

Winter
2010

Agape
International

LOVE IN ACTION

What's New

The Joy of Christmas at Agape

Lynne and Ratnam love Christmas – and every year they work very hard to bring that same joy to all the Agape children. It's a huge job (I have trouble with pulling it off with my own small family) – imagine Christmas for 250+ children!

Christmas Day is a very full day at Agape. Ratnam, Lynne and other American volunteers visit each of our six orphanages in turn to deliver a personal Christmas gift and a new outfit to each child. This year, Roshel and Mark Robey, parents of one of our long term volunteers Angie Robey, visited Agape for Christmas and came bearing gifts. Roshel organized a number of local churches to help purchase gifts for the children, and Roshel and Mark brought the gifts with them in 10 extra suitcases. Women from the Robey's home church, Notus Baptist Church - Notus, Idaho, stitched cotton gift bags for each child. Long term volunteer Emily Richarde's church, Grace Street Church - Cambridge, MA, also raised \$1,000 towards the new Christmas outfits. Thank you as well to the sponsors who sent in extra money for Christmas gifts. The children's delight in opening their presents is a beautiful thing to see.



Keerthana, Pooja and Ravali
opening their Christmas presents



Saritha receives her Christmas gift and hug!

Christmas lunch is the all time favorite of the children – Hyderabadi Chicken Fry (a special treat given the cost). After lunch, the children love to put on a full program including Christmas carol singing, cultural dances ending with the candle light dance, and a Christmas drama. The Agape children love to sing and dance – so the Christmas program is a wonderful part of their celebration. The full day ends around 9:00 PM with a special traditional sweet.



Bhavani happily
shows off her
new gift

Meet Our Agape Family

Khajal

Khajal joined us on April, 25th 2005 when she was five years old. Khajal's mom was a sex worker in Mumbai until she met Khajal's father, a regular client. Khajal's dad was a truck driver originally from New Delhi. They married and not long after the wedding, Khajal's mother went back to her old



Khajal in her first few weeks at Agape (her wounds are healing well)

profession in order to earn income for the family. In response, her husband packed up their belongings and moved to Hyderabad, hoping that a new location and new life would solve the family's problems. After coming to Hyderabad and after the birth of her two children, Khajal's mom found out she was HIV positive. The father, after testing negative, kicked the mother out of the house. Khajal's mother was living on the street and very ill when a woman from Action Aid found her. She took her to an Action Aid's woman's shelter where she died 2 weeks later. Just before she died she asked Action Aid to bring her children to her, but Khajal's mother died before she was able to see the children. Khajal's truck driver father was on the road when her mother died. The children

were alone in the house when Action Aid located them. Action Aid helped them to be placed in Mother Teresa's orphanage on a temporary basis with the understanding that Action Aid would find them somewhere else to go. The project director agreed despite the fact she didn't know of any home that would house HIV+ children (Khajal is HIV positive. Her younger brother, Ravi, is also at Agape but thankfully is HIV negative). Later that same day she learned about Agape.

When Khajal came to us she had open ulcers on her face and all across the entire back of her neck. Only a few days later Dr. Ratnam managed to get the ulcers dried up. "The first day I met her she was heartbreaking to look at! It was so hard initially to hug her with all her open wounds all around the face and head area" says Lynne, Agape's Executive Director. "But she really needed that hug."

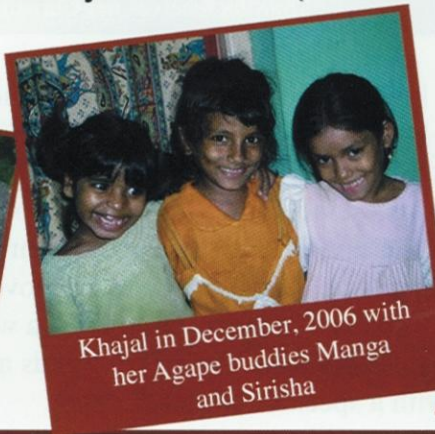
Khajal is an amazing child. She is filled with constant JOY. She loves to love on you and to be loved on. That smile on her face is constant. She has endless energy. She loves to sing and dance. She is now in the 3rd class and is doing particularly well in Math (her teacher says she is "very clever!").



Khajal in 2006



Ravi Khajal's Brother



Khajal in December, 2006 with her Agape buddies Manga and Sirisha



Khajal at Easter in 2007



Khajal in 2009