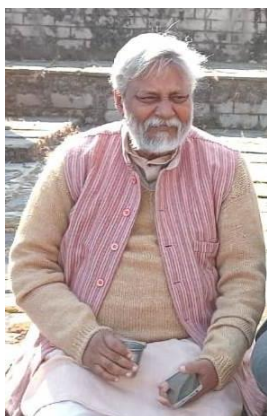
We had the opportunity over two days to see a good number of short films. Some may have only been a few minutes long, yet they inspired me a great deal. On the TV we watch three hour long films, and very often in these long films we truly get no inspiration whatsoever, nothing other than a few hours of entertainment. Yet the benefits of watching films should be that the viewer gets some new inspiration in their lives and the chance to learn something of relevance. In viewing the films shown to us by Sanjay Bhai I came to understand that really short films too can inspire our lives in totality.

# Save the Suyal River Padyatra

## Class X

On 16 February all eight of us students in class X, along with Asha Didi, went from Kausani to Almora to take part in the three day programme of the Save the Suyal River Padyatra. When we reached the bus station in Almora then a young man working with the organisers of the padyatra came to pick us up. He took us to the Shivalik Hotel where accommodation had been arranged for all of us. This hotel was very big, and we were all taken aback to see just how big it was. We had never imagined that we would be staying in such a big hotel! That evening we took our evening meal in the hotel and then went quickly to bed.

The next morning, 17 February, we were all ready at seven o'clock to take our seats in the bus that was to take us to a village close to the Suyal River, from where our padyatra was to begin. Along with us in the bus were also all those other people who were to participate in this programme to save the Suyal River. Meeting all these people we came to understand that people had come from far and wide to take part. The organiser of this programme was Dr. Vasudha Pant. She was organising this programme through her Almora based organisation, Green Hills Trust. Shri Rajendra Singh



(photo) had come all the way from Rajasthan to take an active part in this programme. He is known nationwide as 'Jal Purush' or 'Water Man'. He has played an active role and done a lot of work in saving rivers across the whole of India. The Almora legislator in the state assembly, Shri Manoj Tiwari, Professor Jivan Singh Rawat, representatives from various social organisations, along with local students, were all taking part. Shri Rajendra Singh, 'Jal Purush', gave us a special slogan – "Neer, Nari, Nadi" meaning "Water, Women, Rivers" – highlighting the special role of women in protecting our water resources and rivers. He told us all that we have to save or protect these three. This slogan filled all of us with great enthusiasm.

All those people taking part in this programme were really happy and excited, very enthusiastic to revitalise the Suyal River. Among all those taking part, we were by far the youngest. We talked with people in the bus and sang songs to save our rivers and the environment. We first arrived in Bamaswal, where a meeting was organised in the historic Trinetra Mahadev (Trinetreshwar) Temple, in which everybody introduced themselves. We were told of the objectives of the padyatra. Our class



sang a lot of songs which made everyone very happy and they were inspired by our songs. We also raised a number of slogans on the need to save our water resources. All our class were really full of enthusiasm. The students from the nearby school were also present in this meeting. Then we went from village to village, singing lustily and also raising slogans. Several meetings also took place. Wherever we went we were given a great deal of respect. In the meetings we were sat on the seats in the front line.

Several YouTube activists were accompanying the padyatra and took our interviews. Two people were from a group called Ansuni Aawaaz (Unheard Voices) who make videos for YouTube. They were asking us what our experiences on the padyatra were, what benefits participating brought, etc. Reporters from the local press also talked with us.

This day's padyatra concluded in the Hanuman temple, where a large number of people had gathered, including many who had not participated in the padyatra during the day. Below the temple was the confluence of the Suyal and Kosi rivers, where there were some really large rocks on which people were sitting and enjoying the atmosphere. Then at six o'clock evening worship began in a very moving spirit. After the worship was over offerings (*prasad*) were distributed to all those present. From there we returned to the hotel after a very long and eventful day.

The following morning the three-day programme concluded with an open meeting, an opportunity for all those present to raise questions about the Suyal River. These were all answered by the organiser of the programme, Dr. Vasudha Pant, Rajendra Singh (Jal Purush), Professor Jivan Singh Rawat and Bhupendra Valdiya. The question also arose of what we individually can do to save the Suwal River. Dr. Vasudha Pant took the suggestions made by those present. Together everyone sought to decide on what measures could be undertaken. Most people felt that efforts should be made to undertake as much planting of trees as possible in the catchment area of the river.

On the Suyal River padyatra we had the opportunity to get to know a good number of people who in various parts of India, as well as in our Uttarakhand, are actively involved our water resources and our rivers. This was our first experience of taking part in a padyatra with so many other people.

When we were ready to leave on 18<sup>th</sup> then the organiser, Dr. Vasudha Pant and others were overwhelmed with emotions. This first experience of a padyatra was very good, with the opportunity to get to know so many people, the chance to see a new area and a new river. All in all the experience was a really exciting one for all of us. The meaning of *Padyatra* is a journey on foot, but the word conveys the sense of seeking to spread awareness in the community by walking from place and interacting with the people.

## **Board meeting for the Lakshmi Ashram friends 6.11.22**

### **Election of director and referent**

Helle Poulsen and Ruth Sillemann

### **The boards report**

Lone Poulsen is, despite illness, operating from Albertslund. There she is taking care of mail- and telephone contact to Lakshmi ashram (LA), publishing the LA magazine Sanchar, and also dealing with money transfers. The magazine is published two-three times a year. Since 2007 Lakshmi Ashram has become an association. That makes it easier to transfer money, and tax-wise it makes it easier.

### **News from LA**

Lone showed pictures sent by David, from the events of the year: The library project in the villages, drama project at LA, grass cutting in the mountains, visit from Gladsaxe College and pictures from an Ayurvedic clinic in the village. There were also pictures from Radha's birthday. She was 89 this year, and she was celebrated at the ashram with all her sisters attending. We saw pictures of memorial candles that were lit for Marie Thøger. As we all know, she has visited the school for so many years. All in all, the daily work at the school is going on as always, but the climate is, like here in Denmark, behaving in more strange ways.

There are no more small children at the school, as in 2007 there was a government regulation that implied that all the children had to attend the local schools. Lone explains that there is a tendency to the girls choosing to stay at LA for a longer time, now that they start at the ashram later.

### **The number of students is as follows:**

11 girls attend class 6-8, 11 girls attend class 9-10, 10 girls attend class 11-12

### **Financial accounting**

There were 46 members in 2021.

We are pt. able keep administration expenses low, as we have free copying.

The accounts were presented and adopted.

### **Subscription**

75 kr. is maintained

### **Proposals**

No proposals are received

### **Board**

Lone Poulsen, Hanne Stenager, Ruth Sillemann.

Board deputy: Helle Poulsen

### **Auditor and deputy auditor**

Claus Broskov Sørensen and Martin Huusfeldt