

## Sahasri's smile – a ray of hope



The Parents of Sahasri, a three-year-old baby who was born with a cleft lip and palate, are now happy as their daughter is enjoying her childhood fully with family and friends. Every day, she goes to Anganwadi centre regularly (a government-run pre-school for the children between the age group of 3 to 6 years).



Despite the family is very happy today, life gave them a hard start, life has not always been easy for them. However, The girl for whom her family had to bear shun and ridicule; is now growing as a more social child and one can easily catch her smile and beam of joy.

Sahasri lives with her family in a remote village called K. Krishnapuram under Vizianagaram district in Andhra Pradesh.

When Sahasri was born with a cleft lip and palate, her family could not believe it for some time. They were shocked to see the child and they were very worried about how to raise their daughter with the

deformity as she was the first and only child in their family and relatives who was born with a cleft. The gynaecologist, who performed Sahasri's birth delivery, told the family that cleft is a serious health condition and moreover the surgery is expensive. He stated that if the condition was not treated as soon as possible, the girl might not survive long because of difficulty while eating and breathing.

Srinivas Rao, the father of Sahasri works in a barber's shop in the nearby bus-stand. When he saw his daughter born with a cleft, he broke down. He could not handle the situation for a while. Because he knew that he cannot afford the cost of cleft treatment as he earns a meagre amount of money which is hardly enough to feed the family.

The only hope was to find treatment for their daughter. But that wasn't easy either. Like many others in that village, none of Sahasri's family had heard about our service.

It was when Sahasri's parents had gone to a local hospital to treat her common cold and cough where the local doctor told them about our free cleft surgery services and contacted our cleft centre at Visakhapatnam to inform about the Sahasri.

Our cleft centre in Visakhapatnam ensures that even people from the remotest part of the state know about the cleft and about our help so that these cleft patients can benefit from our free cleft surgery service. Therefore, they build rapport with local doctors, Anganwadi workers and undertake extensive outreach in schools and community places to create awareness on cleft.



The four months of suffering and stress of the child's family was put to an end when they have assured a free cleft lip and palate surgery from us. The life-changing process of the tiny tot ensued as the child first received a free cleft lip surgery, performed by our cleft surgeon Dr Siva Nagendra Reddy. Subsequently, she also received her first and secondary palate surgeries from our cleft centre in the month of April and August this year.

"It was as such a life-changing moment for us. "Seeing our daughter for the first time after surgery was overwhelming. We are so happy to see the transformation in her face and speech", tells Srinivas Rao.

With her brightest ever smile; Sahasri is now a happy child who brings more happiness to her family. A child who was once not allowed to go to the next door, and almost rejected by the neighbours and relatives; is now integrated into society and enjoying a much better childhood.

Sahasri's life could be transformed only because of your generous support. Support us so that we can treat more cleft children like Sahasri and bring them a smile.



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