



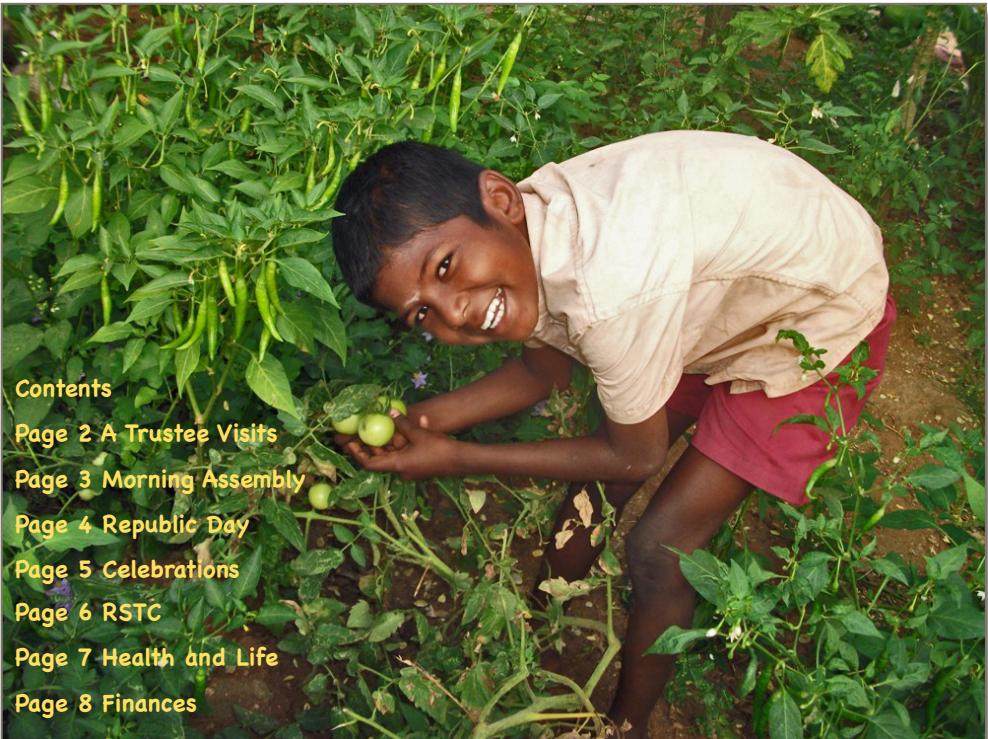
# HAPSI

Helping Alleviate Poverty in south India

Registered UK Charity No. 1122876

## Newsletter Spring 2016

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 now houses 63 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.



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## Welcome Hon. Trustee, to our home!

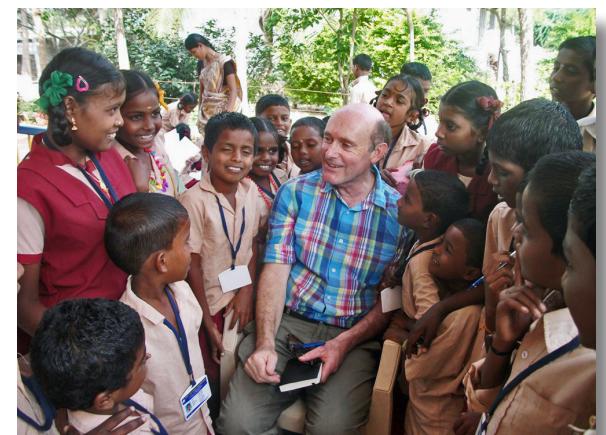


The first thing that strikes you when you arrive at the Awake Mercy Home is the extraordinary sense of warmth and calm which emanates from Elsie and Krishna. There are 63 children now, many of them from remote tribal areas high in the hills.

The trees have grown bigger and the buildings look much more complete. The mixtures of colours – pale green, pink, orange and blue – seems very 'Indian'. I was greeted by two lines of children clapping a welcome song at the gate.

On the ground at the gate and the entrance to the home were some intricate rangoli patterns and a bunch of flowers from the garden. It was all very personal.

Different children had all made a contribution. I got to know them all a lot better during my three day stay.



## Morning Assembly

The Awake Mercy Home is a complete world which provides children with a safe and caring environment. This is where the children eat, sleep, play and pray. It is also where they go to school and the spaces are used flexibly to meet these needs.



The morning assembly, for example, takes place in the drive where cars are sometimes parked. After the usual prayers and oath of allegiance,

the children select a daily poem and proverb which they share with others.

As it was Monday morning I was called upon the hoist the flag at the start of the week. A quick tug on the rope not only hauls the flag some 20 feet into the air, it also releases some

confetti which floats across the yard and into the lines of neatly dressed children. Needless to say I was called up to say a few wise words.



## Waking up to Republic Day



When I go downstairs I am given a little Indian flag to pin to my crumpled shirt (should have got this ironed). Two gentlemen from the local village council (panjayat) are here for the assembly. They look serious and dignified in their white dhotis. I am invited to say a few words and speak about democracy and co-operation – Krishna translates. Then each child is given a treat – a great sugary ball with bean powder based called ladoo which is the usual way to celebrate special events. Then its noodles for breakfast (another treat) and day unfolds before us as the sun rises higher in the sky and the temperature begins to soar.

The games begin after 4pm after the heat of the day. There are two teams, tigers and lions. The captains all shake hands before they begin. Much time and effort went into selecting the teams the night before. Some of the younger children rush over to the altar in the corner of the grounds to offer a quick prayer before the fun begins. There are lots of different races – running, skipping, hopping. A group of sponsors arrive from a nearby village to join in the celebrations. A tribal girl who is suffering from a bad cough sits on the edge. Her parents are divorced and she is worried about her family but she is seems to be enjoying watching.



## From Stephen's diary

Today is Republic Day (January 26<sup>th</sup>). The children started preparing yesterday evening, cleaning the assembly area, painting bricks orange and white (two of the colours in the Indian flag) and arranging strings of bunting from the surrounding trees. At one point I woke in the night to find some children devising rangoli patterns under the light of the full moon. This morning several vehicles with loud speakers cruised along the nearby road, blaring out messages. Apparently there will be a big military parade in Delhi later in the day.

Many of the games are really inventive. In one event the youngest children are arranged in a line with their arms tied to their sides and have to jump for sweets suspended above them on a wire. It is surprisingly hard. There is a game that involves running with a spoon in your mouth. There is a frog jumping race. But the best and most popular is the blindfold game which involves trying to smash a ceramic pot with a stick. The pot is filled with liquid suspended about 8 feet above the ground and participants are distracted by the 'helpful' advice from the surrounding crowd.

## Republic Day Music and Dance

The grey evening light has sucked the colour out of the day before the children start dressing up for the dance programme. With so many tribal children in the Home, it seems appropriate to focus on tribal music. After a few technical hitches – the amp breaks down and has to be taken to the local village for some emergency repairs – the programme begins. We sit in the open air as the moon rises orange then silver in the night sky beyond the stage. The dancing gets increasingly animated. One little five year old especially seems totally involved in the music and dancing. The energy and enthusiasm is palpable. There can be no doubt that these are very happy children indeed.

## Pongal



## The Residential Special Training Centre



Awake Mercy receives funds from the Indian government under the Residential Special Training Centre (RSTC) scheme. This scheme is aimed at children who have dropped out of school and is part of a national initiative called 'Education for All'. The scheme pays for children's education as well as their food and welfare. It has been designed in great detail – there is a specified menu for every day of the week, and an allowance for transport. As with so many similar schemes it is well intentioned and has children's well-being at heart. However there are strict reporting procedures which are onerous and time-consuming, taking Krishna and Elsie from the care they give.

## Health

Thankfully the area around the Awake Mercy Home missed most of the torrential rain which brought flooding to many other parts of Tamil Nadu in December. However, many of the children were affected by an infection which swept through the district in the aftermath of the floods. At one point 18 children had to be taken to hospital in a single day suffering from fever, vomiting and headaches. The treatment, which involved a medicine made from a special type of neem, helped to bring about a swift and immediate cure. There has been no lasting damage.

## Another Birthday



Learning the business ... what is the tamil equivalent to 'Community Chest'?

It costs £260 a year to keep a child at the Awake Mercy Home. The government's RSTC (Residential Special Training Centre) scheme pays according to the number of children and local sponsors cover a further 10% of the total. This means that over 50% of the costs are covered by HAPSI. Without our supporters it would be impossible for the home to survive in its present form.

## 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, 61 Dunyeats Road, Broadstone BH18 8AD** or visit the website at [www.hapsi.co.uk](http://www.hapsi.co.uk) You can also give online through [JustGiving.com/hapsi](http://JustGiving.com/hapsi) or you can text a £10 (or more) donation though JustGiving by typing **HAPI32 £10 to 70070**. You will be asked if you wish to use giftaid. The names of individual children have been changed to protect them.