



Valentines Come in All Shapes & Sizes

by Darlene Large,
HOINA President

My friend, June Heller, suggested I pull something out of the book I am writing to use for our newsletter this month. I have been writing my life's story for more than 20 years. I have about 41 chapters, and I am getting to the end of the story. One of my favorite chapters is about our Indian daughter Rajakumari. Her name means princess so I called the chapter, "Our Princess."



Drawing by A. NagaRaju, wishing a Happy Christmas and Peace in the New Year.

I was in the middle of baking apple rolls for our church breakfast one Sunday. Raja asked me, "Are these tree apples?"

"Yes," I said. "Would you like to see apples growing on a tree?" As she had been raised in southern India and apples grow in the north, she had never seen them on a tree. Her eyes widened, and a smile made its way across her face. We climbed into our Volkswagen bus and drove down to the farm at the end of our street.

"My mother in India always said that tree apples were best."

I wondered what other kinds of apples there were? "There must be some that I'm not familiar with," I thought to myself. (Later I would learn about custard

apples that look like one of our artichokes and are simply delicious. I assumed that she was explaining the differences between the two "apples.")

My Mennonite friend, Barbara, came out and took Raja into the orchard to pick an apple. What a thrill! Barbara wore a long dress with an apron over it, black

shoes and stockings, and a white prayer cap on her head. Raja thought my Amish and Mennonite friends were poor because they wore old-fashioned clothing.

When we came home, she ran outside to play. "Don't forget to wear your shoes," I called after her. She hated shoes.

Five minutes later she came back to the kitchen and asked, "Mama, can I wear night clothes?"

Her sister interrupted, "Wait a minute, Mom. Raj, are you going to bed?"

"No," said Raja. "I'm going out to play." Her reasoning was if she wore her nightgown outside, she wouldn't need shoes. (You can't fault a child's logic!)

I continued baking my apple rolls. She came by and made a face. "I do not like that bad smell. What is it?" She was the first person I had ever met who didn't like the smell of cinnamon and apples baking.

Valentines

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My husband Bruce came home about this time, and he and Raj went out to pick tomatoes from our garden. She came in proudly carrying three large tomatoes. She placed them carefully in the middle of the kitchen floor. In village India women cook over a small fire and prepare the meals while squatting on the floor in front of the fire. I loved all her little customs and saw that she was slowly charming all of us with them.

As the days went by she became more used to our collie Laddie and to our son Dirk. One day as Dirk passed by her, she announced, "I am afraid when Dirk Brother is walking in the kitchen room. I am afraid the house will fall down. When I stand beside him I feel like little mouse."

The next evening she did not want to drink her milk. I was becoming concerned because she seemed tiny and weak. I thought, "She needs the calcium if she's to maintain her strength. Why wouldn't she drink her milk?" After we had a talk, I finally learned the reason.

"It can't be real milk. There is no water buffalo like I had at home." She was used to seeing her Indian mother milk their buffalo, so I promised her that we would find the cows that give milk.

The next day, I walked her up to our dairy store where they milked cows in front of the window so that small children and their families could watch. Then I took her inside to see the milk in glass bottles. When she saw that it came from a

real cow, she drank the milk. On the way home she asked, "What do we eat today? Curry?"



February is a time for valentines and love. Raja was surely a valentine for us when she arrived. Every day was an adventure. Dirk was her teacher, and Letti became the protective big sister.

[Editor's Note: Recently, when reminded of the stories above, Raja told us that she remembered those conversations still. She also was laughing as she explained the story with her unique cultural perspective. She remembered that she had only a limited amount of English at that point. She was trying to translate her thought about the apples from Telegu to English. We chuckled at what adult hindsight will show you. What she was trying to explain to Mom that day was that her Indian mother said that fruits are always best straight off the tree. She knew that there's nothing better than fresh-picked fruit because you can see where it came from! Over thirty years later, we're all grown up and shopping at farmer's markets to get "fresher" food than we can get at our local grocery stores! Even now, when her nieces and nephews visit from southern India for the first time, she takes them to a local apple orchard in Massachusetts, where she lives, to give them the thrill of picking apples from a tree.]



Two HOINA Girls

Besides finishing my book and overseeing our daily operations on my return trip, I will be preparing our girls' home to sell and organizing their relocation to our northern campus in Andhra Pradesh. I will give you more details on the outcome of that project next month as I have more specific information. Please do pray that all would go smoothly with the sale and the move until I can write again. I also appreciate your prayers as I finish writing the book while in India this trip.

Darlene

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01/09



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Please Remember Darlene with Prayer While She's in India

After much work and a lot of prayer, Darlene returned to India the beginning of February. Her stay will last into May. Please join your prayers with ours as we pray for her work, safety and health. It would also be a great encouragement to Darlene to receive a letter or note while she's away. You can email her at hoina1@yahoo.com. Her mailing address:

Darlene Large
C/O HOINA Boys Home
Homes of the Indian Nation
Kothasunkarampalem
Kothavalesa Mandal
Vizianagaram District 535183
Andhra Pradesh, India

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Will You Sponsor These Sisters?




G. Ranjani




Ganathangam

G. Ranjani (left, born in 2003) and Ganathangam (right, born in 2005) are sisters who came to HOINA in March 2007. Their parents were married in 2001. The father was physically handicapped, but could

walk with a stick. He tried to support his family by selling stickers at a temple. Unfortunately, he died on December 26, 2004 due to the tsunami. His wife took their two daughters first to her mother-in-law, but was unable to stay there due to abuse. Then she went to stay with her mother, who was unable to feed the family properly because of her income. When she became ill, a local Catholic sister saw the family's condition and brought the children to a HOINA contact who requested their admission to the girls' home.

Ranjani is in Kindergarten. She is friendly with others. She is also described as an active and playful child. She loves to play with balls and enjoys singing. She hopes to become a doctor. Her sister Ganathangam is described as a calm and quiet child, who loves to play. 

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Saint Charles, MO 63302-0087
U.S.A.
Email address: info@hoina.org

This newsletter is published to inform our readers of the work HOINA does among the handicapped and abandoned in India.

Layout/Eberly Designs, Mount Joy, PA.
Printing/ Freedom-Graphics, E-town, PA.

Send address changes to:

HOINA
PO Box 636
Brownstown, PA 17508-0636
U.S.A.
Tel. 717.355.9494
Toll-free: 877.99.HOINA (4.6462)
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