

# US musician plays Santa!

## Adopts Four Orphan Girls In AP, Flies Them Here For Holiday

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When you see the four girls clinging to American music composer Joseph Curiale and calling him 'daddy' affectionately you are surprised that they have known each other only for one year.

Curiale 'adopted' these two sets of sisters from a state government orphanage in Bodhan village of the Nizamabad district of Andhra Pradesh earlier this year, when he realised they were not being looked after very well. Curiale did this with the permission and support of their legal guardians.

Today, both sets of sisters, Swapna (13) and Shailaja (10) live with their grandmother and paternal uncle on the outskirts of Nizamabad town, while the other two siblings, Fatima (10) and Shagufta (9), live with Naseem Ammi, a family friend in Nizamabad town.

Curiale has enrolled the four girls in two of leading private Telugu medium schools in Nizamabad. He has paid for their school fees, books and uniforms and has organised a private autorickshaw to ferry them to school every day. He also funds the girls' monthly food bills.

Social work is not new to Curiale. In 2006, he travelled five times from the USA to the farmlands of Andhra Pradesh with as much as \$50,000 dollars (Rs 22 lakhs) to payoff debts of eight farm widows and rehabilitate many others.

Curiale is in Pune on the invitation of a city-based IT company, with whose employees he and the girls interacted on Thursday afternoon.

Says Curiale, "It is the kindness of Reflexis (the IT company) chief, Prashant Pallakutty, my friend in Boston and his entire staff in Pune that makes this city feel like home. The people are so warm and helpful."

According to Curiale, the employees of the IT company put up banners greeting Curiale and each of the little girls. Each girl was later presented with a box of chocolates. "My daughters were made to feel like little princesses."

Says Nandalal Dixit, administrative executive, Reflexis, "This is Mr Curiale's second visit to our office. We are appreciative of the good work he is doing and it is a pleasure to meet him every time."

The composer has big plans for the



**DADDY COOL:** American music composer Joseph Curiale and his adopted daughters (from left) Fatima, Shailaja, Shagufta and Swapna in Pune

girls. "I would like to see them go through school, college and even university. I am determined to support them till the very end."

Curiale who recently completed a five-week music workshop with the children of the Tokyo International High school in Japan, has secured permission of the school management to fly his four 'daughters' to the Tokyo school in the near future. "The idea is to make them believe that if they dream, they can achieve."

It is with this dream in mind that Curiale decided to fly the four girls and one of their grandmothers to Pune this week. "Having only seen poverty and misfortune in their lives, the airline flight from Hyderabad to Pune, followed by the warm interaction with the staff of the IT company, has made them realise that there is sunshine and laughter in this world too!"

It is obvious that the girls are enjoying their holiday. Says Sh-

agufta, the youngest of the lot, "Chacha, hame hawai jahaj ki sair bahut acchi lagi. Bahut maza aaya (Uncle, we enjoyed the flight very much. We had lots of fun). I was scared initially, but I simply clung to daddy and was fine after that!"

Curiale also took the girls to a water park in the city on Friday and the girls had a whale of a time. "We splashed around in the water and daddy took a lot of pictures," says Shagufta, assuming the role of spokesperson for the group.

When the discussion veers to education, there is a genuine determination to succeed. "I love the English language and we have very good teachers," says Swapna, while Fatima simply says, "I like all subjects and want to become a doctor. This way, I can look after the poor people in my town."