



12th NOVEMBER 2023

I arrived back to Kolkata in the morning on Friday 8th September and it didn't feel like I had ever been away. I slipped seamlessly back into life at Shuktara and within a couple of days the Shuktara Documentary Team had arrived.

It was an exciting process to see where they would take their story which has been being filmed since 2017. Of course the day to day life of everyone at Shuktara in itself is like any family and could be seen as mundane, except during the times they have been here filming I would say it was anything but mundane.

In 2018 they were with Pappu when he received the call to bring Aakash to shuktara and they were here when Pappu brought Anna home from hospital to the boys house where he died the following day. The boys house! Anna Bari.... And it is hardly full of boys! The young men who live there have mostly been with shuktara since the early days, so it's getting close to being an Adult Care Home. But the vibe has never changed.



Raegan, Phoebe, David & Pappu

The day after Phoebe and Raegan arrived, we went out to the villages in Purulia on the border with Jharkhand, where Pappu has been working with families, supporting them as they raise disabled children with very little medical support. The villages have terrible road access and as I soon found out, the journey is intense. A seven hour train journey there, another two or three hours driving to the villages, and seven hours back to Kolkata.

Pappu works in six villages supporting nineteen families and their twenty children and young people.

It was incredible for me to see the work Pappu has started. A kind of outreach that has come purely from his heart with no input or suggestion

from anyone else. The families there clearly love him and cannot believe that he keeps coming back to see them. I said to Pappu as we got off the train in Kolkata, that I didn't think I would be able to do that journey again. Pappu turned to me and said, that is the challenge for me, because nobody ever goes back there and I want to continue to support them.



Pappu with Tanjim and her father

Shuktara and the young people in Lula Bari and Anna Bari have everything they need, from food, clothes, bedding, 24/7 care as well as physiotherapists, tutors and doctors on call if they are needed. I think Pappu thought if we have all this, then why can't we share it with people who don't have what we have?

I'm very proud of him and this work. Even though I said I didn't think I

could go back again, I have not been able to stop thinking about certain young people and their families and how we can support them.

The other thing that has happened since covid is that our income has dropped considerably - as is the case with most charities. The UK trustees have always aimed to have three years' running costs in the bank to cover any eventualities but unfortunately we have dropped significantly below this. Pappu is trying to pull in local donors, but this is a long and slow process. His local supporters much prefer to donate in kind rather than financially, which of course is generous and helpful, but it is vital that we safeguard our homes by having more money in the bank. Our donations have fallen to such an extent that we now have a £45,000 shortfall between what we receive in funding each year and what we need to keep the homes running - which is shocking and worrying for the UK trustees.

I will do everything in my power to pull in what I can from wherever I can, but if any of you know of anyone who can or who would like to support shuktara please let us know. **Monthly/recurring donations that we can count on have always helped us so much, so if you can - please.** It really helps us budget. Thank you.

I have never been comfortable asking straight out for money and I have always had a deeply held belief that shuktara will be looked after. However, it would be irresponsible of us not to address this issue now before we actually run out of money.



Finally, on the 24th September I got my medal. It has been sitting in a desk at the British Deputy High Commissioner's office here in Kolkata for the last couple of years, since I decided I wanted it presented to me here in India and not in the UK. I felt that it was important for everyone here at shuktara to be able to be part of the ceremony. The medal was given to me for the work I have done with them all, so sharing this with Pappu, Minu di and Swapan who have worked here at shuktara since the very beginning and also having the medal pinned to Sunil our first boy, seemed much more appropriate than the pomp of a ceremony in London.

And In Memory of Anna

Thank You
David Earp



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Trust (UK)

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

Santander UK plc.

Account no: **04404505**

Sort Code: **09-01-50**

Account Name: **Shuktara Trust (UK)**

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https://www.giveasyoulive.com/join/shuktara?utm_source=25milestone&utm_medium=social&utm_campaign=Milestones&utm_content=2023

Shuktara provides a home for life for children and young adults with disabilities in Kolkata, India, who have no family.

shuktara.org

Official website of Shuktara Trust (UK) | UK Charity Commission No: 1112303



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