

## MESSAGES FOR ANKUR KALA'S 30<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY

### **Angela Lee -Singapore:**

"The seeds sown these past 30 years have borne much fruits. My friends and I from Singapore wish to send our heartfelt congratulations on this happy occasion. May God continue to bless all who have worked tirelessly as well as all the women who now have hope because of Ankur Kala.

### **Elsa Kottoor – U.S.A.:**

Ankur Kala began as a tiny seedling and in 30 years has blossomed and grown into a haven for so many women in need of help. The unfolding of this tiny seedling into this seemingly impossible dream of a young Social Work graduate, Annie Joseph, reminds me of Jesus' description of the tiny mustard seed growing into the largest of all trees. There is no doubt that God's hand has been at work in Ankur Kala allowing many women and their families to nestle in its comfort and to fly off to plant more trees. In the years to come we will have to celebrate AnkurKala Ke Ban (Ankur Kala's Forest) a phenomenon that is bound to happen because here is the "Kingdom of God." Congratulations, cheers and blessings to Annie and all the gems of Ankur Kala on their Pearl Jubilee.

### **Francoise Jalais - Kolkata:**

On the occasion of the 30th Anniversary of Ankur Kala, let me thank God for His beautiful family.

I feel privileged and blessed for being part of it.

I just like to say

**Happy Anniversary**

With a special thank to Annie who has been the instrument of God all these years in leading, guiding, inspiring, helping, encouraging and giving hope to so many people.

### **Inger Dejke - Sweden:**

The first time I heard about Ankur Kala was in February 1992. Now I see: this was only 10 years after Ankur Kala started. A person in Calcutta at a café talked about a women's centre in Calcutta and gave the address. His religion was Sikhism. And now Ankur Kala is 30 years old! Congratulations!!!

I travelled in India together with a group of students from Sweden. At our school for adults, Ljungskile folkhögskola, we every year run a four-month-long course including a three-week tour in India, studying peace, justice and environment issues. The course is called "the Course about the World".

Next year 1993 a new group of Swedish students and leaders came to Calcutta. And since that time we have visited Ankur Kala every year. That is 20 times and 20 students from Ljungskile. You see about 400 Swedish persons of different ages – the oldest was a man 78 years old – have taken deep impressions of meeting the busy working, beautiful and friendly women at Ankur Kala.

I was one of the leaders from Sweden and most of the years I had the privilege to visit Ankur Kala. Other leaders were for instance Kajsa Perneman and Eva Erlandsson. We really longed for visiting Ankur Kala and meeting the founder Annie Joseph and many women whom we recognized from year to year. They seem to be family members of Ankur Kala and friends of us

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I can speak for my group members/ students: We admire the women at Ankur Kala very much. Although they come from poor circumstances and a lot of difficulties in the society. they work for a better life for themselves and their families. They are encouraged from their leaders to work in a hard and honest way, not only for themselves but also for others and for a better society. They have self-confidence enough to meet foreigners like us coming from far away and tell us about their lives and showing us the different apartments of Ankur Kala. Of course we speak different languages and have different religions, but we always have a moment sitting together, asking about the Indian way of living and the Swedish. And we can smile together or cry if needed. We can use the universal language of love.

For us coming from a rich country with a lot of possibilities for our lives the inspiring encounter with the Ankur Kala-women will follow us home: We have learnt a lot from you: Never give up! Be helpful and friendly! Good work, good thoughts and prayers will change your life. Take time for stillness and meditation. Share your problems and your dreams. Use singing and dancing to encourage you with joy.

The message from Ankur Kala is already spread like waves from person to person in Kolkata. And also to people in many other countries. Remember the man at the café talking about Ankur Kala, my first wave. And think of all the speeches and talk about Ankur Kala also in Sweden of students willing to share their experiences. With great pleasure I remember when Annie Joseph in the year 2004 visited the west coast of Sweden and met many Swedes eager to buy things made at Ankur Kala and listen to the message how to work for a better future

spirit of hard work

spirit of cheerfulness

spirit of simplicity

I will thank all of you, the Ankur Kala family, for many good meetings and for your encouraging example. Wish you from all my heart a blessed and successful new decade.

Reminding you of a short poem, good to have in mind, written by your great author Rabindranath Tagore:

Hope is the bird

that feels the dawn

and sings in the darkness

**Jenny Amery- U.K.:**

"My warmest congratulations to Ankur Kala for your steadfast and inspirational work passionately taken forward with love over 30 years. You help some of the most marginalised women to find hope, to discover and develop their talents to help themselves, their families and their communities. My brief visits to Ankur Kala over the years have been humbling and inspirational. I wish you all courage and joy for the future."

**Johanna Holzhauser – Germany:**

It is really a big joy that Ankur Kala can celebrate 30 years anniversary.

Ankur Kala is such an important and wonderful initiative, which brought support for so many women in Calcutta, It is such a big success that over all these many years Ankur Kala could continue its strong commitment and could develop many new ideas. Thank you so much to Annie and all those who founded Ankur Kala with her and never give up !

I wish Ankur Kala for the future a lot of perseverance, the blessing of God, many friends and understanding supporters. Here in Germany with some friends we try to support the work of Ankur Kala and we feel very close to you. Congratulations and and many many greetings !

**Kajsa Perneman - Sweden:**

I would like to congratulate Ankur Kala to 30 years of good work.

I have seen your work grow since 1994 and I have always admired the honesty that you show and stand for and I have met so many women who have got hope, dignity and confidence through your work. I wish you all the best for the future.

**Liduiene Heetman - Holland:**

Congratulations with the 30th anniversary of Ankur Kala!! Congratulations with the way you started Ankur Kala - without corruption!

And congratulations for the way that Ankur Kala still exists despite all the serious troubles and Ankur Kala is still flowering. Congratulations to 'all the women' of Ankur Kala - women of Ankur Kala in the villages, women of Ankur Kala in the town of Kolkata, women in the board of Ankur Kala.

I admire the way that you and the other women of Ankur Kala are communicating: despite all the different languages that are used in daily life and work! Congratulations for Val and Deepti and for your sisters also - I think each contributed to the flowering of Ankur Kala.

Of course everybody hopes that Ankur Kala will not be needed in the (near) future...because 'all ' the women then live a life in dignity. But till that moment ....

(I still am a little bit ashamed I could not work for Ankur Kala during the ETFAM fair in 2009 in Eindhoven - Netherlands.)

A lot of love for you! You did so much good ..... I hope you have a good party the 25th of February!

And that everybody enjoys celebrating 30th years of Ankur Kala!

**Mariano Aragón – Spain:**

"Since my first contact with Ankur Kala, in 1994, I perceived two things: work and hope. Hard work, constant, always fighting for a better future. A life with dignity for many women, built on effort and solidarity.

Annie Joseph courage and strength for all you who work in and for Ankur Kala. My best wishes!"

**Nicole Maillard - France:**

I remember, 38 years ago, when I was in Calcutta. I met Annie at the Brothers of Taizé prayer, once in the evening. We spoke together at the end of the prayer, without knowing each other but at the end of what we talk about Annie proposed me to come home at the early morning, just before going to work with in the Mother Teresa centers, because she wanted to learn French.

The house of the parents of Annie was on my walk to work and I used to stop there about half an hour before working, at the begging only sometimes but quite quickly I stopped almost each day. It was in October 1983. I remember her father and the little Deptee. I remember also very well her brother Matthew who was very nice and welcoming.

At the beginning we used to speak French. But quickly we spoke about AK. Annie was at the beginning of what she wanted to build. She spoke about the bad conditions of life of the women in the slum. The difficulties of money the association had. And what project she wanted to reach. I remember also how her father was present to this project.

It opened my heart.

Once Annie took me to the slum and to AK. I have photos I took there with the earliest women working, preparing baticks, learning how to draw on cotton. I remember the roof of the house where there were colors and cottons which dried.

I use those photos each time I want to speak of AK. Even now

Annie gave me some baticks to sell in France. It was the beginning.

At this time it was very difficult to have news, and to send money. There were not internet.....

Annie is a close friend and with her the AK family is very near my life and my thinking.

I didn't come back to India, but it is very near in my memory.

**Peter Wells – U.S.A.:**

Thirty years ago you saw a need, namely, that a multitude of women were living lives without any HOPE, because they had internalised the wrong messages of society and culture, about their own WORTH and VALUE. Today we see ANKURKALA, the fruit of your and your HELPERS' vision and dreams, and much dedication and hard work. Ankurkala has changed the tide for many of our sisters, by EMPOWERING them INDIVIDUALLY and COLLECTIVELY, to define and frame their own lives. I thank you for inviting me to play a very small role in the MOVEMENT THAT IS ANKURKALA. Abundant Blessings!

**Tsjebbe de Vries - Holland:**

As to the 30th anniversary of Ankur Kala, I can only declare that outsiders have no idea how important Ankur Kala has been, not only for the women which were in the programmes all those 30 years, but also family members, neighborhoods profited from the abilities and capacities the women showed as

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leaders, gaining a self confidence and leadership capabilities they were never thought of being able to. To cite Nelson Mandela: "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world."

At the 25th anniversary we sang a song with which words I want to end my contribution:

How could anyone ever tell you, you were anything less than beautiful?

How could anyone ever tell you you were less than whole?

How could anyone fail to notice that your loving is a miraclly?

How deeply you're connected to my soul!

**Vi Cottrell - New Zealand:**

Congratulations to all the dedicated staff and members of Ankur Kala on achieving 30 years of life-changing work for so many women. All of us who have visited you have been touched, not just by what you have achieved, but by the way in which you live and work together and the collective strength you have. We wish for years of peace and achievement ahead for you all.