

April 12, 2016

Dear Friends,

In Banaras, chaat is a popular snack sold from roadside carts. It consists of spicy potatoes and garbanzo beans covered with two sauces, one a yogurt sauce spiked with chili powder and the other a sweet and sour tamarind sauce. Over that they sprinkle salty crunchy bits and diced raw onions, tomatoes and coriander leaves. The mixture of textures and flavors (soft, crunchy, sweet, salty, sour, chili hot, yogurt cool) creates a zingy tongue riot! It's yummy.



Whenever I have a mixed up day here -- joy, sorrow, tiredness, anger, relief -- I call it a chaat day.

The last few days at Asha Deep have felt like that. After the joy in the school created by our big performance and Holi holidays, the graduation ceremony and the current countdown before summer vacation, we were hit by the sudden death of one of our kindergarten boys.

After the Holi break, he returned to school, but he was under the weather. Last Thursday, he came to school, but he was so sick, his teacher told him that he should stay home until he felt better. The next day we heard that he had died during the night.

The family had moved from the village to Varanasi last year so that their children could get a good education. They had a son and two younger daughters. They were all admitted to Asha Deep last July.

Brijesh, the boy, was a wonderful student, obedient and happy and bright. He performed in the item that I accompanied with guitar during the Spring Extravaganza, jumping like a frog and dancing like a peacock.



Brijesh, acting like an elephant

Later on in March, he got sick. His family took him to a doctor, but either they went too late or the doctor didn't take proper care (many local doctors, especially the ones who charge lower fees, practice poorly). He was diagnosed with jaundice and died within days.

Of course, the news was shocking for us. His family is also in shock. They have returned to the village; I would be surprised if they come back to Varanasi. Losing a son is always tragic, but here the family must deal with the added social burden of feeling cursed. People will whisper about them. They will later have to bear the burden of paying dowry for both their girls and have lost the chance to gain dowry with the marriage of their son.



*We remember Brijesh
and his sisters, Khushi and Khushboo*

Please send healing thoughts for this family. The mother was in a deep state of shock when she left. The girls have lost their brother and are in danger of losing the chance for a good education. The father is carrying a heavy load. Our kindergartners are dealing with the loss of a classmate and friend.

Life is like chaat.

love, Connie

