

“A man never stands as tall as when he kneels to help a child”

Arobanam Children Fund

Charity No:1082803



Supporting Children in need

Arobanam Children Fund Newsletter – August 2019

<http://www.arobanam.co.uk>

அருட்தந்தை ஜேம்ஸ் பத்திநாதன்

ஆரோபணம் சிறுவர் நிதிய அறக்கட்டளை அறங்காவலர், ஆதரவாளர் அனைவரதும் இதய அஞ்சலி

ஆரோபணம் சிறுவர் நிதியத்தின் ஸ்தாபகத்திற்குக் காரண கர்த்தாவாக இருந்தவர் அருட்தந்தை ஜேம்ஸ் பத்திநாதன் அவர்கள். இவர் இறுதிவரை எமது போஷகராகவும், ஆலோசகராகவும், வழிகாட்டியாகவும் இருந்து எம்மை வழிநடாத்தி வந்தார்.

1980 களில் பிருத்தானியாவில் குறுகிய காலமாக வசித்த அருட்தந்தை ஜேம்ஸ் அவர்களும் மறைந்த சட்டத்தரணி கந்தசாமி அவர்களும் எமது தலைவர் திரு ராமகிருஷ்ணன் உட்பட்ட சில தன்னார்வலர்களை ஒருங்கிணைத்து மத்திய பிரித்தானிய நிதியம் (Central British Fund), தமிழர் தகவல் நிலையம் (Tamil Information Centre) போன்ற தொண்டு மற்றும் மனித உரிமை சார்ந்த நிறுவனங்களை உருவாக்கிச் சமூகத்துக்குச் சேவையாற்றினர்.

1980 களின் பிற்பகுதியில் தனது சமய மற்றும் சமூகப் பணிகளைத் தொடர்வதற்காக இலங்கைக்குத் திரும்பிய அருட்தந்தை ஜேம்ஸ் அவர்கள் 1990 களின் ஆரம்பப் பகுதியில் கிளிநொச்சிப் பகுதியில் பெரும்பாலும் யுத்தத்தால் பாதிக்கப்பட்டு அநாதரவாகத் தவித்த 38 சிறார்களை அழைத்துச் சென்று பராமரித்தமை அவரது சமயம் கடந்த மனிதாபிமானத்துக்கு ஒரு சான்றாகும்.

இப் பராமரிப்புத் திட்டம் சம்பந்தமாகப் பல நெருக்கடிகளைச் சந்தித்த அருட்தந்தை அவர்கள் 1993 இல் எமது தலைவரை ஒரு யாழ் புகையிரதப் பயணத்தில் எதிர்பாராத விதமாகச் சந்தித்தபோது தமது நிலைமையை விளக்கினார்.

பிருத்தானியா திரும்பியதும் நண்பர்களின் உதவியுடன் கணிசமான பணத்தைத் திரட்டி அருட்தந்தையின் சேவைக்கான உடனடித் தேவைகளைப் பூர்த்தி செய்த எமது தலைவரும் அவரது நண்பர்களும் இவ் உன்னத சேவையைத் தொடர முடிவுசெய்து பின்னர் 1995ம் ஆண்டு ஆரோபணம் சிறுவர் நிதியம் எனும் அறக்கட்டளையை பிரித்தானியாவில் நிறுவி அதனூடாக இன்றுவரையில் மூவாயிரத்துக்கு மேற்பட்ட சிறார்களின் உணவு, உடை, பாதுகாப்பு, கல்வி, மற்றும் மருத்துவம் போன்ற தேவைகளுக்கு உதவுவதுடன் 55க்கு மேற்பட்ட பல்கலைக்கழக மாணவர்களின் கல்விக்கும் உதவி வருகிறோம். மேலும் பல

இயற்கை அனர்த்தங்கள் மற்றும் யுத்த முடிவுக் கட்டம் போன்ற நிலைமைகளில் குடிமக்களுக்கும் உதவி வருகிறோம்.

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2004ம் ஆண்டு சனாமிப் பேரலையின்போது பாதிக்கப்பட்ட மக்களுக்குப் பாதுகாப்பு வழங்குவதற்கு தனிப்பட்ட முறையில் ஈடுபட்ட அருட்தந்தை அவர்கள் எமது நிதியத்தின் பராமரிப்பில் இருந்த பாதிக்கப்பட்ட சிறார்களைத் தேடுவதிலும் பாதுகாப்பதிலும் முழுமையாக ஈடுபட்டார் என்பது இங்கு குறிப்பிடத்தக்கது .

அமரர் அவர்கள் "யாதும் ஊரே யாவரும் கேளிர்" என்னும் புறநானூற்றுக் கூற்றை 2015ல் மேடையில் விளக்கியதுடன் அக்கூற்றுக்கமைய ஆரோபணம் சிறுவர் நிதியத்தின் சேவைகளையும் எல்லைகடந்து விஸ்தரிக்கும்படி அறிவுறித்தியதையடுத்து அதற்கமைய நாம் எமது கட்டமைப்பில் மாற்றங்களைக் கொண்டுவந்து எல்லை கடந்த சேவைகளில் ஈடுபட்டு வருகிறோம்.

இந்த நீண்ட பயணத்தின்போது அருட்தந்தை ஜேம்ஸ் அவர்கள் எமது அறங்காவல் குழுவுடன் மிகவும் நெருக்கமாக இருந்து வழிகாட்டியதுடன் தனது ஆதரவையும் நம்பகத்தன்மையையும் எமது அறக்கட்டளைக்கு வழங்கிவந்தார்.

அருட்தந்தை ஜேம்ஸ் பத்திநாதன் அவர்களின் ஆளுமையும் நேர்மையும் தொடர்ந்தும் எம்மை வழி நடத்தும் என்னும் நம்பிக்கையில் அவர் ஆரம்பித்த இச் சிறார்களுக்கான பணிகளை நாம் தொடர்வோம் என்று உறுதி கூறி அன்னாரின் ஆத்ம சாந்தி வேண்டி நிற்கிறோம்.

அருட்தந்தை அவர்கள் 2015ம் ஆண்டு லண்டன் வெம்பிலியில் (Wembley) நடைபெற்ற எமது 20ஆவது வருடாந்த விழாவுக்குச் சிறப்பு விருந்தினராக வருகைதந்து சிறப்பித்தபோது



A tribute to our Patron – a great community serviceman

On 12th July 2019, the Arobanam family learned of the sad news that our Patron and Mentor, Reverend Father James Pathinathan passed away in Colombo, Sri Lanka.

Fr James is the foremost person to bring the Arobanam family together at the beginning, in 1995.

In addition to his religious services, Fr James involved himself in countless volunteering activities as a passionate and dedicated charitable person.

He was born in 1945 in Uduvil in the North of Sri Lanka, and was educated at St Patricks College, Jaffna. He subsequently decided to follow a path of religious services and ordained as a Catholic Priest in 1970. Fr James, as a religious leader, maintained impartiality in his life and included prayers for all brothers and sisters regardless of race or religion in his masses.

His wings spanned to secure all spectrums of the needy, such as feeding the poor, caring for helpless children, the elderly, and those mentally and physically challenged.

He was instrumental in the formation of several rural settlements, agricultural facilities, securing a livelihood for settlers, educational institutions, and children homes around the Vanni area and ran those in a structured manner.



Humanity over religion for a Priest

We believe that the well-respected, dedicated, and selfless individual Fr James initially served in his birthplace. Subsequently, he moved to the Vanni area; over and above his religious commitments, he was actively involved in community services.



Farewell at Cheddikulam

One such example is from the early 1980s where as a result of the unrest against Indian Tamils (plantation people) in Sri Lanka, Fr James played a critical role in initially rescuing approximately 50 destitute families from the jungles, where families lived in the open with no shelter, and rehoused them in the Cheddikulam areas. Following this, more destitute families moved to the Cheddikulam and Vavuniya areas bringing the total to over 1050.

Fr James managed to obtain two acres of crown land in the jungle and settled the initial 50 families building huts and providing wells. Subsequently Fr James acquired a further 40 acres of land and created a further 25 settlements totalling 26 settlements around Cheddikulam and Nedunkeni areas – 25 of the settlements primarily consisted of Hindus and one primarily consisted of Catholics. As a person of “vision and mission”, Fr James and Sr Nicola along with volunteers from the area started primary schools in these settlements which to this day still function as registered schools.

With the help of local and overseas volunteers and well-wishers, Fr James provided farming assistance for male members of the families and set up weaving centres for young girls to learn and support their families. Similarly, Fr James started a milk collection project for the women and organised for milk to be collected and transported to Vavuniya.

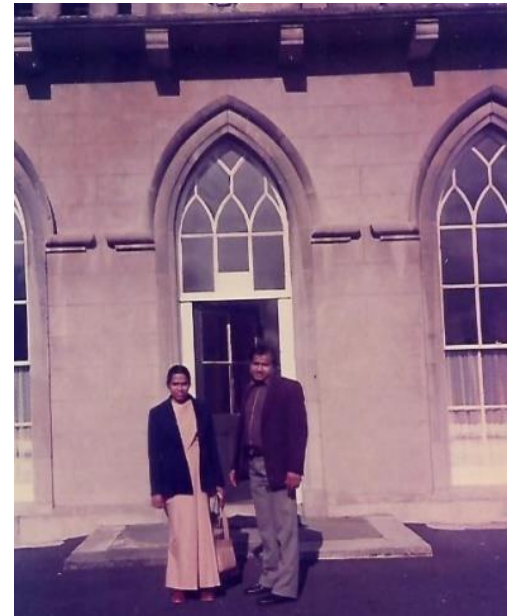
Fr James' influence overseas

In late 1979 Fr James was sent to Canada where he spent two years studying before he returned to the Mankulam Parish in 1981 where again he was involved in creating settlements with short, medium, and long term sustainability, despite facing excessive difficulties, some life threatening, due to his involvements in such community activities.

In early 1983, Fr James left Mankulam and subsequently arrived in the UK where he worked alongside the Late Mr Kandasamy and Late Mr Varathakumar in order to provide the destitute community in Sri Lanka with basic humanitarian needs and rights. During his stay in the United Kingdom, some of Arobanam Children Fund (ACF) members, including our Chairperson Mr Ramakrishnan worked with Fr James on the above initiatives.

Fr James was well connected with international non-governmental and religious organisations and not only successfully secured funds from his contacts around the world, but also proved himself to be a successful leader focussed on the people in need while keeping administrative costs at an absolute minimum.

In late 1980s, much against the requests from friends and Parishes in the UK, Fr James sensed a forthcoming peace in Sri Lanka and decided to return with a view to continue to be with "his people". Fr James continued his services in the Kilinochchi area upon his return and contact with our Chairperson were lost at this stage.



Father James visiting the UK

The start of Arobanam Boys Home

As the war began to escalate, there was a period of severe conflict. During this time, one evening, Fr James spotted a few homeless and starving children – displaced as a result of the war in Kilinochchi area. With no hesitation in just one evening, he rounded up 38 children and brought them to immediate safety and cared for them in his church. Subsequently, he persuaded the Bishop to provide a large plot of land in Kilinochchi where he was able to house the boys there and hence, Arobanam Boys Home (ABH) began.

ABH was run under Fr James' direct supervision – he became a resident carer and ensured that he cared for the children as if they were his own, providing their only lifeline often under difficult and dangerous conditions.

In 1993, our Chairperson, Mr Ramakrishnan unexpectedly met Fr James during a train journey to Jaffna where Fr James explained the difficulties (primarily financial) in maintaining care for the boys at ABH.

Upon his return to the UK, Mr Ramakrishnan contacted a few mutual friends including Fr James' brother Jebam Pathinathan and collected some money to assist Fr James with his project. This informal arrangement continued up until 1995, following which Fr James persuaded the group of friends to form a committee and assist such projects in a more formal, structured way.

Inspired by this rewarding service, the committee subsequently registered Arobanam Children Fund (ACF) as a charity in the United Kingdom in 1999; and to date have assisted over 3,000 children as well as supported over 55 students towards their university education.

In addition, ACF has also assisted civilians during natural disasters in Sri Lanka and India / Nepal, and at the end of the Sri Lankan civil war by providing 80,000 food parcels at various refugee camps.

In 1995, Kilinochchi experienced severe destruction as a result of the long civil war. The area was completely destroyed and many of the children were left parentless, homeless and helpless with no food or drink. Together with the then Government Agent of Kilinochchi, late Mr Rasanayagam, Fr. James realised the urgent need to protect such children in the area. After discussing his ideas with the head of the Mahadeva Asram, Swami Ganeshanatha Mahadeva, he approached ACF to help start the the Mahadeva Ashram Siva Siruvar Illam children's home.

Fr James then moved to the Mullaitivu area and continued his services to include the acquisition of more land and creating further settlements, along with his charitable work.

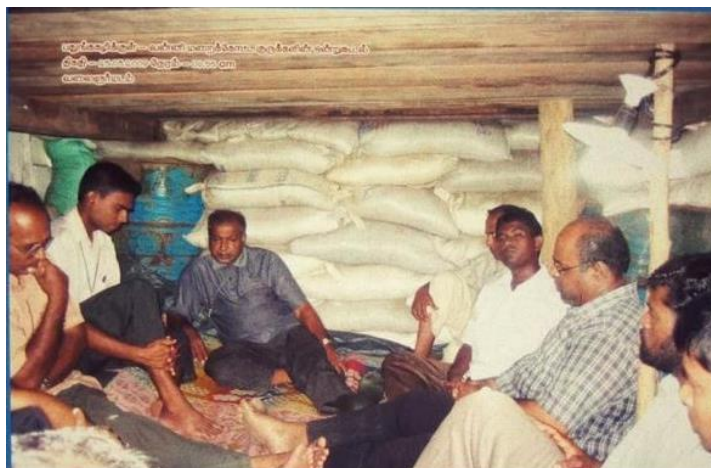
Against all odds

Amongst other projects, Fr James persuaded ACF to commit to a project in Mullaitivu named "Senthalir" - a children's home caring for 140 children. Sadly, during the Indian Ocean 2004 Tsunami, the home was completely destroyed, and we lost 122 children.

Similarly, during the end of the war in 2009, 310 children resided in number of homes in the Vanni area went missing. Fr James and late Mr Rasanayagam (then retired) worked tirelessly to locate as many children as possible to bring them to safety and organise continuous care for them.

At a time that the public faced such hardship, Fr James continued with his meritorious services with courage, often single handily and provided support and relief to all in his path. He even had to go above and beyond in order to satisfy two government administrations (as Vanni was the den of the LTTE administrations). Despite his difficulties, Fr James also gave sanctuary to countless civilians and several NGO representatives.

During the intense war end, Fr James suffered with severe heart illness and was advised to seek treatment in Colombo with help from the Sri Lankan authorities – but he refused to leave "his people" and remained with them always. Later, he was injured from an air attack but remained in a bunker with villagers as he felt that he would be able to provide protection to them. This is testament to his leadership and humanity above religious or race barriers.



Father James in a bunker during an attack

After the war ended, Fr James moved to the Mankulam Parish and forged a good relationship with the armed forces; some of them also came regularly to worship at the church. During this period of time Fr James along with Sr Rajesh also managed to obtain help from the armed forces for a month to clear one acre of land, covered in dense bushes, to build a new home for parentless girls.

Inaugurated in October 2010 under the care of Sr Rajesh, ACF is pleased to have been able to help fund this home. At the same time, with the help of Fr James, ACF created a foster care scheme (children live with family members / grandparents) and is currently helping 130 parentless children through this project.

A true leader dedicated to serving 'his people'

Of Fr James' 49 years of tireless golden service as a religious and community leader – 35 of those were served in the Vanni area.

At the ACF 20th annual event in 2015, we were honoured to have Fr James to join us as our special guest and keynote speaker. Here he was able to address all members and supporters and explained the famous proverb "Yathum Oore Yavarum Kirleer" ("யாதும் ஊரே யாவரும் கேளிர்") – Fr Thaninayagam, translated into English as – "The whole world is my village and everybody in it is my kinsman." As per the above proverb, he subsequently advised the ACF committee to remove any geographical and other barriers and involve in cross border activities. As such we made amendments to our constitution and are now engaged in cross border activities.

At the end of 2018, our Chairperson and another senior member of the committee visited Fr James to discuss progress and future aspirations of ACF. As ever, Fr James gave his precious time for such discussions and requested that no matter what we "continue the good work". This was our last meeting with Fr James and one that we will keep close to our heart.

During ACF's long journey Fr James worked very closely with the committee – guided, supported, and offered his credibility and trust at all times. We believe that his leadership and honesty will continue to guide us, and we pledge to continue to serve the children in need



Father James with some of the foster care children