

CROYDON eUPDATE

ISSUE 1 – January 2011



EDITORS' NOTE



Happy New Year! Welcome to our first edition of the Croydon Kendra Newsletter. This Newsletter will bring the following items on a fortnightly basis:

- Spotlight on a Baalak
- Take me to your Leaders
- Croydon Shishukunj Airlines
- National/international news

We started the new term and the New Year with a blast. Croydon Kendra has now been launched and it seems that a new era has dawned in the South. We are hoping that publishing this newsletter will give a better insight into the activities that are carried out within the Kendra.

SPOT LIGHT ON A BAALAK

In each issue of this newsletter we shall profile one of our Shishukunj baalako. We kick-off the series with an interview with young Kamaalbai Solanki from South Croydon.



Kamaalbai Solanki

Namaste Kamaalbai. Please tell us a little bit about yourself.

Namaste. My name is Kamaalbai. I am 10 years old and I go to Elmhurst School in Croydon. I like sports - especially rugby, football and swimming. I like art and drawing manga. I've been coming to Shishukunj for one year.

How did you end up coming to Shishukunj?

Last January I changed schools. My parents thought I should be mixing more with other Asian kids outside of school and learning about our culture. One of my best friends, Adarshbai, from my old school goes to Shishukunj and I wanted to keep friends with him, so I joined.

How did you find out about Shishukunj?

I think Adarshbai's dad told my parents about it a long time ago.

What do you like about Shishukunj?

The games! I love playing the sports, especially football, benchball and Kor. I think the teachers are very funny –especially Sanjaybai– and they encourage you to learn new things all the time.

Is there anything you don't like?

Not really, but I do find the Gujarati classes quite difficult, especially the writing. I like the stories though. Dumbells can get a little boring – at least after doing the same thing over and over again! Having said that, at Shishukunj you are not made to do anything that you don't want to and everyone is always included in the activities – even the little ones like my sister Aleeshaben. She's only five. The teachers are very good and caring like that.

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What have been the highlights of your first year at Croydon Kendra?

The camp we went to in the summer holidays. [Ed: Jeevan Ghadtar Shibir in Hertfordshire, August 2010] This was my first residential and a really good experience. I'm proud of myself because I was very ill that weekend and being sick a lot, but I didn't quit and go home. The teachers, especially Heeralben and Chiragbhai [volunteer medic on site] looked after me and encouraged me to stay the weekend and enjoy the camp. I enjoyed the sports and meeting lots of new people from all over London. I liked staying in the tent but it was very cold at night, especially when I was on night duty at 2am in the morning!



The show at Tara Arts; 'Shishukunj Has Got Talent', last year was also good fun. I took part in the Thriller dance and did a violin solo in front of all the audience. This was quite scary but also good experience for me.

What would you say to another baalak who doesn't know about Shishukunj?

Come! You get to play games, learn new things about different countries and make friends. The teachers are very good and funny. You get nasto at the end and pizza when it's people's birthdays, sometimes! I would definitely recommend the camp but would tell them to make sure they take a woolly hat, thick socks and a torch!

Thank you Kamaalbai. Namaste.

TAKE ME TO YOUR LEADER!



We caught up with Amitbhai fresh in his new position to find out what it felt like to be our new leader and his exciting plans for Croydon Kendra for 2011.

First a brief introduction. Amitbhai Maru, age 27 lives in Sydenham, South London and is a Trainee Actuary by day. He recently got married to Jeshikabhai and has naturally roped her into helping with Shishukunj every Sunday. (We did try to warn Jeshikabhai of Amitbhai's secret life by sending a contingent of Shishukunj die-hards to his wedding in full uniform singing 'Nanu nanu saslu' and 'Ame to taara' but obviously the hint was too subtle to warn Jeshikabhai off!)

Amitbhai was introduced to the Shishukunj movement in his youth when he attended a Kendra in Nairobi, East Africa. He got the bug in Nairobi and wanted to pass on what he had learnt to other baalako here in South London. Amitbhai had been a Nayab at Croydon Kendra for 1 ½ years being trained up by Himalbhai, Vikashbhai and Heeralben (all very dedicated volunteers from North London). Himalbhai passed on the baton to Amitbhai in December 2010 at the end of the Christmas term at a touching and emotional gathering.



"Himalbhai waves his arms about enthusiastically when giving instructions"

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Amitbhai remarked how at first it was quite a lot to take in and he felt a little daunted by the task ahead and especially following in the boots of such a good leader as Himalbhai. However, Amitbhai explained in his inauguration speech, "Vikashbhai is known for rubbing his hands when he speaks. Himalbhai waves his arms about enthusiastically when giving instructions. I've watched them and have mastered the art of speaking whilst rubbing my hands and waving my arms around!". This no doubt shows Amitbhai has been an excellent student of his mentors and will bring to Croydon Kendra the best of what's gone before and build on the success of his predecessors.



"I've watched them and mastered the art of speaking whilst rubbing my hands and waving my arms around!"

Amitbhai's plans for 2011? "I want Croydon Kendra to be fun-filled every single week. I want ALL baalako to feel a part of the Kendra and feel proud to belong here. Parents have been wonderful at Kendra. This year I would like to see even more parental involvement in supporting the Kendra.

We have just launched Croydon Shishukunj Airlines and we will be taking baalako on an exciting journey to different parts of the world every week. In addition to our virtual adventures, we are planning three outdoor trips this year which will be great fun too. All in all it is going to be a fantastic year – lots of participation, lots of enthusiasm, and lots of fun!"



Amitbhai's new team on this venture includes the support of two other amazing Karyakars. They are the experienced yet ever youthful Heeralben Patel, and the mad but equally astonishing Sanjaybhai Shelat. The three of them make up a dynamic team, each bringing different sets of skills and experience but working very closely together to ensure every Sunday at Shishukunj is different, challenging and enjoyable. In the next issue we shall be talking to the lovely Heeralben and find out what motivates her to travel down from Edgware to Croydon week in week out and maybe discover her secret of how she manages to bring calm to any situation – even when Sanjaybhai is excited and goes off on one of his abstract arty turns!

In the meantime a final message of inspiration from our leader; "This is your Kendra. Enjoy every aspect of it and give it all your energy. Namaste."



What an innovative idea. On the first day of term we started the day with games and we did notice the Parthna room being converted into something, (but what was it?????). We were all pleasantly surprised when we were told to queue before we could board a plane. What you might ask is going on!!!! That was our exact thoughts. Sanjaybhai (crew) greeted us and stated that everyone had to get a passport which was handed to us by Jeshikabhabi (boarding clerk). The room was organised with four rows of seats and all the baalako and the parents sat quite bewildered.



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We were welcomed by the Pilot (Amitbhai) who stated that we had boarded the Croydon Shishukunj Airlines. He explained that we were going to visit countries around the world. We did however start with Prarthna. Baalako were given the opportunity to choose the countries they would like to visit. The board was covered with names of countries from around the world. This was then divided into areas where the baalako and parents had visited. The countries were divided into Portugal, India, China, Equador, USA and Canada, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Australia, and around the world.

Each of the Talim members were given a country to research and they were teamed by a parent who had either visited the country or had knowledge of the culture. The members were asked to look at the culture, religion, nutrition, language, physical activities/sports of each country. Vishalbhai worked with Nilamben to look at Portugal for Sunday the 16th of January 2011, for our first leg of the tour.

PORTUGAL

Before the baalako could board Croydon Shishukunj Airlines they had to produce their passports with a photo identifying them. At the gates they were greeted by security guards who made sure passengers were not carrying anything illegal. The passports were stamped with the Portuguese flag. We boarded the plane and were escorted to our seats. We were given instructions on health and safety within the flight and what to do in the event of a crash (Do not do anything!!!).

We landed at Lisbon airport and we were greeted by Senor Vishalbhai. Ola! Ola! Ola! (Welcome). He stated that we were all welcome to Portugal and that we were going to be

learning about the culture of the country. We then sat on the floor and sang our Prarthna.

The Talim group were then enticed by a card magician (Colinbhai – pictured left). Colinbhai was a magician who did tricks close up. What an amazing session with parents having an opportunity to witness the amazement.



Colinbhai

Baalako also learnt to name the face parts in Portuguese and made the Portuguese flag. Senor Vishalbhai then finished off the day with a boudhik on Fatima (Mother Mary).



Photographs of the Baalako (above) and Parents (below)



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Please join us in two weeks time where I will bring you news from two other countries. Thanks again to Vishalbhai for his dedication to finding out about Portugal and delivering the country with great enthusiasm.

The following Baalako took part: Nimishaben, Kamaalbhai, Vishalbhai, Shanilbhai, Bhavikbhai, Jayeshbhai, Kavishbhai, Amarbhai, Adarshbhai, Niyantbhai, Devyanbhai and Tinaben.

NATIONAL/INTERNATIONAL NEWS



A BIG THANK YOU to everyone who donated clothes or helped pack the containers. This has benefited many families in India.

OUR BAALAKO ARE OUR FUTURE LEADERS

Recently some of our young baalako took part in a leadership training course organised by Asian Resource Centre Croydon (ARCC). It was a full day of group work, role plays and discussions. All our baalako received a certificate which was presented to them by Bharatbhai from North London at our last day of term.



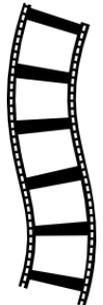
Jayeshbhai receiving his certificate from Bharatbhai



ARCC Leadership Training participants with certificates

ARCC have kindly offered us some free places on their next course for young people which will take place during the half-term break, 21-25th February 2011, between 10am-3pm (lunch will be provided).

This will be an intensive multi-media training course aimed at children aged 10 and above - typically valued at £2000. It is. This is a rare opportunity for our baalako to learn film making and script writing so please book your place with Nilamben ASAP!!



The ARCC are also offering a wide range of courses throughout the year, for all ages, from business planning to report Writing to marketing for voluntary organisations

For more information on these courses please visit the ARCC website or contact them directly:



asian resource centre
croydon

w: www.arcc ltd.com

t: 020 8684 3784

e: info@arcc ltd.com

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(belated)

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

By Bhupenbhai

Did you know South London Kendra (now known as Croydon Kendra) celebrated its 5th birthday in November 2010? Here's to the next five years; Hip Hip Hurrah...



An emotional and joyous day for some of the visionary karyakars that started it all off in Croydon. From R to L: Shantibhai, Kaushikbhai, Pravinbhai, Hansaben, Himalbhai, Vikashbhai, Surajbhai and Sanjaybhai



Shishukunj South London Kendra age 5. Will you be in this photo in 5 years time???



CALLING ALL BAALAKO!

We would love to hear from baalako who would like to have their piece in this Newsletter. It could be anything that you think other baalako in Shishukunj would like to hear about; from an article on an interesting activity or trip at school, to bhajan sessions you might have attended with your family. Or, how about a poem or drawing, or even some funny jokes you've heard recently?



If you have an idea for the next issue, please come and see Heeralben at Kendra!

Croydon@Shishukunj.org.uk

If you have any questions or concerns regarding Croydon Kendra, please do not hesitate to e-mail us at our new Kendra e-mail address (above).



For any feedback on our first issue of the "Croydon eUpdate" please speak to Shamaniben or Bhupenbhai who have compiled this fantastic eBulletin for us!

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY – SPRING TERM

Shradanjali	Wednesday	2 nd February 2011
Kendra Shradanjali	Sunday	6 th February 2011
Kendra Closed for Half term	Sunday	20 th February 2011
Bring and buy sale	Sunday	13 th March 2011
Kendra Holi Celebrations	Sunday	20 th March 2011
Annual General Meeting	Sunday	27 th March 2011
Kendra Easter Celebrations & Last day of term	Sunday	3 rd April 2011
Indoor Games Competition	Saturday-Sunday	9 th -10 th April 2011