

Seeds on the Wind

NEWS FROM BETHANIA • FALL 2009

*“The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me,
because the LORD has anointed me to preach good news to the poor...”*

Beautiful

Athma Raj and Sudha looked at each other with a tired sadness. Their daughter, Sanjana was playing happily in the next room. They could hear her humming and talking to herself. Arvind sat, safely secured in his chair, unable to communicate clearly. Sudha wiped his face—Arvind had been born with cerebral palsy and was not able to do many things for himself. Athma had prayed and prayed, asking God, “Why? How had this happened?” He and his wife were both intelligent, hard-working and healthy people. There seemed to be no explanation. Athma was silent as he helped to clean up the table from supper.

At half past 8, they had a visitor.

Bethania co-founder Bob Granner came through the door with a bright and cheerful smile. He looked directly at Sanjana and said, “Hello, I’m Bob, what’s your name?” She looked up confidently and said, “My name’s Sanjana and I’m 4.” As the group ascended a short stairway and turned the corner into the living room, Arvind looked up from his chair across the room. Bob looked directly at him and said, “Oh. ... beautiful!”

What was that? Had Athma heard him correctly?

We channel 100% of every penny donated into direct ministry for children.

Bob turned back with a genuine smile, “He’s beautiful. What’s his name?”

“Arvind,” Athma said, with trembling lips. He looked at his son. Never... never had anyone looked at Arvind and said ‘beautiful.’ He himself had never looked at his son in quite that way. He was overwhelmed.

As this single shift in understanding took root in Athma Raj and Sudha, they felt called to start The Arvind Foundation. A center for children with disabilities was opened in Chennai in July of 2008. In September of 2009, Bethania Kids partnered with The Arvind Foundation to open the Mannavanur Day Care Center for Special Children, way out in a tribal region of Kodai’s upper hills.

Athma Raj writes,

“On 16th of Sep 09, as informed, we had our humble but vibrant inauguration of our Mannavanur Day Care Center for Special Children. The Lord had marked this day and He knew when this should happen. Under the guidance of Mr Paramadas and Mr Jay the arrangements were taken care by Ponmalar & Kavitha and our professionally trained staff from Bethania Poomparai unit.

My mind was full of thanksgiving to our mighty Jesus for finally making this happen.”

Now, increasingly, the awkward movements and odd looks of the disabled children of Mannavanur, whom God has always known by name and has always loved, will be seen as *beautiful* by the families and other residents of this region.

Bethania Kids



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If you wish to consider making an Estate planning gift to Bethania Kids, we will arrange for a free consultation with a Certified Financial Planner or an attorney.

To learn more, please contact (800) 993-5179 or email Kathy at bethaniakids@hotmail.com

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*Bethania Kids welcomes
three new Advisory*

Board members:

Eric Grasse
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Healing Takes Time

Celine remembers clearly that her father was unconscious upstairs on the second floor of the house. She says, "I asked my sister to go up and bring him down, but she wouldn't go. I did not know what to do. After some time I learned that he had taken poison and that he had died."

Celine is a lovely girl with a winning smile. She is a good student, and although she says she is happy, she seems very sad. Her eyes fill with tears whenever she tries to say anything about her early family life.

"I do not remember many happy times when I was a small child. Only sometimes my father would bring us snacks and we would be happy then.

"I was seven years old when my father took his own life. I do not know why he did this. My sister, Jebashanti, was eight. My other sister, Mehima, was five. We were all frightened and alone. Our mother was very sad. Later she married again and had one son, Anish, who is my half-brother. Our mother's second husband was also very troubled and he, too, committed suicide.

"My mother was desperate, trying to care for her four children and unable to work to make a living. It was in 1998, eleven years ago, that she brought my sisters and me here to the Bethania Home. I was nine years old then. Mother still lives nearby, just a short distance from Nagercoil. We can still go to visit her, but she is so happy that we are so well cared for here."

Brightening a little, Celine adds, "I am in eleventh standard now. Next year I will complete my Plus-Two exams and go on to Nurse's Training. I want to help poor people in the villages."

Our ministry coordinator writes that he encouraged Celine but did not press her for more details. He says, "We feel she still needs counseling and much loving care and comfort."



*"He has sent me to
bind up the b*

Celine

From the Depths Of My Being

(Excerpts from an Interview with Benila)

When I was two years old, I had an experience that I will always remember. I had silver anklets that I loved to wear. One day a friendly man asked me to come and show my anklets to him. He took them off and then went away. When I went back to my mother, she said, "What happened to your anklets?" I told her a man took them and went away. From that day I was not allowed to go out to play alone. I still remember.

My father was a very bad man. He used to beat my mother and he did many bad things to me too. We moved from a small town to Chennai where my mother got a job as a sweeper. Once, when she was away, my father wanted to give me a bath and I said my mother had already given me a bath. He got angry and locked me in the house. Then he poured boiling water all over me and left me alone. Some neighbors heard me screaming. Then my mother found me and took me to the hospital. I had bad burns and boils all over my body.

During the next three or four years my father continued abusing my mother and treating me badly. My mother worked very hard to support us even though my father beat her. One time he pushed her off the terrace and she had to go to a hospital to have stitches.

She tried so hard to get away and to protect me. She needed to escape. So, she moved us a long distance away, almost seven hundred kilometers, to a village near Nagercoil, close to the southern tip of India.

Mother found work in a stone quarry for awhile, but soon she had a chance to go away for a new job, so she arranged for my auntie to take care of me. She thought I was safe because she hadn't told my father where we were. But somehow he found out anyway. One day he came to the house, and when my aunt tried to stop him from seeing me, he became angry. I think he was drinking. He knew that I was scared of ants, and he deliberately sat me down on top of a red ant hill. I can still remember the pain from those bites.

My mother and auntie became so upset and knew they had to do something different to keep me safe. They had heard of the Bethania Home, and arranged for me to be admitted. They knew I would be safe there. I was eight years old then.

At first I didn't want to stay. I cried and cried. After about a week, I started feeling at home, and since that time, a teacher at the Bethania Home, Gnanaba Auntie, has helped me a lot. She counsels me in many ways. For instance, I have always been tall for my age. I was teased a lot when I was younger, but Gnanaba Auntie says God made me tall for a purpose. She thinks I am supposed to be a leader and this is why I am tall.

I really don't have many close friends. I feel closer to God than to my friends. From the depths of my being, I talk to God in my prayers. I also have been strongly influenced by our prayer meetings and Bible studies at the Bethania Home. My goal in life is to be a missionary for poor children who are in danger. I am willing to give my life for Christ's sake, in order to tell people all over the country and all over the world that they have to protect children and keep them safe from terrible things, and show them God's love.

This article has been printed with permission from Benila and her caregivers.



Benila

rokenhearted,
to proclaim freedom for the captives...

Bethania is a Christian mission bringing wholeness and hope to poor, abandoned and disabled children in India, equipping them to share God's love.

100% of your contribution will be used directly for children's ministry in India.

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The Theology of the Child

A woman took Suzanna's hand and pressed it warmly in her own, saying, "Just a few more minutes and we'll be up front." Smiling, "Are you ready?" Suzanna looked up nervously—barely able to raise her face—shy and not sure what to think. There were the voices of grown-ups up ahead and she didn't understand. Suddenly, Suzanna found herself standing in the front row, before a man, sitting on the old stump of a tree. "Go on up there, it's OK," offered the woman. He said warmly, "Ah, Suzanna, just look at you!" And He smiled lovingly. "I've waited a long time for this moment. Come to me, child," and he put out his arms. She didn't know why, but Suzanna rushed forward and buried her face in the folds of his robe. The lid on a deep well of sadness just lifted off; tears flowed down her face and she knew... it's going to be alright. Everything is suddenly going to be alright. She felt secure arms picking her up and setting her down on the lap of God himself.

Suzanna, Celine, Abraham, Benila, Mariamuthu, TiruSelvan, Murugasan, and Packia had some things in common. As Bethania kids they had all known the pain of disease, hunger, loneliness, and extreme poverty; and some had experienced severe abuse. The love of Christ compelled us to address all of these issues in their lives. Yet, before they came to Bethania, they had another thing in common. They didn't have a personal relationship with a loving Savior. Our vision was simply to take these children

one by one and put them on Jesus' lap. "But Jesus called them to him, saying, 'Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them; for to such belongs the kingdom of God!'" (Luke 18:15)

"The love of Christ compels us because we are convinced that one has died for all and therefore, all have died. And he died that those who live might no longer live for themselves, but for him, who for their sake, died and was raised." (II Cor. 5:14) Surely many complex theological issues often demand our attention. But, at Bethania Kids we are called to the simple theology of the child. We take a child and place him on Jesus' lap; then we take another... and another. As Jesus simply says in Matthew 25:35, "I was hungry and you gave me something to eat. I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink..."

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and release from darkness for the prisoners...

—Isaiah 61:1

