



INDIA

Caregiver Names: Nagaraj & Padmavathi
Age at Implantation: 6

Child: Aishwarya
Age Today: 25

My name is Nagaraj and my spouse's name is Padmavathi. We are the parents of Aishwarya, who is now 25 years old and who is a deaf and mute child. We live in India, from the state Karnataka and resides in the Ballari District. We are writing this to share our experiences as parents of a child with hearing and speech disability.

The biggest challenge we faced was communication. In the beginning it was heartbreaking to not hear our child speak or respond to our sounds. As parents, we struggled to understand our child's needs and emotions. Learning sign language was not easy for us, but we realized that it was the key for building a strong bond. With time, patience, and practice, communication improved and our connection with our child grew deeper.

Another major challenge was education. Finding a school that could understand and support a deaf and mute child was very difficult. Often, our child was left out in classrooms that were designed mainly for hearing students. Watching our child struggle was painful, but it also motivated us to never give up.

The greatest support in our journey has been our family and a few kind educators and professionals. Doctors, therapists, and special educators who guided us during the early stages played an important role. Government support such as disability certificates and scholarships helped reduce some financial burden. However, accessing these services was not always easy due to lack of awareness and complicated procedures.

At the age of nine, our daughter was able to communicate verbally due to continuous effort, training and support from our family. Though she could speak, she was unable to hear, which remained a major challenge. After undergoing cochlear implantation, she was able to both hear and communicate more effectively. This improvement helped in her early education. However, from her second year of pre-university (PU) education, the cochlear implant stopped functioning. Despite studying without any hearing device, she continued her education with determination and self-effort. She successfully managed her academics and completed her degree without the use of any hearing machine. If a cochlear implant is provided to her for her further education, she will be able to hear and communicate properly. This support will help her pursue higher studies, perform confidently and achieve her dream job without any hesitation of fear related to her hearing disability.

Our greatest achievement as parents is seeing our daughter complete her undergraduate educations despite many difficulties. She is a deaf student, yet she successfully completed her Bachelor of Commerce (B. Com) degree. Her journey was not easy. Communication barriers lack of proper support, and social challenges made her education very difficult. Still, she never lost confidence or gave up. With strong determination, family support, and hard work, she proved that disability is not a barrier to education. Today, she is preparing for her Chartered Accountant Intermediate Examinations. This is a proud moment



for us as parents. Her journey from a salient struggle to a strong academic path inspires us and shows that with courage and support, children with disabilities can achieve great success.

To other parents who are raising deaf and mute children, our advice is to stay strong and patient. Accept your child as they are and believe in their potential. Learn sign language, communicate openly and encourage independence. Early intervention, proper education and emotional support can change a child's life. Most importantly, to remember that a child's disability does not define their worth.

As parents, we also made changes in our lives to improve our child's access to opportunities. **We adjusted our routines and learned new ways of teaching at home. We became advocates for our child through speaking to schools, communities and authorities whenever needed. These efforts helped our child grow more confident and independent.**