

THE ROSE THAT SLIPPED THROUGH OUR HANDS

In the Central Province of Sri Lanka where the cool winds blow is the small town of Nuwara Eliya. Here you have the mist, mountains and the cold climate which you can love and hate. In this town there is a school and centre for Special Needs Children, in this place there is love has no limit with little opportunity for crying.

In 2004 a young boy called Jayagaran was enrolled in this school. He was sent to our Tamil senior class. He looked nervous but gradually got friendly with all of us and crept into our nest. Our class was in the educational unit where we had to climb 84 steps, after Jeyagaran's admission to our class we had to change to another class room as he was unable to walk and was using a wheel chair.

Jeyagaran was very clever, his hand writing was like pearls on paper and we were shocked as he was so intelligent. Jeyagaran used to come to school in our MENCAFEP bus. The teachers used to wait for him with a wheel chair and bring him to our class. He did not waste his time; he was good with all the staff and did all the work given. Jayagaran had studied till grade 5 at a Private School and at that time he was able to walk and run like every other child.

Jeyagaran and I (my name is Subashini) were focused year by year to do our GCE O/L's. We were given special attention in studying Language, Mathematics, English, Religion and Social studies. Jeyagaran was so good in Math's he would finish his work quickly and laugh at us. Whenever we had a concert he was the first to be selected. He had a beautiful voice where we said it was a gift from God.

One day we were planning a school trip. This trip was to visit our sister school in Batticaloa. During our journey we sang many songs and Jeyagaran was the main vocalist and we had loads of fun. In Batticaloa we organized and set up a children's club. Then we were taken to the beach Jeyagaran was scared but the teachers carried him in and out of the waves which he really enjoyed. The trip was unforgettable.

In our school in Nuwara Eliya we have a school band where we play in April for the season and on invitation from the Educational Department and the local Hotels through this we have had the opportunity to display our skills. Jeyagaran was the main focus of every single event.

However as the years passed he was becoming weaker and weaker, where he loses balance and even falls off the wheel chair. A customized chair was built for him to use in the class. Then on a sorrowful day in early 2010 Jeyagaran fell ill and parents refused to send him to school. But with some persuasion he was brought once a week on a Wednesday to the school. We had a good chat and shared many stories with each other. Then suddenly he fell very sick and was rushed to the hospital ICU. The staff and some children went to see him where he was unconscious. We returned home with great sadness, his thoughts were everywhere, we could not work.

On the 13th of May when everyone was getting ready for Vesak celebrations we got very bad news about Jeyagaran; he had passed away. I felt my heart shatter; I rolled on the bed crying. A friend who held our hands, who was in our little nest left us forever, God was unfair. He was just 16 years of age. He will always live within our hearts.

Jey like we all call you! You are the leader for ever. We will always remember you; the fragrance of you will always linger around the school premises. Good bye our friend till we meet again.

“Life on earth is short,
In this world that is not eternal
Our dear friend,
The diminutive time you spent here
To me will be subconsciously everlasting
As I think of you in every tear drop I shed”.

By Subashini
Grade 10-MENCAFEP

Translated from the original Tamil

Subashini is from the Family Group Home. She was around 5 years old when we started working with her, Subashini's family were living on the street. She had two elder brothers who came to MENCAFEP and received a basic education. Their father was a shoe maker and died young as he was an alcoholic. The mother was having many relationships with other men as well as being an alcoholic.

When her brothers were around 14/15 year old they left school, both brothers were into smoking marijuana. At this time, Subashini was around 8 years old and we felt that she was at great risk by her being on the streets. The police child & women unit helped us to take Subashini under the care of the MENCAFEP Family Group Home. Subashini has no birth certificate and is deprived of attending a local school.