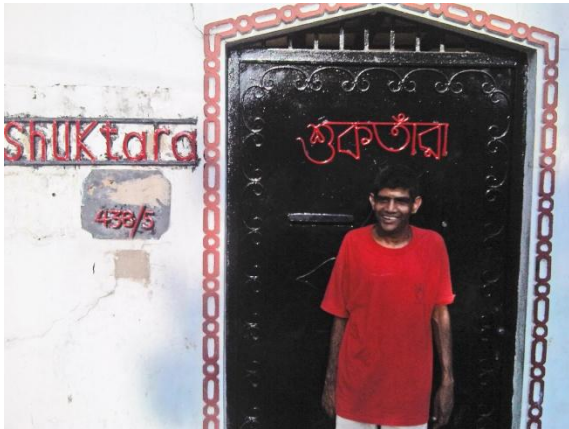




a new home in the world for young adults

◆◆◆◆◆shuktara◆◆◆◆◆  
43b/5 Narayan Roy Road Kolkata 700008 West Bengal INDIA  
Contact no: - 91 33 2496 0051

APRIL 2012



### SUNIL OUTSIDE THE NEW HOUSE

I last wrote in January to wish you a happy new year and to let you know that we had finally purchased a house for the boys.

The boys moved in on the 27<sup>th</sup> January and the girls moved in to a ground floor flat just a few streets away, all on the same day. It was a Thursday that we moved in and then on the Saturday there was a big festival here in Calcutta. We decided that this was a good day to invite a few people over to celebrate with us.

Amongst the people that came to visit us on that day was an American doctor who runs a home for girls with disabilities here in Calcutta. She had just been made aware of the terrible condition of some children in a home locally and I had said that maybe we could help her by taking some of the boys and girls into shuktara. When I saw the photographs I was so shocked at the condition of the children that Pappu and I immediately made the decision that we would not take any children until our shuktara family had well and truly settled in their new homes. To have children brought to shuktara who were suffering from such terrible neglect, we felt, could possibly upset some of our boys and girls who we were wanting to settle in to a new home and a new locality.

However, the next morning I awoke with the face of one boy in my head and try as much as I could, I could not shake him away from my mind. I called Michelle and told her and she said his name was Ratan, he was terribly malnourished and has cerebral palsy. We agreed that we would put the wheels in motion and get Pappu to organize a transfer. The same day Pappu went to the home and was shocked to find Ratan and three other boys with cerebral palsy alone in a darkened room lying in cots with sides raised up. He left and after we had discussed what we would do, he arranged the transfer with the Social Welfare Department immediately. Our only concern was that once we had Ratan, he would be too weak and could die. This would be an appalling situation for our children and also in a new neighborhood. But we took the risk.



### **THE PHOTOS OF RATAN THAT I COULD NOT GET OUT OF MY MIND**

It was a very emotional moment when Ratan was brought through the door of our new home. He really did signal a new beginning here and everyone seemed to spring into action in their new roles as carers and older brothers and sisters.

Ratan had been abandoned on the street in Kalighat about 2 years back and after being refused entry to the Missionaries of Charity was taken in to this home, where for two years, he lay alone on a bed in a darkened room, with three other boys. He was force fed occasionally and beaten when he urinated. This was clear to us when he came, as he did not urinate for 2 days and every time we went to touch his face he screamed. For two days he had sweetened water, sweetened milk and biscuits and bread soaked in tea. He vomited often, which seems to be normal for children suffering from malnutrition when they first start receiving nutritious food. But what was amazing was for the first time, this little boy smiled and he closed his mouth in order to say “NO”, when we were feeding him. Finally he had choices.

I was aware that during the early days I did not want to force the shuktara boys into roles as carers. This was their new home and we wanted them to settle happily and enjoy the new space. So for the first few days Pappu and I did the caring, the nappy changing and feeding, but after about 5 days the boys were asking me for a wheelchair, because they wanted to take him out, to push him around the house and feed him – and change his nappies!!!’

What an amazing change this has all been for Ratan. From being constantly alone he went to being constantly held and touched, bathed, oiled, dressed, fed and toileted respectfully and lovingly. He stopped closing his eyes in fear every time someone went to touch his face and spends most of his days holding the hands of one of the boys or his carer. We have now hired our ‘odd-job man’ Malai to be his full-time carer. The signs of malnutrition and scabies have completely disappeared and a little tummy is appearing and we are constantly greeted by the sound of him giggling. He seems to do this most at night – once the lights are turned off. Pappu and the boys tell me he laughs hysterically for about an hour until he falls peacefully asleep.

Our focus this year in the UK is to increase our monthly giving. We have the funds to purchase a house for the girls and we are so very blessed with occasional gifts from our supporters, but to put shuktara on a permanent and safe footing – we are currently short of about 1,000 (gbp-sterling) per month. Our running costs for the two homes are about 3000 per month. If you know anyone that would be able to support shuktara or are perhaps looking to support a charity, please pass on the shuktara details and we will be in touch with them.

Can I take this opportunity again to thank all of you for your generosity, your regular and occasional gifts of money that allow us to continue caring for the shuktara family. There have been some large donations this year as well as some smaller ones and every rupee that comes to us here in India is used to pay salaries, to buy the food, to pay the school fees, the transportation fees and electric/gas charges and we cannot express our thanks in words. I hope the photos show you how much your money can actually change lives.

Particularly this year I would like to thank Emily Howling from Mellor in Greater Manchester, who was crowned Mellor Rose Queen in 2011 and chose to support shuktara during the course of her reign. I know that everyone has had great fun taking part in the events that Emily and her friends and family have organized in that part of the world and she is on course for a record breaking fundraising reign. Our thanks to Emily and everyone involved. If you still wish to support her, there are justgiving pages on the internet that clearly mention Mellor Church Rose Queen charity - just type in Shuktara Trust (UK). You have until the end of June, when her reign sadly comes to an end. THANK YOU EMILY

On the 1<sup>st</sup> July we celebrate 13 years of shuktara. I started shuktara on 1<sup>st</sup> July 1999 with Anna and Sunil, who are still a very important part of our lives and we would like to have a “SUPPORTERS CELEBRATION” on Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> July in Maida Vale at Xen’s restaurant “Tsiakkos”. If you would like to attend, please get in touch with me or Sue Tungay and we will get an official invitation sent out to you.

People have expressed an interest in collection/gift boxes to collect money for shuktara. We are in discussions at the moment about ordering or making these up and if you are interested, again, please contact me or Sue Tungay.



**RATAN ARRIVES AT SHUKTARA**





**THIS IS RATAN TODAY**

During the last year we had many visitors to shuktara. We seem to be a popular destination for deaf visitors from the United States and around the world, due to our connection with Gallaudet University and Discovering Deaf Worlds. Christy Smith is still searching for deaf interns to come out again this year, so if you know anyone, please let us know. Nothing is more inspiring for our deaf youngsters than communicating in sign language and increasing their confidence with their peers.

Emma Christmas, a friend of mine from way back in the days of Camden Market came for a month and had an extraordinary time working with the girls. They inspired each other and created fantasy costumes and spent hours making pom poms. Emma's time with the boys was equally creative – (see the photos below of the mask making with the boys and the fantasy costumes with the girls).

THANK YOU EMMA

All of you have played important parts in the establishment and continuing success of the shuktara homes. My thanks to all of you – we could not do it without you.

