



March 2019

I have so much news that I don't really know where to start. The last newsletter I sent out was to inform you all about Anna dying. Losing Anna has affected everybody, but he is always close by in our thoughts and hearts and our new boy Bappa somehow seems to be a constant reminder of him. It's the same smile.



Aakash has now started at REACH school in their Cerebral Palsy Unit. The teachers have described him and Guria as the happiest children in the class.

Recently he developed a form of gastric reflux, was always vomiting after food and started losing weight. We kept him off school, changed his diet and he hasn't vomited since. Small amounts of food regularly seems to be doing the trick. And everyone is looking forward to him returning to school.



We have had our usual friends visit at Lula Bari, including a relative of Lula Gibson herself - Kate Willis. Sarah Annay returned after a year and did the most wonderful Frida Kahlo workshop. Pappu translated Frida's story into Bengali as well as sign language and then the girls dressed up and used marker pen to create the famous Frida Kahlo eyebrows. Sunnie Niklaus loves to come to Kolkata and always includes the girls at Lula Bari in her itinerary - this time Sunnie came equipped with everything to create the perfect Spa Day for the girls. Enough to say - they loved every minute!



Lali

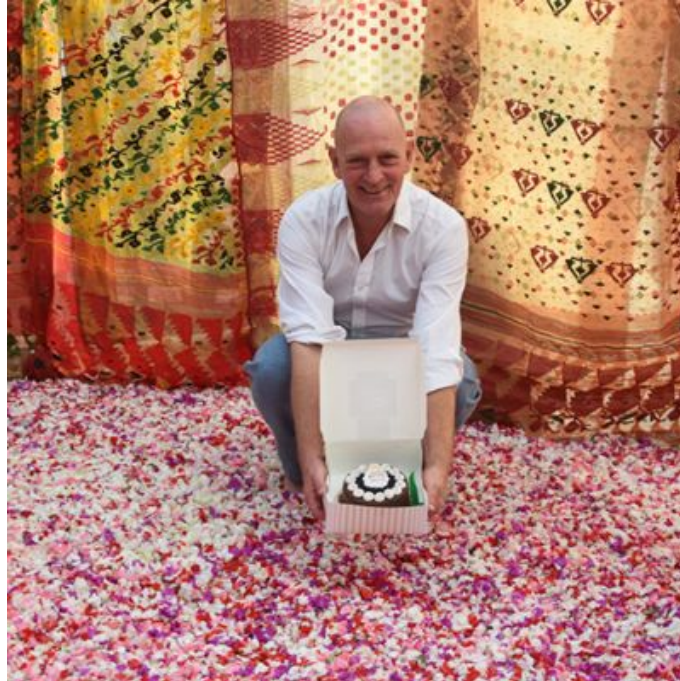


Guria



In December 2018 the British Deputy High Commissioner invited a group of shuktara's older boys to meet Indian International cricketer Wriddhiman Sarkar as part of the ICC World Cup Trophy Tour. Obviously Raju, Rajesh and Ashok were first in line to want to go. Pappu also took Sunil, because Sunil loves any kind of outing or celebration. We were very grateful to Bruce Bucknell (BDHC) for inviting us to be part of this.

In January, on the 20th I became 60 years old. Being very unsure of what I wanted to do and where I wanted to be on this day and having thought about it for a year: when Anna died I was 100% certain that I wanted the party to be at Anna Bari - the boys house named now in his memory. We covered the floors with flower petals, had pizza and coca cola (my healthy choice option) and invited anyone and everyone who wanted to come. As the flower petals became moist with the evening dew, what I thought would be beautiful became like a skating rink with everyone slipping and sliding on dew sodden petals. However it looked wonderful and we made the most of it.



Also in January, my friend and shuktara supporter Ben Pundole ran the half marathon in Miami. He wanted the money raised to go towards the Shuktara Documentary Film and if you still wish to support him you can go here:

www.gofundme.com/half-marathon-for-shuktara-homes

Phoebe and her film crew think that another two trips to Kolkata will cover everything and every season. She also tells me that for a Documentary of this importance it does take time. We are all very much looking forward to seeing what she has captured, but she is asking me to be patient. As our 20th anniversary is on the 1st July this year, the plan is that she comes over with a team for that and again in the Winter which is a beautiful season. The light at that time of year is very special.

On 30th January Bappa came to Anna Bari. Pappu had been contacted three days previously by an agency who had found a boy in the centre of Kolkata with cerebral palsy. Pappu was wary of taking him immediately in case his family came to claim him. However it became clear that they weren't going to as his mother had actually left him on Park Street, which is a really busy area, outside a hotel on a street corner - I am sure she did this knowing that he would be taken into care.

Poverty is so cruel, that a mother has to abandon her son because she cannot care for him - leave him and walk away. It breaks my heart and I wish I could find her and tell her that he is OK.

He is verbal, he's a bright little boy and even though his legs and one arm don't work well he is very mobile. He has a bright future here. And with all that has happened to him - he is smiling all the time.

Soon after Bappa's arrival, with his new hair cut, new clothes and his well scrubbed up appearance we celebrated Saraswati Puja. This Puja has a special place in the story of Shuktara and this year we remembered Anna and kept his photo next to the goddess.



Then only a couple of weeks later one of the UK Trustees came with his son. Adam Thompson first came and stayed with the boys back in the very early days of Shuktara when we lived in Jubilee Park. I had gone off on a trip somewhere and so he enjoyed the Holi Festival there with them. Fifteen years later he returned with his son Frankie. Adam has written a lovely story about the three full days spent here during Frankie's half term holiday, at Anna Bari, Lula Bari and Shuktara Cakes. His letter and an introduction from me is on our website and you can read it here:

<https://shuktara.org/adam-and-his-son-visit-shuktara/>

This is one of my favourite lines from all his stories about their quick trip - and we loved having them here!

"The great privilege for both of us was to feel like we were welcomed into this zany, slightly chaotic, incredibly warm family. It just felt so special."

That's Shuktara!

David Earp



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The most cost effective way to donate and help towards the running of our two homes is to pay directly to Shuktara Trust UK account:

Santander UK plc.
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Sort Code: 09-01-50
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Shuktara provides a home for life for children and young adults with disabilities in Kolkata, India, who have no family.

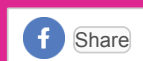
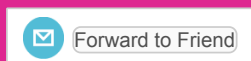


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