



April 2023

## Post Covid Visit Report April 2023 - From Muriel Thomson



Children return with their partners and families.

**My first visit for 3 years:** Finally after a three year gap due to the Covid situation I was able to return to India. I couldn't believe how the children had changed in my absence. I hardly recognised any of the them. Children who were in school uniforms on my last visit are now young adults attending college. Others who were in their early years at school are now grown up teenagers. A number of the children who were youngsters when I first visited in 2006 are now married and have children of their own. During my visit I was able to meet up with almost all the children who have been supported by the St. Joseph Centre Project throughout the last 17 years. I spent a lovely day one weekend when many of them came back to visit the Home they had grown up in. It was great to hear them say how the love and care they had been given in the St. Joseph Centre and the education opportunities they had received over the years from the Project had made such a difference to their life situation. With them all now settled in jobs and earning a decent wage they are able to support themselves and have a good standard of living.

### **Vinitha teaching at a Special Needs School**

Vinitha was six months old when her father died. Her mother then found herself in a situation where she was left homeless with Vinitha and her older sister Jaya Marie. All three were all taken into care in the St. Joseph Centre. Both children were brought up by the Sisters of the St. Joseph Centre and Vinitha's mother was given a job there as a cook. This allowed the family to stay together. We supported Vinitha right throughout her schooldays at the local Tamil school. She completed her Government school exams then she moved on to a college in Chennai taking a degree in English Literature. After passing her degree she had her mind set on joining the Indian Police. However, she failed the Police entrance exam. Vinitha then decided to make a change of direction. She did a BEd in Special Education and has now secured a job at a School in Chennai teaching children with special needs. She teaches English to children from Kindergarten to 7th Standard. She has also picked up a part time job in the evenings working at a Therapy Centre where she teaches computer science to 12th Standard students. These students are studying on the National Institute of Open Schools. Vinitha loves her job and is finding the work very rewarding. Vinitha's sister Jaya Marie is now married with two children. Vinitha and her mother live with Jaya Marie and her family in rented accommodation in Chennai. It's lovely that the family have been able to stay together all these years.



Vinitha now a teacher.

**Thank you to all our supporters:** I would like to thank all who have donated to the six Projects and also the Sponsors who committed to supporting children on the English Education Programme. Without your generosity and support we would not have been able to improve the health, education, welfare and living conditions for all the children. I thank Sister Arul Mary, Sister Jayaseeli & the staff of the St Joseph's Social Service Centre in Chennai, the 'Little Drops Charity Trust' in the UK, our 'Little Drops Charity Trust' Director in Chennai and all at Montfort School. My thanks also go to Dr Sunny of Koodu Trust in Nilgiris District, Pastor Manoharan of Grace Vision Centre in Dharmapuri, The staff of CHES Home & the Prema Vasam Home in Chennai & all at CKB organization in Andhra Pradesh.

**Little Drops Charity Trust—Registered Charity Number: SC028069**

**Projects : \*St. Joseph Centre \*Koodu Trust \*GVC \*CHES \*Prema Vasam Homes \*CKB**

**Cyril completes college and secures a job:**

In 2006 when I first visited India I met Cyril a young boy of 4 years old. Cyril is the youngest of four children and he was taken into care in the St. Joseph Centre when his father died. His other siblings being of school age were able to remain at home with their mother. Cyril was one of the first group of children placed on our English Education Programme in 2007 at a local school in Chennai. He quickly picked up English language, studied hard and gained good grades right throughout his school days in Chennai. At the age of 14, with a change in family circumstances Cyril was rehabilitated back to his village with his mother and other siblings. It was a very difficult time for Cyril having to leave all the other boys and girls that he'd grown up with in the St. Joseph Centre. We continued to support his education enrolling him in an English



Cyril starting school 2007.



Cyril now working for the ICICI Bank.

school in his village. His new school Head Mistress was aware of his background circumstances and became Cyril's friend and guardian. She arranged extra homework classes for him in the evenings, ensured he always had a good meal and was always there for him when he needed advice and help. Cyril passed all his Government exams and secured a place in college for a 3 year BSC Physics course. He successfully completed his Under Graduate course last year then took on a six month Oracle IT course in Chennai. I met with Cyril during my visit and I was overjoyed to hear that the previous day he had been successful at an interview and had secured a job with the ICICI bank. Cyril has now completed the bank training course and started work as a Senior Officer at a branch in Chennai. He plans to go on and take his banking exams. It's been a delight to watch Cyril grow up over the years and it's been a privilege to assist him with his education. Cyril has matured into a very nice, polite young adult and he is a great role model for all his peers. We wish him every success for his future.

**The Six Projects that are supported:**

The St. Joseph Centre was the initial Project set up after I visited there for a month in 2006 to do voluntary work. St. Joseph Centre is a Home in Chennai

for orphaned and semi-orphaned children. The Project funds the Hostel Care needs for the children living in the Home. It funds the school fees at English & Tamil medium Schools for children from the St. Joseph's Centre and for a number of children from the poor neighbourhood area. School uniforms are provided for all the children. We've employed teachers to assist with homework. College fees are being funded for 18 children who now attend various colleges in Chennai. A Health



Children of St. Joseph Centre receive gifts—Chennai.

Programme and medical care is provided for all the children. Christmas gifts, an Annual Day Out, and other treats are given to all the children and staff. Over several years the complete renovation of the Home has been funded to allow the St. Joseph Centre to be brought up to a suitable living standard.

**Five other Projects are supported throughout South India:**

- \* The Koodu Trust, Nilgiris Hills area.
- \* The Grace Vision Centre, Dharmapuri.
- \* The CHES Home, Chennai.
- \* Prema Vasam Home, Chennai.
- \* CKB Project, Andhra Pradesh.



5 Students attending Alpha Arts & Science College.

### 10 Montfort School students pass Exams:

Ten Montfort School students who were supported on our English Education Programme completed their final Board Exams last summer. All 10 students successfully gained pass marks in all subjects. It was a difficult time for them with the schools closed for almost two years due to Covid lockdowns. During that time we were able to provide essential mobile phones and laptops so that they could continue with their studies online. They have now all secured places at various colleges in Chennai where they are enrolled on 3 year Under Graduate courses. While I was in Chennai I visited the Alpha Arts & Science College where a number of students are attending various courses. I met with their Heads of Department and I was pleased to be given a positive report on their performances in their first semester. Another five students are in their second year of their Under Graduate courses in other colleges in Chennai. These students were also supported from kindergarten right throughout their school years at Montfort. All five students are doing extremely well and gaining very good marks in their term exams. We will continue to support all the students for their Under Graduate courses.

### Nikhil wins National Arts competition:

When I first went to India in 2006 to the St. Joseph Centre I was unable to speak a word of Tamil so a young trainee nun called Sister Freeda was assigned to accompany me as I travelled about Chennai. When I returned the following year I visited Sister Freeda's family across in the west of India up in the Nilgiris Hills. Over the years I've got to know her family well and was delighted when her brother got married and they had a son. Her brother who fully understands the values of an education enrolled their



Nikhil wins Art competition.

son Nikhil in a local English speaking school in their village. Nikhil was doing great in school and he picked up English language very easily. As he moved up the school years and the school fees increased his parents were struggling to finance the funding. On hearing of their plight I agreed to offer assistance and for a number of years now we have assisted with the school fees for young Nikhil. Nikhil is now in VI Standard. He studies well at school and is gaining excellent grades for all subjects. He is a very talented artist and has won many competitions and trophies for his art over the last few years. Last year he won a National Art Competition and had his artwork printed on the front cover of the Indian National Children's



Nikhil's Indian Cultural Art work.

magazine. He's an excellent all rounder. Not only does he do well in his studies and sport but he sings beautifully in the school choir, plays drums in the school band and is also an altar boy in the local church.

\* 100% of all donations go directly to The 6 Projects.

\* The 6 Projects support children in Southern India.

\* The Projects provide for the Health, Education, Welfare & Social needs of the children.

**Grace Vision Centre Project:**

GVC in Dharmapuri is a Christian organisation that works with the rural poor. GVC supports children from five rural villages around Dharmapuri. The children are from the lowest caste families. Their parents have low paid jobs as cobblers or funeral drum beaters. We give support to provide teachers to run after school homework classes for one and a half hours each evening. The classes have proved invaluable and many children who attended them in the past have gone on to secure places in colleges. A number of years ago Little Drops Charity Trust built a Medical Clinic and we provide a nurse. The nurse conducts weekly clinics and she runs Health Programmes in the villages. The nurse also works with the young students who have reached puberty and have no one to go to for advice and help.



Children at one of GVC Tuition classes.



Children of one of the Student Development Centres.

**Koodu Trust Project:** The Koodu Trust Project founded by Dr Sunny, supports the people in many villages in the Nilgiris Hills in Tamil Nadu. This is one of my favourite Projects to visit because it's in such a beautiful part of India right in amongst the tea plantations. The majority of the children in the villages are either Tribal or the children of the many tea pickers. At the village schools they don't have sufficient teachers to teach every subject. We give support by funding six Student Development Centres in the villages. The Student Development Centres provide high quality after school education to the children who are underachieving. This ensures that every child has basic competency in Tamil, English and Maths. The monthly reports that Koodu Trust provide us are showing significant improvements

in the learning abilities of the children. I visited a number of the Development Centres and was very impressed with the level of teaching the children were receiving. It's a very worthwhile Project and ensures the children receive the necessary level of education. We also provide a Health and Personal Hygiene Programme for the young teenage students. The aim of the Programme is to convey the importance of personal hygiene. The Programme with the support of nurses from the Government Health Centre discusses various topics such as environmental pollution, hygiene and sexual related diseases.

**RIP Annie:** I first met Annie in 2009 when she was 2 years old. Along with her older brother and sister she was taken into care in the St. Joseph Centre in Chennai after their mother died. Annie suffered various health problems some of which were genetic. Annie was in poor health and after numerous hospital tests she was diagnosed with glycogen storage disease and was also HIV positive. Annie was moved to a Home specifically for children with HIV where she received specialised medical treatment. Her health improved but she was never well enough to attend school regularly. In Covid lockdown Annie returned to live with her father. Sadly in 2022 she picked up Covid which affected her badly and gave her lingering chest problems. Last summer she contracted TB. With her very low immune system Annie was unable to fight her deteriorating chest condition. She very sadly passed away in September at the age of 16. Annie was a lovely girl who bore her illnesses bravely. No matter how poorly she felt she could always raise a smile. Our thoughts are with her family as they come to terms with their sad loss. Annie will be forever in our hearts. May she rest in peace.



Annie.