SHELTER TRUST

SOLOMON RAJ – FOUNDER OF SHELTER TRUST – AN HIV HOME FOR CHILDREN AND MUCH MORE…

It's not heroic to be moved to act…..

How did it all begin?

'We were married for eight years and didn't have any children so we thought about adopting a child, we thought why not a child with a disability or, handicapped, or HIV, something like that. The decision could not be made because we live with a closely knit family who were against it, and then by the grace of God, we had our own children. But, the thought of doing something for these children was nagging me.

One day this transgender called me saying there is a seven year old HIV boy that you need to do something about. So I was not prepared to take him home, actually, I tried a number of places, homes and such like and everyone was refusing because he was HIV. One of my friends told me you have been talking about doing this for sometime, why don't you take the boy home and do something for him. So I thought okay I'll talk to my wife and I took him home. She had some questions about how to look after the boy, and once she felt she had the knowledge she said fine bring him home.

In the meantime both of us worked, our children were at school so he was at home, and he was alone at home locked in, so I felt that in itself was a kind of abuse, so I started taking him to the office, then everywhere I went people were asking who is this? So again I felt this is not the right thing. So I thought to keep him company I would take one more.. The moment Sangeetha came the word spread that I was taking HIV positive kids. *cont.*

SLUM TUITION CENTRE

ELSIE'S BIRTHDAY

SHELTER CHILDREN

SHELTER TRUST

cont:

The moment Sangeetha came the word spread that I was taking HIV positive kids. About seven or eight children were recommended to me within a week. The apparent need disturbed me, there was so much need. So I decided to do something about it and so Shelter was born.

I searched out a building and in 2004 we opened a home in Kolathur. I used our joint income to begin with, one staff member came to us, but finding help was difficult, for a while I bought food from outside and gave. Little by little the news spread, friends and colleagues began to come forward and made some offerings, food items and such like and slowly some regular donations.

What surprised me was how many people were against me doing it, questioning whether I could do it. There was so little encouragement, it made me question myself and wonder if I was being crazy. Honestly speaking I had no idea of the lifespan of the children, so I was not sure how long I was going to be involved for. The fear in the sense, of the emotional bond with the children and then those children die, that was a major worry for me getting involved with the children. At that time, even the Doctors would talk negatively about a child's life expectancy.

At the time I was working as a lecturer in a Bible College and working with the Centre for Development and Woman's studies, so I was questioning whether this was the right direction for me to be going in. So I prayed about it and felt a real peace with it. In the beginning I was very worried about the money and how to fund it, and while I know this sounds strange to some people, I had to trust in God that it was going to work out. And whether you call it answers to prayers or just plane coincidence, things started to happen, and over time so many coincidences worked out it made me think it must be God's plan.

After some time when we became more clear about what we were trying to do we put it into words, simply to offer **love, laughter and life**.

We have had successes and of course some tragedies. Some of the children who have come to us in a critical condition are still with us, some have received the best medical attention that Chennai has to offer thanks to some generous doctors and hospitals, but there have been a few that have passed away.

The first time we lost one of our children was devastating of course, it was like losing my own, but the worst of it was that so many people in the medical world just seemed to expect it, it was a struggle to try and bring some sense of sanctity to the little life that had just passed away in such terrible anguish, and we are unable to do anything about it. Without faith I don't think I could do it, but knowing there is a God that loves all the little ones and knowing they are returning to Him, gives us some sense of reassurance, as well as the knowledge that our efforts are not in vain."

See The Shelter Blog for more information, just click on Shelter.

BALLOONS ARE ALWAYS FUN

REAL CARE

CHAMPION DANCER