



Loka News

This Newsletter brings you uplifting stories of an education that connects us with ourselves, with the world around us and with timeless wisdom.

January-July 2025

- > At the beginning of the new academic session in April, 17 lovely new students joined Loka. (See photo above)
- > Festivals uplift the atmosphere, bring joy and create a sense of community. This year Loka celebrated Makar Sankranti, Republic Day, Saraswati Puja and Buddha Purnima.
- > Art1st continued its 3 year teacher training in 2025, led by artist Ashis Palei. The course aims to make teaching & learning more creative at Loka's school, while using local materials and connecting to social issues.
- > Harvests from Loka's farm included wheat, bottle gourd,

sponge gourd, cucumber, chiku, bananas and many delicious mangoes.

- > Artist, educator and long time guest teacher Ita Mehrotra started an online reading circle with grade 6-8 students. During her classes a love for poetry and stories is nurtured while reading, writing and engaging in meaningful conversations together.
- > Shilpi and Madhu have been learning at Loka since childhood and are now teaching Loka's smallest ones as interns. They recently participated in a librarian workshop by Bookworm Goa at Parivartan in north Bihar after which they structured Loka's library and started to conduct reading classes for Loka students.
- > Earlier this year construction of a new toilet building started which will be inaugurated soon.
- > Guests from Korea, Belgium and London stayed in Loka's beautiful

What? Loka is a small school with big dreams. **Where?** At the entrance of a village along the Punpun river in Bihar, India. **Why?** Loka explores (new) ways of learning for a Beautiful, Just and Peaceful World. **Who?** Loka's 100 students aged 4-16, from nursery to grade 8, receive a complete education of Head, Heart & Hand. Older students work at Loka as interns. **How?** At Loka students are equipped to create their livelihoods, empowered to uplift their surroundings and enriched with a sense of purpose.

www.loka.in/info@loka.in

student led guest house.

- > This spring co-founder Charlotte Leech gave Loka presentations in Amsterdam and London.

Upcoming Activities

- > A Design Thinking for Young Changemakers programme by entrepreneur Swati Sharma.
- > An ecological walk along the Punpun river and integrating learning from the river in Loka's curriculum by experiential educator and entrepreneur Aneeta Pathak, co-founder of Anveshan Auroville.
- > Loka interns Shilpi and Madhu. Are starting Wednesday afternoon activities to prevent drop-out by girl students by teaching them new skills and creating a safe and conducive atmosphere for meaningful conversations.

Check out Loka's [Facebook Page](#), [Instagram Account](#) and [LinkedIn Profile](#) for regular updates of a School with Big Dreams in India.



Loka in Images



Handyman Dhanraj gives Loka's old play equipment a new life



Thursday morning presentation by Loka's smallest ones



Luvkush and Ankit harvesting mangoes in the summer season



Junior students participate in Body Movement activities



Walking with a Korean visitor along the local Punpun river trail



Shilpi & Madhu prepare Loka's guesthouse for an arriving visitor



Loka students save a wounded sunbird



Saraswati Puja: worshipping the Goddess of Culture & Knowledge



Philosophy and Play meet during an Art1st teacher workshop



Loka's new teacher Surya making learning English fun for grade 3



Pure Love: Loka's pets Tara the dog and Bheem the cat



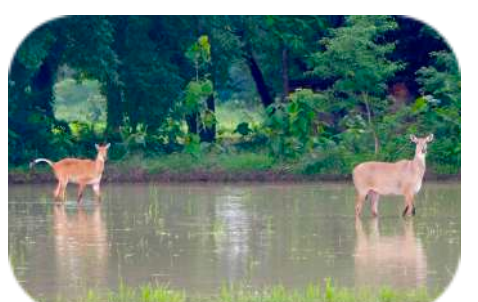
Local village women harvesting wheat on Loka's farm



Loka's smallest ones learning in the lush green outdoors



Online reading circle guided by guest teacher Ita Mehrotra



Majestic and elegant Nilgais spotted near Loka's boundary

About Loka

Loka's school serves the young population of a village in rural Bihar. Families here generally earn their livelihoods as farmers, day-labourers and as small scale business owners. Loka's 100 students aged 4-16, from nursery to grade 8, receive a complete education of Head, Heart & Hand. The school uses NCERT books created by the Indian government as a guideline. Besides subject learning students engage in reflection & meditation, practical work, sports and choice classes such as dance, music, drama. After grade 8 students complete their education at a nearby college and stay connected to Loka through projects and as interns. Currently six senior students (Loka's Lions) follow an internship as teachers. Loka is also setting up student-led business units, such as a Guesthouse, Learning Journeys through India and a Loka Cafe & boutique Shop to create livelihoods for students and sustain the future of the school.

Future Plans

A New Loka 2026-2030

Loka has created its more year vision for the coming 5 years titled 'A New Loka'. The future vision focuses on:

- > Enabling young people to contribute to their local community through holistic and practical education.
- > Enhancing the village where the school is located through agriculture, local entrepreneurship and ecological awareness.
- > Create employment for young people in their own region and thus reduce the outflow to cities.
- > Develop the school in a self-sufficient way that can serve as a global example.

Interested to receive Loka's more year project plan and/or to support Loka's future vision?
Contact us through info@loka.in

Loka's Flower Mandalas



Every morning a new flower mandala brightens up Loka's school. Students create beautiful designs with the flowers blooming throughout the different seasons in the school gardens. No flower mandala is the same; they are spontaneous creations that occur naturally depending on the available flowers and people. Some thoughts of those involved in this daily intricate and mindful activity:

Shilpi - The mandala adds beauty to Loka's school. But there is more to it than that: it affects everything else that we do. By making the flower mandalas we also take better care of our surroundings, maintain our notebooks well, take care of how we look and dress. Also, when the mandala is not there, something is missing. Its presence makes us feel more complete.

Madhu - Mandalas are the beauty of Loka. We are not here just to learn from books, also to acquire new skills. We make the mandalas in a team and create them for all teachers, students and visitors to enjoy. The mandalas bring peace.

Chanchali - When we arrive in the hall in the morning to make the mandala, children might be shouting. When we start making the mandala, we become quiet and the children who gather around to watch us make it become silent too.

Priyanshu - Just like the children, plants, trees and butterflies, the flower mandalas are part of Loka's family.

Sanjana - By making the flower mandalas we learn to design.

Surya - Being involved in the flower mandala team allows me to observe and slow down.

Step into a New World called Loka

The Farm as a Classroom

Loka intern Shilpi started farming classes with Loka's junior students; ploughing the land, cutting grass, making the land smooth, preparing a plot and sowing seeds. Children learned the names of farming tools in English and Hindi. They thought about which vegetables grow this time of year and which crops they wish to cultivate. Village children guided the city children by telling them which greens can be cut and fed to the cows and which greens need to be kept for growing into vegetables. Did you know that coriander seeds need to be gently crushed before sowing to allow them to germinate? Children learned farming skills, collaboration, communication, recognising plants, being leaders and how to serve and that learning in the outdoors with head heart and hand is useful and fun. **Let's Farm!**



Teacher's Perspective

At Loka we work as if the school is ours and the students are our own children - that is the level of care and ownership. There is an atmosphere of respect between me as a teacher and the school's management. What I admire is that hard situations are dealt with in a quiet and solid way - people are not talked about in a bad manner and the focus lies on improving the school. What I wish is that Loka opens another branch. And to those who support Loka: thank you and we need more supporters to further improve the education Loka provides and to make it available for many more children!

~Abhilasha, Hindi Teacher at Loka



Remembering the Past

Every year Loka students participate in The Open Canope (was: Out of Eden Learn), an online learning programme for Intercultural Exchange, designed by Project Zero (Harvard). Most recently students participated in a history learning journey, for which they went into their village to listen to stories of their elders and learn more about the past of their village. In below interview Loka student Shaili describes an interview with her neighbour Naresh, a retired soldier of the Indian army:

Hey everyone, How are you? I hope you all are good. This is a girl who is going to describe one person whom I interviewed. He was sitting outside his home. He was wearing a white shirt and lungi (towel), he was looking smart and

fresh because he had come after bathing and sitting outside in the sunlight. When I went there I said Namaste Baba then he replied 'be happy' then I explained why I am here for Interviewing you, he gave me a chair to sit. He is a very strict and bold person, his name is Naresh. He was in the Indian army but now he does farming because he is retired. He and his wife live together and they have one son who is also in the Indian army and there is a daughter in law. He was living in this village for a long time so he has felt many difficulties in his life like his land had been captured by another person for a long time who is saying not to return the land so he is always trying to get his land back. In past time there were many struggles in all person life there was a lot of poverty and when the flood came then it would

cover the road and then people had to suffer from that situation. But it has changed from that time, now the road is made properly. Before time also food was healthy, people did not get fastly sick but nowadays people get sick easily because of food change. In the past there was equality in the village but slowly it got disrepair. He was missing that time of equality and nowadays all people fight with each other.

I wish that again people become equal and respect each other.

-Shaili (16)





The ability to perceive or think differently is more important than the knowledge gained. ~David Bohm

A Unique Experience

Bookings for Loka's guesthouse for the season September 2025-April 2026 have opened! Check out the new [Loka Visitors Flyer](#) for more information about Loka's unique location, the handcrafted rooms, beautiful surroundings, possibilities to work as a volunteer at Loka's school and visit ancient seats of learning Varanasi and Bodh Gaya.

Book your stay now!



Three meaningful Loka Events in Amsterdam and London *A Movement of Learning for a Bright & Beautiful World*

Loka's Board in the Netherlands looks back with satisfaction and delight on the three special meetings of Friends of LOKA this year with Shari Tishman (Harvard Project Zero) as special guest.

"On April 4, in the beautiful canal house of The Embassy of the Free Mind in Amsterdam, Charlotte took us with her beautiful photos and stories to the small village in Bihar with that special school. Stories about the children, their development, how things are now and what the dreams are for the future, close by and long term. On April 6, we received a group of friends of Loka in the Rijksmuseum, in the Asian

pavillion, around the statue of Lord Shiva. Stories there too, and just like on April 4, Shari Tishman took us on a slow looking exercise. April 11, there was a special meeting in London, where the oldest students of the school themselves also spoke digitally. We experienced the involvement with LOKA across borders. We would like to thank each of you who attended one of these meetings. People came from different places, cultures and countries and were connected by the story of the school, which is increasingly taking on its role within the local community. And connected by the hope and inspiration for our own communities."

From Loka's Dutch Board

"I was especially impressed by the people, Loka's board members; their intelligence, commitment and their large hearts – they were so very generous in giving their time and sharing their visions. The Loka community consists of good and smart people who are connected to something larger than themselves. It's impressive!"
~Shari Tishman, Educator, Author and a Senior Research Associate and Principal Investigator at Harvard Project Zero.

Special Thanks to: Shari Tishman, Gerard and Teresa van Kesteren, Alexander Reeuwijk, Karishma Datai and Paul Palmarozza.



A New Toilet Building for Loka

A Local Project with Global Support



Loka's latest building project: construction of a toilet unit for students, teachers, visitors and staff. Right now Loka has a small toilet building on the farm which is out of sight of teachers, too small for the growing group of students and shared with everyone. For practical reasons such as safety and hygiene a proper toilet building is being created attached to Loka's school building. Interiors of the old toilet building will be reused where possible and the building itself will be converted into a tool shed. The new toilet building is extra special because it has been made possible due to the kindness of various people and organisations: The designs are made by Madhu Shankar of Psda Ayanagar - a renowned Delhi based architecture bureau that has supported Loka's school from the very beginning. The construction is co-financed by Hidrostaal NL-BE, with special thanks to its managing director Bart de Crom. Bill Wei decided to support Loka's school for the coming 5 years through his family-fund and the toilet building is the first project he is contributing towards. Hofsteestichting is a Dutch fund that has been supporting Loka for many years, they will also be contributing towards this necessary and important project.

Inauguration of the toilet building is planned on 15 August.

We are touched by the kindness and support of everyone involved.

Become a Friend of Loka

Loka's school is situated in a village in a remote part of India. Parents of students generally work as small scale farmers and day labourers. They are unable to afford fees for quality education. Through Loka, their children have access to a unique school that educates students to shine in their full potential, uplift their surroundings and inspire the world.

Ways to support Loka's school include:

- Students plant 10 trees - EUR/USD 10 or INR 900
- Education of one student/month EUR/USD 35 INR 3000
- Daily fruit for 25 children/month EUR/USD 100 or INR 9000
- Montessori educational materials EUR/USD 350 or INR 30000
- Entrepreneurship Course 15 students/1 year EUR/USD 3500 or INR 3 L
- A New Store Room for Loka's School EUR/USD 5000 or INR 4.5 L

More information/Contact **E** info@loka.in **W** www.loka.in (school site)

W vriendenvanloka.nl (Dutch site) and friendsofloka.org (International site)

Information

Founders/Boards/Advisors

Founders

Sanat Kumar, Charlotte Leech

Loka India (Sarvodaya)

Nityanand Sharma, Uma Prajapati, Gautam Kumar

Loka NL (Stichting Loka)

Sander Tideman, Alain Hubers

Anne Wibaut, Parsia Tayyebi,

Trudy Kamsteeg, Wendy

Nordemann, Miranda Korz

Advisors & Ambassadors

Shari Tishman, Mike Lee

Guest Teachers

Ita Mehrotra, Swati Sharma

Inspiring Collaborations

Masterclasses art by Artreach

India. Three-year course teaching

art as a subject by Art1st. Football

training by a professional coach

Shreeja India. Slowing down,

sharing stories and making

connections through The Open

Canopy (was Out of Eden Learn).

Loka's main financial partner:

Van Kesteren Foundation



Donations

European (Dutch) Bank Account

IBAN NL04 TRIO 0254 4577 38

(Stichting Loka) BIC:TRIONL2U

Online Donations

vriendenvanloka.nl (Dutch)

friendsofloka.org (Int.)

www.loka.in (India)

Donations within India

Account nr. 28490100019100

Bank of Baroda in name of

Sarvodaya Society

IFS: BARBORAMNBS

MICR: 221012023

Paypal International

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