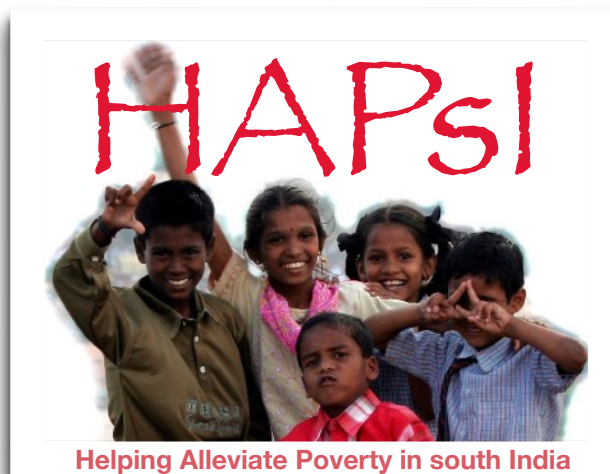


The Awake Mercy Home was founded in 2002 to provide family-style care and support for a small number of children in need. The home is now housing over 60 children and is run by a husband and wife team (Krishnamoorthi and Elsie), with the support of a local committee of trustees. HAPsI has supplied funds to this registered Indian charity since 2008, when the present site was purchased.

Over 250 children have had the Awake experience over the years from 2015 - 2023, giving them a much brighter future. Many are of low caste, are semi or full orphans, or are from broken families.

**This success would not have happened without your loyal support**



Helping Alleviate Poverty in south India

Registered UK Charity No. 1122876

**Newsletter Summer 2023**



Resident Artist, Viji



....and one of her masterpieces



### Senior Girls begin a new term

Six senior girls, of 9th standard and above, leave each morning for their local state high school while, at Awake, there are more families arriving at the home with younger children to register.

### Awake Residential Specialised Training Centre (RSTC)

Krishna and Elsie have again agreed to take over 50 children in the 1st to 8th standards who have no easy access to schools in their locality. These children are mostly from tribal communities in villages of the Palani Hill area. RSTC is a project financed by the Tamil Nadu Government which aims to help these children recover lost ground in their education due to the COVID epidemic when they were sent back to their villages and could not easily make any progress in their studies. There have been many requests for places in Awake, as the reputation of the quality of care and educational success spreads throughout the region. Awake has three full-time teachers and a headmaster on site, and with the greater space afforded by the new hall, there are plenty of opportunities for progress.

Many people either know someone in their village who has been a child of Awake, or more frequently they have relatives who have benefited from the love and care which has been given there. The picture shows Vetri, an old student of Awake and his elder brother, Kannan and his two children. They arrived one morning bringing Kannan's children for registration. They come from a very poor hillside village which has no school and from first-hand they know well how Awake can help to improve their lives.



## John and Jacque Burden's visit

In early February this year John and Jacque Burden selflessly took nearly a fortnight out of their grand tour of India to spend some valuable time with the children and staff, as a full part of the Awake family in Maniyakaranpatti. With their professional farming and teaching experience the couple launched into a frenzy of activity to the benefit of all, their hosts, the animals and we hope themselves. They left having created a fantastic and varied vegetable garden, a chicken house with compound, and above all the children had many precious memories of being taught by inspirational people. I hope they do not mind me adding a few quotes from their very moving letter of thanks to Krishna and Elsie.

“Krishna, Elsie and the whole team ..... you have devoted your lives to improving the life of so many others, allowing the creation of a unique family where every member is a unique and valuable part.

“Children .....live life to the full. Believe in your dreams and respect and support your family members. Thank you for allowing us to visit your villages. It has been a life experience for us, one which we could never have experienced without you.”



John and Jacque at the opening of their garden

## Changes to Awake

The 'new' hall is now fully furnished and decorated. It works well for so many activities including entertaining guests and official meetings, which seem to happen frequently. The two kitchens are superb. There is a



Vairamani showing her skills

large room with a gas-fuelled range and worktops for food preparation, and a second kitchen in a covered area outside the rear door, with wood burning stoves to reduce expenditure on fuel. The whole building looks magnificent, both inside and out with its new coat(s) of paint and murals designed by Viji, an old Awake student, and painted by her with the enthusiastic help of staff and children. The hall is supplied



Jothimani and children outside the hall

with solar power from the rooftop panels and it is hoped that this can be repeated on the other buildings to minimise the electricity bills.

The Boys' accommodation is also looking good with its covered 'stage', the access ramp and front rail for safety, and the new large space on the roof with its metal structure supporting the roof and walls. The interior wall linings of this have to be completed before it can be used but it has great potential as another multi-purpose room. The compound wall which runs alongside the rear of this building has been repaired and rendered up to the new gate which is yet to be completed for use. This new access to the site will be for kitchen and commercial deliveries. The gate used at present will remain solely for children and visitors to the home to improve the safety of the whole site.



The Boss Painter



Vellanganni enjoying his work

The Girls' accommodation now looks in much need of attention and the compound wall down the side of this building will have to be rebuilt to ensure site security. There is also the question of the vehicle which is used for so many purposes. It is a very small people-carrier which was bought second-hand eight years ago. It is not strong enough to be used for the necessary hill village trips, and its transmission is becoming noisy. Around the vicinity of the home it is in daily use for school and shopping trips. It will have to be replaced soon. These three expensive projects are essential for the future of the home, and we need your continued support.



Another mural by Viji

## Tribal Village Communities

Leaving the shower cubicle this morning I was reminded of my recent stay and the Indian way. The Indian shower head is a plastic jug and the tray is a large bucket. The water is cool and very 'refreshing' (the outside temperature was in the high 30s most days). I did try a few cold showers at home when I returned from last month's trip, but as the weather here has cooled I have resumed to using the electronically controlled thermostat. I'm still a sucker for technology and comfort I guess. However I retain the many images of life in the hillside tribal communities and wonder at the lack of facilities available. There is little access to clean running water. Water is collected in buckets from a nearby stream or standpipe. There is little evidence of toilet facilities. On a visit to one village in the hills I did see some government built toilets but was told the people never used them as they were never maintained. This is always the case I've learned. However most people and especially the women and girls, dress amazingly well and cleanly. I don't know how they maintain this beautiful state. So when it comes to new applications for places in Awake's RSTC section I wonder why it is that old students of Awake who are bringing their offspring for admission, do sometimes return to their villages after school life and make a living there, when they could find 'better' living conditions elsewhere. However it always occurs to me when I visit these villages that the scenery is very special (but sadly the rubbish piles are increasing), the communities seem so tightly knit and I marvel at the ability for most villagers to look so healthy. Of course I do see individuals like Kannan who I have mentioned already in this newsletter. He has been



Paddy field worker



Girls in a tribal village

through a children's home (not Awake), and from his brother has learned that Awake offers children the best care and access to education of any similar institution. I feel that at least Awake children do have a much wider scope of opportunities after school, but there is always going to be some who will prefer to return to their home background and use their skills to improve the environment there.



**AWAKE MERCY HOME - 2023**

