



From a cleft child, Now Rajesh's new life is all filled with the Smile!

This is the story about little Rajesh and his grandmother who saved his life even before he was born. In the fifth month of pregnancy Rajesh's mother, Kavita went to the hospital to do the scanning. The doctor informed the mother that her baby will have a cleft lip.

It was a big shock for the family who could hardly afford the cost of the scanning. The doctor made them even more afraid of telling Rajesh's family that their best option is to abort the child. Confused and very upset, the young parents told Rajesh's grandmother about the news and that they would follow the doctor's advice. Luckily, Rajesh's grandmother convinced her son and her daughter-in-law to give the baby a chance to live and promised that they would find a way to take care of the child.

Four months later, Rajesh was born in a hospital in Khammam, the closest town to his small village in Telangana. In the hospital, their bad luck continued. After Kavita delivered her son, the doctor told the parents that they had an "ugly child" and that the hospital would not be responsible for anything that might happen to the baby. Rajesh's parents had to sign an acceptance document and left the hospital ashamed and with great fear of their son's future in their heart.

Taking care of Rajesh was a great challenge for Kavita, who is a day labourer in a cotton field. Again, Rajesh's grandmother was taking care of the baby. She figured out how to feed the small and underweighted boy, who struggled to eat because of his open palate.

After a couple of months, Rajesh's parents had saved some money to go to another hospital for treatment. They spent five days at the hospital and even forewent their salary for these days to give their son the chance of a better future. After long days of wait and hope, the doctor finally told them, that the boy was still too weak for the operation. Again, the family left the hospital disappointed and hopeless.

Rajesh grew older and older, but his parents were too afraid and frustrated to visit another hospital and they were worried about the financial burden of the treatment. Today, Rajesh is nearly three years old. He is a shy boy, who is not able to speak and doesn't like to play with the other kids in his village. Still, he prefers to stay with his grandmother, the most important person in his life who gives him shelter and protection.

Finally, Rajesh's run of bad luck ended. Dr. Vijay Kumar and his team organized a Cleft Search and Awareness Camp in Khammam where they found the little boy. It was the first time that a doctor treated the family with respect. It took some effort to convince the young family to come to the ABMSS cleft center in Hyderabad for the operation, but eventually, Rajesh's parents agreed.

After the lip surgery, Rajesh's parents were very happy. With the support of ABMSS, they can consider the future with more confidence and strength. Now, the entire family wants to get the palate operation done as soon as possible. This will give Rajesh not only a smile, but also a better voice to speak for himself. After a few more years he will go to school as his elder brother does.

Akila Bharatha Mahila Seva Samaja (ABMSS), an organization that helped bringing smile in the face of Rajesh with the support of its donor PERSISTENT, undertakes cleft lip and palate treatment as one of its major programmes under the generous support of Deutsche Cleft Kinderhilfe e.V., Germany and many other local donors in India.

Apart from cleft lip and palate, the organization also supports awareness work in rural areas; education of doctors and medical personnel involved in supporting the charitable cause; speech and myo-functional therapy; and supplementing of vitamin and minerals to pregnant women and malnourished children.