



March 2016

I have just realized that the last newsletter I wrote was back in October 2015. So much has happened since then and I hope I am able to update you with as much as I possibly can here.

At the end of last year, on December 6th, Sanjay's wife Munni gave birth to a little girl. Sanjay came to Shuktara in 2000 and it was always his dream to have a family of his own.



Also in December our friend Willeke visited the girls home Lula Bari and brought dolls with her from Holland.

Her friend Ellie had the idea to collect old dolls and make new clothes and give new names for each of them. The dolls were sold to raise money towards the running of Lula Bari.

You can see the joy on Guria's face with her new doll "Norah".

On Christmas Eve the Shuktara Cakes team were featured on Indian National TV on the *India Today* channel, introduced by Rajdeep Sardesai. They told a story about "Kolkata's disabled, baking to make a difference". Despite being described by the presenter as a "motley group of youth" we took pride in the fact that out of all the stories they could have told for Christmas, they chose ours!



From left to right – Sanjay, Raju, Ashok, Somnath, Pinku & Bapi

In January we had a visit to the Shuktara Cakes Training Centre by the new Consul General of France in Kolkata, Damien Syed. This was also covered by the local media. So 2016 was off to a cracking start for the team, admirably led by Somnath, Manager of Shuktara Cakes.

Back in September 2015 Guria came to Lula Bari, and if you remember there was a mix up in paperwork between the Social Welfare Dept and the hospital, where she was being kept – we had been expecting another girl. We were so happy to receive Guria, but we did always wonder about the “unknown girl”. In January Pappu received yet another call from the hospital and it was about the same girl we had been expecting. We were overjoyed and happily accepted her into Lula Bari.



Puja with Pappu at Lula Bari

Puja came to us on 22nd January. She needs lots of love and care and lots of space. She needs us to wash her and dress her and allow her to be. She is non verbal. She was found alone on the streets of

North Kolkata and had been lying alone in a hospital bed having been placed there by the police who had found her back in August. She stayed in the hospital alone until Pappu met her and finally she came to us. She is now eating by herself instead of being fed and we provide cloth for her to wipe her hand after every mouthful because of the sensitivity in her fingers.

This text comes from www.autismspeaks.org and it says everything we needed to know when we started caring for Puja:

View my autism as a different ability rather than a disability. Look past what you may see as limitations and see my strengths. I may not be good at eye contact or conversation, but have you noticed that I don't lie, cheat at games, or pass judgment on other people? I rely on you. All that I might become won't happen without you as my foundation. Be my advocate, be my guide, love me for who I am, and we'll see how far I can go.

The girls that attend REACH school had a day out in January and spent the day in Nicco Park for a picnic. Prity, Lali, Tamina, Moni and Muniya all had a great day and this photo of Moni with her school carer was taken by Ranjini Mukherjee, one of the teachers at REACH and a long time friend of Shuktara. It was Ranjini that taught the boys back in 2000 when they were first admitted to REACH school in their Deaf Unit.



Moni with her carer Suniti at Nicco Park

My friend Sunnie Niklaus was in Kolkata in February volunteering and spent one of her days off with all of the girls at Lula Bari. It was great for her to see Guria and Puja settling in and she brought with her a bag of goodies including glitter masks, rubber band balls, lipstick and stick-on tattoos. They all had a wonderful day. Thank you to Sunnie and all the other visitors that have come and spent time with our girls.



The girls at Lula Bari enjoying Sunday 21st February with Sunnie Niklaus

Top left Muniya, Ipshita & Tamina / Top right Tamina / Bottom left Guria / Bottom right Ipshita & Puja

I have just returned from spending the afternoon with Sanjay and his wife Munni, finally meeting his beautiful daughter Sumi who was born in December. I am so proud of him. Even though he has never had paperwork or documentation, even though he has never had a birth certificate himself, he has worked tirelessly to make sure that his daughter has everything. He has done this unassisted, using signs and gestures and he loves showing everyone her vaccination certificates from Government Hospitals, her birth certificate and all the other official documentation that is required as a Citizen of India and that has sadly not been available for him. Sanjay always wanted to have his own family and through his work at Shuktara Cakes he has been able to find a home for his wife and family and live

independently.

Your support of Shuktara and the great teams here in Kolkata as well as those in London at Shuktara Trust (UK) and in other places around the world, have all helped in some way to enable Sanjay to do this on his own. But it is not only Sanjay who has been helped, all of the young people who live at Shuktara that will never, like him, be able to live independently are able to live comfortably and in safety because of your support.

Thank you
David Earp



With Sumi, Sanjay and Munni – March 2016

Shuktara provides a home for life for children and young adults with disabilities in Kolkata, India, who have no family. www.shuktara.org is the official website of Shuktara Trust (UK). UK Charity Commission No: 1112303

