

My name is *Selva Shekila*, my friends call me *Shaki*. I am from a small village called North Vandanam. Your support of LIFT is giving me a career and a future. I know that most LIFT supporters cannot make the journey to India but I hope to share with you how important your commitment to LIFT is and how deeply grateful my family and I are for the opportunity you have provided us.

You see my father is a tailor and my mother is a *Coolie-worker* (day laborer.) She earns just \$2.80 per day working on a farm. I would have had a similar job because my family could not afford to send my brothers, and sister, and me to college.

I have always loved school, and I believe it was 14 years ago when I came to LIFT that my life truly began. LIFT provides tuition to high performing schools, leadership training, and room and board to orphans and children whose families are poor like mine. Although many LIFT students are orphans, LIFT is not an orphanage. LIFT is our home. We call each other brother and sister. Today 71 children and young people like me have a safe place to sleep, nutritious meals, and emotional and academic support.

I am very proud that today, I have earned a Master's Degree in visual communications from Loyola College in Chennai. I have already turned down two jobs because I want to own a marketing company. You may know that in India only 14 percent of women own their own businesses. After getting married, most of them stop working outside their home. When I own a company, I will hire women to help empower them.

LIFT has made me bold and confident and the most resourceful person in my family. Because of you, I will *lift* them out of poverty.

I want to be a role model to the girls at **LIFT** and in my village. I want them to see that a woman can do anything. My heart especially goes out to Abirami whose mother was brutally murdered by her own father before her own eyes when she was only 13 years old. Even a little drop of blood due to mosquito bite can bring back forcefully the horrible murder scene of her mother and all the emotion she experienced graphically.

I know it is possible for Abirami to beat the odds. If I can do it, she can do it. I have joined the group of over 25 LIFT graduates who have completed their college degrees and are working as teachers, nurses and in business for companies such as Caterpillar, Tata Consultancy Services, Stayzilla, Saint-Gobain, and United Health Group. As graduates we are giving back to LIFT and supporting our families.

LIFT is truly breaking the cycle of poverty. LIFT gave birth to the person that I am today. Thanks to you, there is no dream that is too big.

I hope you will join me in giving the gift of education and the possibility of a bright future to other children like Abirami.

Thank you,

Selva
Selva Shekila

