

Name	Sharon Angel J Madurai Sevashram Girls Home		Sponsor
Institution	Thiagarajar College of Engineering		
Location	Madurai	Accommodation Home	
Course	MSc Computer Application 3 years		
Start	1 July 2015	End 30 June 2018	Year 1



In her final year of her first degree course, Sharon Angel's view of the future placed little interest in campus interviews and resulting job placement. She had long hoped to continue in full time study for her Master's, both because it was well within her grasp and for the boost to her employment prospects it would confer. The pressing question was practicality – was it possible and could her family afford it? Academically it became possible when she achieved 83% overall for her BSc first degree final exams and, was offered the post of Junior Software Engineer with Tech Mahindra, at Pune, starting with six months on-the-job training and earning Rs15,000 monthly, with increments to follow when made substantive. Both result and offer confirmed her obvious ability and potential to go farther. Worries about affordability were swept away when her Sponsor generously agreed to continue his support for her Master's course. Normally, sponsored apprenticeships wind up when the first 'stand-alone' qualification with the potential for reliable employment is achieved. Very occasionally a case of exceptional merit warrants an exception to the rule, with the expectation of an outstanding result. Having set the scene for getting the best job she can, that could take her anywhere in India initially, but with time served, companies let their staff transfer nearer home; she draws the line at working abroad.

Sharon Angel's first degree result gained her a place at this prestigious University - a top centre of excellence for the State of Tamil Nadu. Her first semester result of 85% overall confirms she is in the right place and heading in the right direction. She's placed third in her class of 58 of which only 20 are girls (but with the top three places held by girls). The English medium poses no problems as she converses easily and comprehensively in English, making an interpreter unnecessary.

Her 2<sup>nd</sup> semester subjects are:

Visual Basiclab.	C++ (software) lab.
Professional Communications	Operations Research
Client Server Technology	Operating Systems.

The last four are theory classes only. Visual basic is her favourite and all are easy. In parallel she's taking the on-line Cambridge University Certificate in Business English – an additional qualification which should lead to a better job ultimately; it covers listening, reading, speaking and writing. Asked

how her Tutor might describe her she finally suggests “Not Bad” and won’t be budged – maybe at her university understatement is a virtue!

Sharon Angel lives at home and makes the 45 minute journey to college by public bus with her free bus pass. Although she received her free government bicycle in higher secondary school, the city traffic is too congested for safety. Formal classes are 9am to 4:15, with her on-line course 4:15 to 5pm.

She’d like to play shuttle cock but seldom can spare the time. Homework occupies about an hour daily but that’s literally at home. Another government freebie from higher secondary school is her laptop, which plays an important role in private study as well as browsing. She can access the internet at college, or at home, either with the office WiFi or a plug-in dongle.

Home is in the staff quarters of the Madurai Sevashram Girls Home, where her Mother is Superintendent (for the past 22 years); Sharon Angel and her younger sister Catherin were brought up here and it’s still very much Home. Catherin too commutes daily to her BSc course at a local college. Asked about her ideal time for marriage, she feels late 20’s; with her level of education she’d continue working after marriage. Not yet 21 now and with another two more years of study pencilled in, clearly she’s aiming for plenty of working experience before meeting her Groom. Anyway, she adds, Mother is happy with her plan and she won’t leave Mother alone, she’ll keep her with her.

Although Sharon Angel has had no direct contact from her Sponsor, she’s very much aware of his role in supporting her and enabling her to pursue her ambitions. She sends her best wishes and grateful thanks to Uncle for helping her, adding that she hopes he’ll want to serve more children like her, helping them to be successful in life and face the future. That’s certainly on her ‘Wish List’ once she’s settled into a job and taken care of Mother. Already in her sparse spare time she gives computer training to the girls of her Girls Home and both she and her sister use every opportunity to satisfy the girls’ curiosity about further education and urge up the quality of their schoolwork, including the need for good spoken English. Maybe this first-time support of a second degree might become a regular occurrence in the future as this pioneer carves her trail and spreads her influence. Uncle can be very proud of his exemplary girl and for his role in “helping her to be successful in life and face the future”.

Interviewed and Written by: Terry Quadling, Volunteer

March 2016