

“Let all our children bloom as Gandhi did...”

Orphans are the lost and unclaimed luggage of humanity. They lack family, community, religion, and caste. As adults their lives are marginal at best. Shishur Sevay has taken orphan girls from Sukanya Home between 2-13 years with the purpose of raising them to their fullest potential. The four youngest are severely handicapped. Our primary contribution to society is in rehabilitating the children so they may make their contribution.. We can't know their potential unless we try.



The children arrived with infections, malaria, dental problems, and a variety of skin conditions. The handicapped children were listless and sleepy.. We have immunized all the children against DPT, polio, hepatitis B, and MMR. They have received dental and eye care. They arrived illiterate and undisciplined, at times fearful and defiant, but truly thankful for everything we give them. This is home.

When we dare to dream big:



Sonali is blind, but full of joy, and learning fast. **Ganga** can hold her head up now, and uses her hands to turn the pages of books. She loves to watch Damu and Charlie Chaplin.



Sonali February 2007 and 2008

Ganga February 2007 and 2008

Bornali February 2007 and 2008

Rani February 2007 and 2008



Bornali didn't do much for a long time. She just stared silently, tears trickling down her cheeks. **Bornali** has pierced ears so she must have had a family once.



Bornali is very sensitive to loss. She was sad the whole time **Rani** was in the hospital with seizures, **Rani** used to spin in circles all the time. In this picture she is kissing **Bornali**. The handicapped children contribute to our lives because they are able to love unconditionally, and they accept us unconditionally.. All four handicapped children will begin school at the Indian Institute for Cerebral Palsy in April. All receive physiotherapy and speech therapy. **Ganga** and **Bornali** won prizes in the local community “Sit and Draw” competition.

Dreaming Big for the Big Girls

The girls arrived without clear names, so the first hurdle in teaching them to write their names was to figure out what they were. The girls did not know numbers or alphabet or colors or shapes...Non could recognize India on a map, In the first month they learned to write their names. Bengali is the medium of instruction although they are learning English also. By May they were prepared to enter Class I at Sahapur Sabitri Balika Vidyalaya. Upon return from school each morning we hold classes for an additional six hours a day .at Shishur Sevay. All but one child has passed, with five of them having A's. Two have been chosen as class monitors. One won a handwriting competition; One competed in an all-school sports competition. All the girls recognize the map of India and have learned about leaders of Indian independence More important, the girls have developed a love for books, reading, and art. The girls came without self-discipline, understanding of study habits, or respect for their elders. Much of this has changed dramatically in the past year. There is no point in dreaming big if there is no internal discipline, goals, or respect. Their world views were narrow. We spoke of one day having “office jobs” and learned they thought this meant sweeping floors or washing dishes in an office. Some will continue academically; some will have vocational training. But all will be taught to do their jobs well, and with pride. The girls all have responsibilities in the home. They wash their dresses daily; Teams clean the kitchen after lunch, after dinner. One team cleans the classroom. All help with the handicapped. The girls would do more, but school remains the priority.



Today the girls at Shishur Sevay know India on a map, and hold India in their hearts. They will make their contributions in ways we cannot yet know.

