



Kindness • Health • Education • Laughter

KHEL ANNUAL REPORT 2015



Swami Veda Bharati at LDA

Swami Veda Bharati, formerly known as Dr. Usharbudh Arya, together with Mrs. Arya (Ammaji) founded KHEL and transformed a community. When he passed away, what Ammaji wrote isn't so much an obituary as a celebration of his life that included the mission of KHEL to bring kindness, health, education and laughter to the impoverished children of his home town, Dehradun.

Thou hast made me known to friends whom I knew not

Rabindrath Tagore

Swami Veda Bharati

1933-2015

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Swami Veda loved languages. He knew so many I cannot count and among them is the sweet lilt of Bangla. He loved Tagore's poems and this quote from Tagore's *Gitanjali* was one of his favorites. This poem fully illustrates the kind of life he lived, and seems most suitable for the occasion to celebrate his life with the world he created. He was given seats in homes not his own, not as an invited guest, but as an honored and loving teacher. He traveled far and wide into unknown lands and found kinship among strangers. He treasured the old and found it still abiding in the new. He had that ability to go back into time, pull out the relevant from the archaic and adapt it to contemporary life. His family saw this in everything he did – his three daughters, his son, their spouses, their mother, and grandchildren. Sometimes he went so far back we would sit agape, listening, lost in time and space.

Before taking sanyaasa he had already adopted a larger family than his own, prompting a few old family friends to say to his children after his Mahasamadhi – 'Thank you for sharing your father with us. This was the swami he was that he could live the rules of 'Svaahaa' - this is no more mine - and still make others feel they belonged to him.

I wondered, what I could write that others have not said, wept and written already? We are always caught in the dilemma of sorting the feelings, experiences, laughter, tears and of course the joy of the company of one who took vows of renunciation but who was also a son, uncle, spouse, father and grandfather. Some family members were concerned that I write only what is appropriate for public consumption. But what parts of life should we deny, what do we affirm?

I have hesitated in the past to bring those brahmacharya/grihasta (student/householder) portions of his life to the fore, but since they were part of his psyche how can we deny these roles that helped make him the person he eventually became, enhancing the monkhood he later adopted? The qualities of such experiences made for a more complete person, trained in life's work to continue to develop and understand that world that had always been his friend and given him a home when he left his own – a home in strange lands, a welcome in the hearts of strangers who became his students, his friends and his aides in his world wide tours of yoga practices, meditation sessions and countless lectures.

Much has already been said about his admirable scholarly achievements that were the manifestations of his desire to teach and share the knowledge of the Vedas. He was so well qualified that after his sanyaasa ceremony when Baba (Swami Rama) announced that his new name was to be Veda Bharati I was not at all surprised. He could quote the Vedas backwards and forwards from a very young age, he sang, recited and taught us not only from the scriptural treasures, but from all the Sanskrit literature that was his life. To him this literature, those Vedas, weren't dry, esoteric texts. As my son said, he took delight in learning, and I think he took delight in sharing, too.

He had reached such a state of Samadhi in this life that it was bliss to sit in meditation with him. Even in ill health he did not like refusing requests for meditation. He had full faith and belief in the One who gave him this life so that his Purpose would be successful. He had found friends in the homes of strangers for he knew of the 'one in the play of the many'.

As the poem he loved concludes – 'When one knows thee, then alien there is none, then no door is shut. Oh, grant me my prayer that I may never lose the bliss of the touch of the one in the play of the many.'

May his teachings inspire us to find that one in the many. May we work harmoniously together to continue in the accomplishment of his life's desire to spread Compassion, Truth and Love.

KINDNESS



Condolences: In addition to Swami Veda, we lost some good people in 2015. Munni Devi worked for KHEL for over 20 years, helping to look after not only our school but our students as well. She was only 46 years old when she fell in her home and struck her head. She is survived by three grown daughters, her husband, as well as many other family members • Mr. Subroto Chatterjee, KHEL's first Manager, passed away after a surgery related to an illness. KHEL's history is interwoven with his; he was the first adult we met from Shiv Puri Colony and his children were the first kids we educated • Buddi Lal was a Leprosy patient who helped us distribute food rations to other Leprosy patients. He leaves behind a daughter, Anandi, who was educated by KHEL and has a good job as a lab technician • Bhola Singh, an elderly resident of Indresh Leprosy Colony passed away in August • We are unsure of the status of Lal Mani Pandit, who went to Delhi for personal reasons and has not returned or been in contact with anyone at Indresh Leprosy Colony.

Helping others: When we had read about an attack on a group of leprosy patients not far from Dehradun, Beni Bhatt, KHEL's General Manager, traveled with his 13 year old son to offer them assistance. The residents were wary of Beni but when he offered some aid the head of the colony cried as he told how they had been attacked by

men with guns and swords and how all their valuables had been stolen. Beni gave them the donation from Swami Veda and KHEL, and also provided them with some dry food rations. The whole area is dangerous and unstable and they left as quickly as they could so that they wouldn't be caught on the roads in the dark.

Celebrations: Our Sanskrit teacher, Bhagat Shastri and his wife Preeti welcomed their first child, a son named Naitik • Kapil, the son of our teacher Sunita Rana was married in December to Komal. Congratulations!

Medical Insurance: In 2015 we added medical insurance for our staff, for which KHEL pays a percentage. We hope that this benefit will help bring stability to our employees and their families.

Improvements at LDA: After the heavy monsoons two years ago, the cement holding the railings together on the back staircase started to fall off, leaving the metal cables exposed. We replaced the old cement and metal and painted the surrounding walls.

Lions Club, Dehradun: The Lions Club of Dehradun actively supports the population in the area around LDA. They chose to honour Mrs. Manju Maurya, LDA's Principal, for her devoted service. Beni hosted this event at his home.

State Bank of India (SBI) Ladies Club: Twelve women from the Ladies Club of SBI visited LDA and donated two much needed ceiling fans.



Candle Fund Raiser: Anita and Manu Sabnani of Hong Kong conducted a very successful fundraiser for KHEL, designing and selling exquisite candles. They were assisted by Karan (17) the son of a friend. Anita said, 'There is no greater reward than to make a fundamental difference in someone's life. It was through Swami Veda's guidance that we chose to support KHEL Charities. He remains the inspiration for the good we do in the world.'

Indian Government Scholarships: Private schools in India are required to accept a certain percentage of minority students. For several years the Social Welfare Department of Uttarakhand has been trying to implement a reimbursement of tuition to schools for these children because the schools don't charge the kids. Many schools complained that they cannot cover the costs of supporting minority children while waiting for the government reimbursements (which can take years). Although we welcome any efforts on the part of the government to help those in need, this particular attempt placed a heavy burden on KHEL. We were relieved when the government decided it would give funds directly to the students via automatic deposits. Even though we're still responsible for setting up the bank accounts for incoming minority students, in the long run this new system will be much easier for KHEL.

Other Regulations: Every year, there are many changes to the regulations with which KHEL must comply. As a non-profit we maintain our status by using our funds correctly, which is monitored by the government through an accountant licensed to perform audits. Since KHEL is responsible for LDA, we must also comply with regulations related to an educational institution. Beni spends much of his time making sure we are in compliance with all regulations, which recently has included the transition to digital forms.

Use of Funds: LDA, a permanent project of KHEL, is a government-recognised school serving 300 preschool-8th grade students. KHEL has 20 employees, half of whom are teachers at LDA with many other staff members

supporting their efforts. KHEL also provides aid to three Leprosy colonies near Shiv Puri Colony – Ram Mandir, Indresh and Rotary Club. The use of funds is as follows (rupees shown in lakhs):

INR3,50,000 (USD5,840) KHEL Administration: accounting, legal, banking, travel, office expenses, regulatory • INR18,00,000 (USD28,000) KHEL/LDA Teachers & Staff: salaries, bonuses, retirement fund, health insurance, other assistance • INR4,00,000 (USD6,670) LDA: overheads, basic maintenance, regulatory • INR3,20,000 (USD5,340) LDA Kids and Community: medical camps, school books and stationery, other support to education, other aid, extracurricular activities • INR7,20,000 (USD12,000) Leprosy Colonies: emergency aid, medical aid, dry food rations • INR1,20,000 (USD1,770) Other Medical Aid • INR37,10,000 (USD59,620): Total

HEALTH



Medical Clinics: We partnered with two local nonprofits, Sankalp Foundation and Sarayu Devi Charitable Trust (SDCT). Sankalp arranges doctors, medicines and other medical supplies, and SDCT provides a large portion of the financing. LDA has the space to conduct a medical camp and the local contacts needed to inform the community. Our staff volunteers their time to assist with the participants. There is, of course, no charge and many medicines are distributed for free. Our two medical camps this year each had over 200 registrants seen by doctors, gynecologists and dentists. In addition, we administered HepB vaccinations to all our new students.

Mission Humanitaire: This is a volunteer based French organisation that works in the medical field. Jeet Bahadur, a friend of Beni's, is the Dehradun Coordinator, operating through a local NGO, Sneha Society. Jeet was assisted by Ram Kishan Mehta. In addition to providing medicines and multivitamins to all our kids, they taught basic hygiene and the proper way to brush teeth. Before they left they gave all the kids toothpaste, tooth brushes and art supplies.

Eye Camp: An eye clinic was organised on very short notice. The local mosque's imam generously used the mosque loudspeakers to inform the community since there was no time to go door to door as we usually do. Dr. Brij Bhushan of Shree Eye Care Hospital led this camp which helped over 200 participants. If any eye problems couldn't be treated immediately (such as cataracts), the patients were invited to visit Dr. Bhushan's clinic and receive free or subsidized eye care and glasses. Some of our students took part, getting tested for glasses.

Rubbish: The compost pit at LDA was built 28 years ago and wasn't designed to deal with plastic, which is a huge problem in Shiv Puri. With the help of Kamli Bhatt, our local City Councilor, we remove the compost pit and installed dustbins. LDA is now a much more sanitary and safe environment for our kids and staff.

Medical Aid: In addition to the medical camps that help large numbers of people, we provided medical aid for the birth of a child, for sick children, an elderly woman, and a parent of one of our students who needed asthma medication so he could get back to work. We have two people who receive long-term medical aid, Salman and Khooshboo. Salman has his own fund that was set up by KHEL from funds donated specifically for him.



Leprosy Colonies: KHEL has long-term relationships with three leprosy colonies, Ram Mandir, Indresh and Rotary Club. We provide ongoing assistance in the form of medical supplies, medicines, and dry food rations such as rice, flour and pulses.

Government Health Clinics: LDA is centrally located in Shiv Puri Colony and the grounds easily accommodate large groups. Every month the local government nurses, Kiran Walia and Sneha Lata, bring a team to LDA to administer vaccinations to newborns to 5 year olds, and give their mothers pre and post-natal advice.

EDUCATION



Staff Changes: To replace two teachers who resigned, we hired Shivani Lapad and Asha Noutiyal. Shivani has nursery school certification and teaches our nursery-3rd grade students. Asha has a B.Ed. and teaches math and science. Asha and Shivani come from the local community, which is good for our kids because they have teachers who understand their challenges. It's also good for the community; by supplying jobs to people in the area we give well educated individuals a reason to stay in Shiv Puri • After Munni Devi's death, we hired another maintenance staff member, Kailash. Welcome to all our new staff!

Adolescent Resource Centre (ARC): ARC is a fun after school program so the kids have a great time while learning about health, hygiene, relationships and other topics relevant to 7th and 8th graders. RDI - HIHT (Rural Development Institute - Himalayan Institute Hospital Trust) provides three counselors, Karishma, Ankita and Madhvi Gairola. Bhola Shankar Dabral, representing Dhyana Mandiram Trust (DMT), worked with other DMT members and donors to raise the funds, while also liaising with KHEL staff.

Summer School: We're pleased that one of our former students, Suman (19), asked if she could conduct summer schools programs for the neighborhood kids at LDA. Although it didn't go as smoothly as she thought it would, we encourage her to work with us again to develop her ideas more fully.

LDA Academic Report: All our students passed their final exams, with 1st through 3rd place in each class ranging from 95% to 78%. Due to recent government policies, our teachers aren't allowed to fail any children up to the 8th grade. It's gratifying that even with this regulation our students are still working hard to do well. We had 304 enrolled students for the 2015-16 year.



Buddy Project: Once a week, our 5-8th grade students meet with a 1-4th grade student to work on a project together, share a snack, help with homework, and take part in general knowledge competitions. This helps the kids to develop empathy for each other from a young age and teaches them much needed skills for adulthood. They learn that, no matter how poor they are, they have something of value to share with someone else. The program has been running for a year and the kids look forward to the days when they get to hang out with their Buddies.

Educational Seminar: Beni took our teachers to a seminar on primary education, arranged by Dev Bhoomi Institute of Education. It was beneficial for our teachers to listen to speakers such as the Vice Chancellor of HNBG University and the Director of Uttarakhand's Education Department.

Saraswati Bhadri: Congratulations to Saraswati for earning her Ph.D. in Psychology! Saraswati is a former LDA teacher who was helped by KHEL at a critical time in her life. She now lives with her husband and two children in the US.

Teachers' Workshop: Beni arranged an educational workshop for our teachers with Mr. Jeet Bahadur. New teaching methods help the teachers find innovative ways to make the curriculum more interesting, which makes learning easier and fun for the children. Our teachers were pleased to have the opportunity to improve their skills.

LAUGHTER



Annual Picnic: After exams, our older students deserve a treat. We took them to Poanta Sahib, a historical gurudwara (Sikh place of worship) on the banks of the Yamuna River. After visiting the gurudwara, they kids went to Rampur Mandi Park to enjoy a picnic and a post-exam relaxing afternoon with their friends.

Visitors/Volunteers: Shauna, a long time friend and supporter of KHEL, spent an afternoon at LDA, teaching Yoga to the children. She led the teachers in a relaxation/meditation exercise. For some of the teachers this was their first experience of meditation • Anirudh, Beni's son, has volunteered as a translator for KHEL in the past. In 2015 he spent a portion of his Saturdays teaching English and general knowledge to the older kids. He also celebrated his birthday by distributing sweets to all the kids, which of course made them very happy.



Sports: The poverty ridden home lives of our kids don't reflect what they see on TV and the internet. The boys do drugs (whatever is cheapest like sniffing glue) and the girls turn their frustrations inward, becoming depressed and suicidal. We offer LDA's grounds for after school sports which gives the kids something to do. Some of these kids take part in local tournaments and asked us if they could organise one at LDA. Ten teams participated, and two of them were made up of our neighbourhood kids.

Teachers' Educational Trip: This year our teachers went to Lucknow, Varanasi and Sarnath. In Lucknow, the capital of Uttar Pradesh, they visited Bara Imambada, a massive shrine constructed 400 years ago by the Mughal Empire. In Varanasi they saw Benares Hindu University (BHU), a well-known university, and Kashi Vishwanath Temple which is one of the nine temples of Shiva. Sarnath is famous for being the first place where Buddha taught.

Holidays: Our kids love celebrating the holidays! • Rakhi commemorates the bond between siblings and the kids made Rakhi bracelets together • On Teachers' Day, the students presented their teachers with a card that said, 'Dear Teachers, in play you taught us to climb the stairs of Life. Not only do you teach us academic subjects, but you also guide us on the path that reveals the meaning of success' • The Lions Club sponsored the program for LDA's Independence Day commemoration. They distributed treats to the kids, and invited the staff to join them for



breakfast • On Children's Day the little kids enjoy games like Musical Chairs while the older kids have competitions including some traditional Indian games like Kabbadi and Kho.

Ammaji's 80th Birthday: On Maji's 80th birthday, the children and staff of KHEL planted a Neem tree in her honour. Many years ago Dr. Arya (before he was Swami Veda) planted a Neem tree at LDA, too. We hope the new Neem tree has a long and happy life at LDA, and we wish Ammaji a long and happy life, too. May we all have a chance to sit under these Neem trees and remember the two people who brought KHEL to life.

SRSB: A small group of kids and staff attended one day of the Children's Retreat at Swami Rama Sadhaka Grama (SRSB), Swami Veda's ashram in Rishikesh. The kids had a great time learning basic yoga and meditation, and listening to stories told by Ma Radha.

WELCOME

We welcome Swami Ritavan Bharati, Ashram Pramukh at Swami Rama Sadhaka Grama (SRSB) and spiritual successor to Swami Veda Bharati in the Himalayan Tradition.

THANKS



Thanks to: Lions Club: Mr. Omi, Mr. Obrai, Mr. Sharma, Mrs. Obrai, Mr. Krishan, Mr. Dutta, Captain Yadav, Mrs. Joshi, Mrs. Yadav • Ladies Club of SBI: Mrs. Rao, Mrs. Yadav • Dr. Chauhan, Dr. Tyagi, Dr. Singh, Dr. Bhushan • Kamli Bhatt, Mr. Rabbani, Mr. Sajwan, Anirudh Bhatt • Sankalp and SDCT: Sanjay and Rakhi Maini, volunteers • Bholaji • DMT • RDI-HIHT • Mission Humanitaire: Jeet Bahadur, Mr. Philip, volunteers • KHEL's wonderful employees • Arya/Persaud/Haas families: IT, social media, the occasional shoulder to cry on, and financial support so some of us can volunteer our time at KHEL.

To our friends around the world, we couldn't do this without you!
To Ammaji, for your love and inspiration during a very tough year.
To Swami Veda, no longer physically present but always in our hearts, we miss you.

In Service,

