



Helping Alleviate Poverty in south India
Registered UK Charity No. 1122876

The Awake Mercy Home was founded in 2002 to provide family-style care and support for a small number of children in need. The home should now be housing over 70 children and is run by a husband and wife team (Krishnamoorthi and Elsie), with the support of a local committee of trustees. HAPsi has supplied funds to this registered Indian charity

An Awake Story

Kaviyarasan is an 11th standard (Year 12 in UK) boy who has a younger brother. His mother left the family when they were very young. His father is an occasional worker who usually works daily, collecting coconut leaves for thatching roofs or sometimes walls. He is paid Rs150-200 (about £1.50) a day when he is given work, which is not regular. They have no permanent house but the present one is covered with old asbestos sheets, which leak, and the floor is just earth. They often sleep in a nearby temple. The picture above shows a thatched and patched house, better than that of Kaviyarasan.



When the coronavirus spread into the area it caused much fear and anxiety in the neighbourhood. The family doesn't have any savings, living day to day, and when the government announced the lockdown for months they couldn't travel, had little work and virtually no income. They didn't have the cash to buy even the basics of rice, dhal or vegetables. Low quality rice was made freely available at government shops and the family prepared tomato gravy with onions and chilli powder. This was all they ate for months.

His father often had to borrow from money lenders at an interest rate of 15%. They had to repay Rs100 daily when they had the money, and Kaviyarasan learnt how to help his father to prepare the coconut leaves for roofing or make brooms. They ate in the mornings and at night, going without food at midday because they were working or didn't have enough. Sometimes they would eat rice with pickles or green leaves from the countryside. Rice with butter milk was also taken; anything which could fill the stomach, no matter if it was healthy or tasty. Occasionally his brother asked for chicken curry which pained his father as there was no way he could provide that. There were no entertainments, no visits to family members. All they could think of was earning enough to repay the loans.

This has been an unforgettable time. As Kaviyarasan says "Totally those days were raw and full of sorrows and fear. I pray to God that we should not face worst situations as this forever."



The occupants of Awake during the lockdown took themselves into the hills to celebrate Diwali with the villagers. This was very special and made the lockdown boredom a little more bearable.

A New Trustee!



Jancy was born in Tamil Nadu and lived her childhood in the Dindigul district, where her maternal home remains. She studied engineering at Trichy university, before securing her first job as a software engineer in Chennai, where she lived for several years before meeting her husband, Glenn, our Hapsi chairman in the summer of 2006. It was then that she first learned about Elsie and Krishna, their incredible work and their original, rented and small Awake Mercy home, just an hour's drive away from her native village. Two years later, Jancy and Glenn married in India and Elsie, Krishna and the children of AMH attended the wedding; the children performed many songs and dances to win the hearts of Jancy's close family. After marriage, Jancy moved to England for a new life with Glenn and she has always been in the background of HAPSI's work, creating the website, which she updates regularly. The friendship between both families has grown with many visits back home; including when Krishna, Elsie and many children from AMH attended the baptisms of both Jancy and Glenn's children at the village church, as well as visits to the AMH of course. Jancy's mother tongue is obviously Tamil and she understands the intricacies; the way everyday life works in Tamil Nadu and some of the complexities of bureaucracy in India, which she is able to chat about freely with Elsie and Krishna, to get an even better picture of what is happening over there on the ground. Jancy was recently invited to join us as a trustee, which she accepted and we are very happy to have her now formally as a member of the team.

Some Indian News



There are still riots on the streets of Delhi, and they were accompanied by violence and hospitalisations (and 18000 tractors). This is not because of the spreading of the virus (but may be adding to it), but is the result of the reaction by farmers to the proposed new agricultural bill which will force the many farmers with smallholdings to rely on big business to purchase their produce. The usual free markets will exist for a while it seems, but for how long is unknown, and as over 50% of the population is employed in agriculture, the farmers are very concerned about prices being controlled by large corporations, and profit margins being severely reduced. This in turn could cause a good deal more unemployment and would impinge on the economy of rural areas such as that around Awake Mercy Home. There is so much distress in the industry anyway, resulting in a great many suicides over the years, this action could easily exacerbate the problems.

As all the children taken in by the Awake home are from very poor families who are often employed on a part-time basis by the many small farms and some larger landowners in the area, this would cause a bigger need for well run children's homes like Awake. The government does run many hostels near schools, but these are not usually good places from my experience.



The situation more local to the Awake Mercy Home is that there have been moves to involve Krishnamoorthi and his team in a plan to introduce home-schooling for some of the children in the 40 strong group which had been in Awake's care before the pandemic, mainly because they had no organised schooling in their neighbourhoods. The teachers have taken classes in two villages, capturing the process in photographs and videos for the officials to see. There seems to be no such requests given to teachers employed by the district education department. This peripatetic schooling required finding a suitable building or space which is large enough, and taking selected teaching resources from the Awake home. It is a reflection of Awake's willingness to work for all needy children, and its quality of care, that this has been requested.



Shooting a scene of the Film on location

The Children's Film



The idea behind making the film about two children from a village community and their experiences in the Awake Home first came to light, as so many good ideas do, in a Bristol pub. I had previously visited the home 7 years before, and remained a supporter. My friend, the film-maker Jack Hayter and I had the idea of asking if any child in the home wanted to share their story. One story would be selected as part of a film-making workshop at the home. We approached the HAPSI trustees and they in turn contacted Krishna, who was keen to try.

Two of the children wrote fantastic stories. Choosing which one of the stories to focus on was very difficult as they were both very well written and emotional. Eventually however, we settled on Lakshmi's story. The film was to be performed in the local language of Tamil to allow the children to make it their own project and was kindly translated by Krishna and his son Thaniesh.

The first few scenes of the story were filmed in and around a village, nestled in the Palani Hills where we were kindly accommodated. This included several stunning shots of the village and surrounding forest, along with a fire dance scene at night. A group of teenagers who lived at the home joined us to get involved behind the camera. Between them, they planned and set up a water pump to create rainfall during one of the scenes. They were shown how to hold the boom mic, use reflectors for lighting, sync sound with a clapper board and directing terminology such as "Speed, Set, Action!". This was an enormous collaborative effort where the kids could get a truly hands on experience. The latter half of the film was shot in and around Awake Mercy Home.

Simon King

How you can see the film

The film has recently been released on YouTube and can be found by searching <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GjXBJkxPM> Ultimately, it is intended to raise awareness and more support for the charity. If this article was of interest and you watch the film then please consider making a donation to HAPSI and sharing this story on social media. If you are looking to do the maximum amount of good in the world, for a charitable donation then there is not much of a better cause than HAPSI.



Every donation, no matter the size, makes a huge difference to these children's lives, and 100% of the donation goes to the care of the children.

Simon King

Please also see the Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/search/top?q=hapsicharity>

HAPSI has no administration costs.

All funds received are used to help needy children in south India. Remember that if you pay tax, HAPSI can claim Gift Aid. Please ask for a form to

giftaid it

Send donations, cheques to HAPSI, to the
Treasurer, HAPSI, 23 Onslow Gardens, Wimborne BH21 2QG
 or visit the website at www.hapsi.co.uk

You can make contact by email at hapsi@btinternet.com

The names of individual children have been changed to protect them.