

From the Founder

Dear Friends,

Durga Puja is the biggest festival of West Bengal. It is also a time of socializing and family. In truth, some years these festivals have been difficult as we are somewhat socially isolated. There are many who are “like family,” but we don’t celebrate family events and festivals with them. One of my goals for Shishur Sevay was to raise the children in their culture and religion. Children in institutions do not learn about the pujas or the rituals. They remain outsiders. My Judaism gifted me the values of inclusion, tolerance and care of those in need. That's what I am doing here.

- Dr Michelle Harrison, Founder and Secretary of Childlife Preserve Shishur Sevay

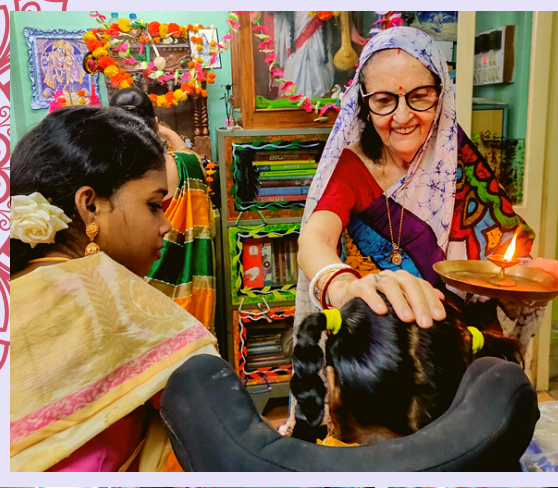
Lock down Brought Us Together



This is our current household. Our mashis – childcare workers – have not been home to their families or villages since March 2020.

The girls were masterful at planning how we would handle these celebrations under lockdown. They also wanted to celebrate the nine days of Navaratri, which we have not always done. Each day brought us bits of wisdom and light about ourselves and each other. In different words, different colors, different emotions, related to Navaratri’s nine manifestations of Ma Durga we came together as a family, people who care for and who feel cared for by each other. We mother and we are mothered. I am home. We are all home. As family and community, we wait again for the yearly return of our Goddess Maa Durga.”

OCTOBER



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The last day, following Navaratri is Dashami where we bid goodbye to Maa Durga playing with vermilion *sindoor khela* and sweets.

Days later came Lakshmi Puja. In our first years, priests came to Shishur Sevay to do the festival rituals but over the years the girls have learnt them and the staff and the girls themselves conduct all the rituals.



NOVEMBER

- The festivities and celebrations continued with Dr. Harrison's birthday.



The girls prepared a beautiful program for her and gifted her a saree that all of them painted together, which had the words 'maa' (mother) and her age in Bengali.

This is the red saree with yellow plastic sheet under



Dr. Harrison wearing the saree that the girls painted, on her birthday. Cutting cake along with Rani who shares the birth month with her.

- The girls made rangolis in the backyard and decorated the premises with lights and hand-decorated *diyas*.

DECEMBER



**This distressing year is coming to an end.
Don't really know what to expect!**

December was the month of site visits from our donors. We really appreciate these visits as we value transparency and the need for the donors to know how their contributions are being used. Vesuvius India Ltd funded us to start our free community school in 2019 through their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Program. Indian law requires that large companies donate a percentage of their profits for some form of social welfare. The head of CSR came for a site visit we gave a formal presentation of our project with a budget for the coming year. Some were not able to begin the school due to lockdown, we had unspent funds. We continued to pay the rent for the building, but that was all. CSR people was shocked and said they'd never had an NGO save unspent money. We are meticulous in making sure funds are used only for the intended purposes.

In our budget we applied the unspent funds to the following year, thus requesting less funding than expected.

- Sandeep Sarkar, from the Asha, Colorado chapter was next for a site visit. Asha has been a long-time supporter of our educational program and we remain grateful to them for their continued support over the years, through their various chapters- Cornell, CNJ, Delaware.



Purba Rudra with Sandeep Sarkar from ASHA

- Our little one demanded for some steam momos, so everyone got together and prepared this delicious dish for the family.



- In New Year's Eve we ordered in Chowmein and chicken. The year ended with celebrating the New Year's Eve, hoping for a better and healthier 2021.

THE IMPACT

- One goal of Shishur Sevay was to give the girls a strong cultural, religious values. Achieved!
- The Daughters of Shishur Sevay relate to their culture, heritage and stay close to their roots. They have so much to pass on to the next generation.
- There was a time when these girls were isolated and left alone. No home, no family. Today they are not alone. They have family. They connect their past and future through their religion, culture, and family.

To Not Feel Alone in the Universe



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[Indian Donation : shishursevay.org](https://www.shishursevay.org)

All Donations toward Childlife Preserve Shishur Sevay are tax deductible under 80G

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[U.S. Donation : friendsofshishursevay.org](https://www.friendsofshishursevay.org)

Friends of Shishur Sevay is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization

HELP US TO SUPPORT THEIR LIVES WITH DIGNITY