

At first glance you might think that five-year old Bhavani is an introvert. She appears quiet as the intense look in her eyes observes the goings-on around her, but as soon as she feels comfortable around you she begins to relax. That's when her other side emerges – the playful, jovial, mischievous side. Draping a dupatta around her, she pretends she is wearing a saree as she plays teacher in her pretend classroom. It's hard to imagine that not long ago, this young girl was at the center of a shocking child abduction case.

Bhavani: a story of strength and hope

No money no child

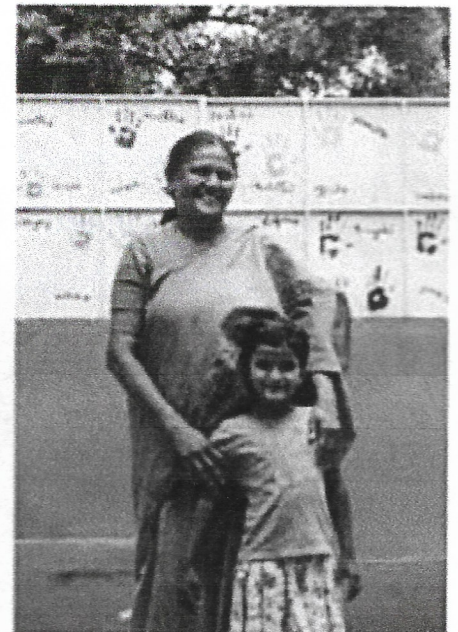
The trouble began when her parents, Naggapan and Kasturi, took an advance of Rs. 30,000 and began working as bonded labourers in a sugar cane factory. When they asked permission to return home to celebrate Pongal they were told "no." Forced to sign a bond sheet that stated they had taken an advance of Rs. 2,00,000, Bhavani was then taken. Abducted by the contractor, she was forced to work long hours. Her parents were given a choice: pay Rs. 2 Lakhs or never see their daughter again.

Escape to freedom

In an act of bravery, they made another choice – escape. With help from the RBLA and SHED India, a complaint was lodged with the local police. Bhavani was found and soon she and her family were free.

A resilient girl

Bhavani was enrolled into Sat Kaarya Children's home, where colorful paintings align the walls and the halls come to life with the joyful sounds of children. Bhavani's caretaker, Ms. Rose, says she has seen a remarkable change in the once-reserved girl. It didn't take long for her to open up and make friends, including a best friend named Susee who she helps get ready every morning. Now enrolled in school, Bhavani excels as a student. She proves time and time again that she will overcome any obstacle in her way.



Life in freedom

Bhavani is excited about her future. She wants to be a teacher when she grows up. But right now she is looking forward to her birthday – her mother will be visiting and she looks forward to giving chocolates to her friends! There's no better way for a young girl to celebrate her birthday than in freedom, surrounded by family and friends.