

CROYDON eUPDATE

ISSUE 2 – February 2011



EDITORS' NOTE



Namaste. Welcome to the second issue of our new e-bulletin. Thank you for all your positive and encouraging comments on the first issue. If you missed out on the first newsletter, you can view it on the Shishukunj website at:

<http://shishukunj.org.uk/kendras/croydon/croydon-spring-term-2011/>

Also email us at croydon@shishukunj.org.uk and we'll make sure you are on the e-mail list.

In this issue we take you on the next leg of our Croydon Shishukunj Airlines tour to our motherland, India and then to the other side of the world to Ecuador in South America. We put the spotlight on one of our Talim baalako, Sonaliben and have a special article by Vikashbhai on his recent trip to India.

SPOT LIGHT ON A BAALAK

In each issue of Kendra eUpdate we feature one of our Shishukunj balaako. In this issue we catch up with one of the original crew who was in the 'Class of 2005'.



Sonaliben Shah



Namaste Sonaliben. Please tell us a little about yourself.

Namaste. My name is Sonaliben Shah and I'm 13½ years old. I live in Croydon and go to Norbury Manor Girls School.

How long have you been coming to Shishukunj?

I've been coming for five years – right from the beginning when Shishukunj started here.

Has Shishukunj changed much in the 5 years you've been coming?

We've had different leaders. First there was Chiragbhai, then Vikashbhai and Himalbhai. Now Amitbhai. All have been really good and introduced new things for the balaako to do. There's always something new and different every year. It's never boring. Oh yes, in the beginning Kendra used to finish earlier, at 12 I think, but because the baalako wanted more time for activities we now finish at 1pm.

How did you end up coming to Shishukunj?

My nani used to go to Shishukunj in Nairobi, Kenya. My mum [Reshmaben] said I should try it so brought me when it started in Croydon.

Did your mum go to Shishukunj also?

No my mum never did, but she didn't want me to miss out on the opportunity.

Five years is a long time to keep coming. You must enjoy it?

Yes I enjoy the trips, the camp, the picnic days, Navratri festival and the indoor sports.

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What has been the highlight of your five years at Shishukunj?

The Shibir definitely! The camp is amazing. I have made lots of friends from Finchley and Kingsbury Kendra through the camp. I couldn't go last year but I am definitely looking forward to going this summer.

You're a teenager. Is it not boring and 'uncool' to come to something like Shishukunj every week?

I don't think so. It's never boring because there are always new people to meet and make friends with. I've had some really good friends at Shishukunj, like Shivaniben. I have learnt a lot about my religion too which I think is important. I've also learnt about charity work.

What do you mean?

At Shishukunj we learn a lot about the importance of helping others. We have L4C – Life for Children which helps children all over the world with their education, shelter, food and medicine. Through this understanding it has made me do more charity work like when it's Red Nose day.

You are one of the few girls in the Talim [trainee leaders] group at the moment. Do the boys give you a hard time?

Yes it is a bit weird being the only girl sometimes, but the bhaiyo are alright. They're not too much trouble, most of the time!

What have you gained from Talim?

I have learnt handling skills. These are skills like how to use your voice to get people's

attention, how to keep good posture and to give clear instructions. I think all these things will help me in my future. I have also learnt how to help the nano baalako in the games.

Finally, do you think you will still be involved in Shishukunj in the next 5 years?

Yes, I think I will. Will you...?

CROYDON SHISHUKUNJ AIRLINES



After a successful first leg of our world tour to Portugal with Senor Vishalbhai and Senorita Nilamben, the balaako came back the following Sunday full of anticipation and eager with their passports to travel to our next destination... "Jana Gana Mana..."

INDIA

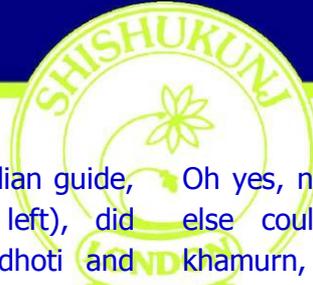
Yes, the 26th of January was Indian Republic Day and we were there to join in the celebrations. We landed at Delhi Airport in the scorching heat and wondered if we would ever get out of the Arrivals lounge. The kumkum from the tilaks on our foreheads was even starting to drip.



Even the parents had to receive a welcome to India Tilak

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Eventually our Indian guide, Niyantbhai (see left), did turn up in his dhoti and Indian accent (?) to greet us half an hour late. He explained being late was part of the tradition and he wanted us to experience the real India from the outset!

Oh yes, nasto – as we were in India what else could there be but soft fluffy khamurn, spicy bhajias, chevdo and Thumbs-up cola! (okay I lied about the Thumbs-up- we just had water!)



Our recent trip to Ecuador was surely one to remember with Kavishbhai and Bhupenbhai really pulling out all the stops for the baalako.

During the day balaako took part in traditional Indian games like kabadi, ghero and an Indian version of dodge-ball. Ishaben, one of the parents, taught baalako how to speak Marathi. "Thumu kase ahath?", how are you?.



Ishaben Pathak

DID YOU KNOW?

Ecuador means 'equator' in Spanish.

The previous week Colinbhai the magician and Sanjaybhai had taught the Talim group how to perform one of their magic tricks. The Talim balaako then put their newly acquired magical skills into practice and put on a show for the nana baalako. They showed how to transfer dust from one palm to another just like the babajis do in the Indian villages!

The plane journey itself was a treat because Croydon Shishukunj Airlines had acquired a new plane in its fleet and the passengers could now see out of the windows and had a screen showing the cockpit view of the flight. During the 20 hour flight to South America we were treated to awesome views of the Andes mountains and an exciting in-flight geography lesson by Bhupenbhai.

The Talim group then delivered a baudhik on the history behind India's Republic day and the struggle for Independence. The day was complete with lively and beautiful bhajans sang by the baalako – pictured below.

We landed at Quito airport which was situated on the side of a volcano, on a runway which, as one of the baalako remarked, looked the size of a cricket pitch!



DID YOU KNOW?

Mount Chimborazo (pictured below) in Ecuador (and not Mount Everest) has the



highest point from the centre of the Earth because it is on the equator.



Once in Ecuador we were taken around the country to the Amazon rainforest, to the Andes mountains (where a volcano erupted) and to the legendary Galapagos Islands, renown for its unique wildlife, fauna and marine creatures.



Some of the wildlife of Ecuador

Kavishbhai, our local tour guide explained the features of each part of this amazing country, some of the history and the plight of the indigenous populations.



Kavishbhai – our guide for the day

We visited a native American Indian village in the Amazon and the balaako saw the effects the deforestation and pollution from the oil companies was having on the lives of native Indians who were losing their homes and land at a devastating rate every single day.

DID YOU KNOW?

An area the size of two football fields is destroyed in the Amazon rainforests every second. If this continues then the entire Amazon forests will be destroyed in the next 40 years!

During the visit, balaako got the opportunity to take part in a traditional Ecuadorian dance and also learnt some Spanish, the official language of Ecuador from Senor Kavishbhai. As a

memento the baalako were also given a colourful and informative souvenir brochure on the country.

Thankfully the nasto didn't feature any of the traditional dishes Ecuador cuisine is sometimes famous for – don't look it up if you've got a guinea pig or hamster as a pet!)

NATIONAL/INTERNATIONAL NEWS

By Vikashbhai Patel

This December I had the opportunity to visit the BGMS ashram in Bangalore. We had taken our Bharat Darshan members there in December 2007. Shishukunj has been helping BGMS since 2002 and through our Life for Children initiative have assisted in Food, Education, Shelter and Health programs.

I only had 4 days there and as the children were on Christmas holidays we decided to make the most of it. Along with the Kendra Nayak and portfolio members at BGMS we did a 3 day shibir of various activities. These included a lungdi and chakbilu competition with all 150 baalako, cultural programs of dance, plays and comedy skits, making a trifle for all the baalako to eat on New year's eve and number of ECA's, baalgeet sessions and baalvartas.

One memorable event for me was to help cook dosa for 150 people one morning. It took 2 ½ hours and god knows how many hundreds of burnt dosa's I made but the children happily ate them. On the next page are photo's of only a few of the activities that we did. A trip to the ashram once again made me appreciate the life we have in the UK and that around the world there are many people less fortunate than us.

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NASTO

Thank you to all those families that sponsored nasto in January! If you would like to bring nasto for a special occasion like a birthday or simply sponsor nasto for the baalako for any week, then please speak to Ritaben at the Choki desk.

HIP HIP HURRAH!

Happy Birthday to Rishikbhai (6) and Anjaliben (10) who celebrate their birthdays this month!

LOOK WHO'S BACK...

Hansaben and Kaushikbhai have returned from their seva tour in Bharat (India). We will hear about their realisations in a future issue but more importantly for now, **YOGA IS BACK ON!** 10.30am every week – adults come and join us!



Photo's from Vikashbhai's trip to BGMS, Bangalore

DATES FOR THIS MONTH

- Sun 20th Feb – Closed for Half Term
- Sun 27th Feb – Parents meeting

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Complaints: To Amitbhai!