

Ravi, our special son, is nearing 42 years. He lived with us for 40 years and he has now moved out to a Group Rehabilitation Home.

Ravi, was 'The Darling Child' of the entire household, moving around the house, asking for coffee and tea and always taking the last sip of every cup of tea or coffee that I took. His love for music is immense. All the time he would sit before the radio/television and listen to music. He knows most of the songs. Whenever he is in a happy mood, he sings them. With his presence at home, the house was full. Everyone in our family had something or the other, to do for his sake.

Ravi is my second son. He was diagnosed as a special child when he was eight months old in Simla. From then on, our relationship has been special and warm. During the eight years in Simla, he was totally homebound. My other son, Balu and we, the parents managed him on our own. It was hard, but great. On our return to Bangalore, he started going to special schools. In all he has been a student in three schools. The teachers in all these three schools were very devoted and excellent. The time that Ravi spent in the school was the time for me and my wife, to regain strength to take care and have fun with him when he returned. Balu was out in USA after completing his studies.

As Ravi turned 40, he became a resident of Vishwashanti Niketan – Group Home Rehabilitation Complex located at Arshinakunte, just outside Bangalore, off the Bangalore-Mumbai Road. Ravi, the permanent resident became a casual visitor to our house. The dear son, who lived with us for 40 years, was suddenly missing. The house became empty. The radio and television stopped playing music. There was nobody to demand for the last sip of coffee or tea from me. The word 'Appaji' I always cherished was not to be heard. Ravi has gone to the Group Home to stay there on a long term basis creating a huge vacuum in our house.

It is almost two years since he is away from us. We are very gradually adjusting to these realities. Managing a child at our age with the health problems attached to it, is not easy. On occasions when Ravi visits us, we feel that we have really grown old and incapable of managing him.



RAVI WE LOVE YOU!

by K.R.Venkatesha, President, KPAMRC

(Karnataka Parents Association for Mentally Retarded Citizens)

Are we totally unhappy about this arrangement? Are we totally happy with this arrangement? I do not know. I can only say that we are satisfied.

Vishwashanti Niketan is a dream child of all the parents of our Association. We have been involved in its development and growth. We have ensured that the best of facilities are available to our children. Parents stay there to provide the required love and affection. Young adults who stay there do not want to go back to their homes. The feeling of brotherhood amongst the residents is so strong that it makes them happy and comfortable in the Group Home.

Initially, every time we visited Ravi at the Group Home, he would say 'Appaji shall we go home in the car' but once we left he would get adjusted to his new environment. But the last time, we visited Ravi, at the time of departure 'Appaji shall we go home in the car' was not there from Ravi. He just said 'bye bye'.

Has his love and affection for us come down? Or, is he adjusting himself to the new environment and feeling more comfortable now? We do not know.

We only know that our son Ravi is staying in a home which is away from his real home.

Now we can also say "Ravi, we love you" and take solace.