

## **Success Story of Arya-A Child with Severe Hearing Impairment**

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This is a real life story of a child named Arya with hearing impairment who was brought to the All India Institute of Speech and Hearing (AIISH) for rehabilitation. Arya was born on 16<sup>th</sup> February 2010. Her parents suspected that she had hearing loss when she was 10 months old as she did not respond to sounds or speech. It was a big blow for the parents when their fears were confirmed consequent to a hearing evaluation carried out in Kerala. Although the child was advised to attend speech therapy in order to learn to speak, they could not utilize the therapy services since the clinic was located far away from their home and this involved travelling long distance. One of their family friends helped them to cope up with the situation and accept the problem. He informed them about the AIISH, which is a premier institute in the rehabilitation of children with communication disorders located at Mysore. Her father Sreejith was a coolie and mother Ramya was a housewife. As their financial condition was not so stable, the decision to bring the child to Mysore all the way from Wayanad in Kerala for a consultation was a tough one. However their child was their priority and for the sake of the child, they decided to visit AIISH. Arya was brought to AIISH on 5<sup>th</sup> April 2011 when she was 1 year 2 months old. After the preliminary investigations, she was diagnosed as a child with Bilateral Severe Hearing impairment. She was advised to use a binaural hearing aid. Following the detailed evaluation, the therapy sessions for both speech and listening were initiated.

During their stay in Mysore, Arya's mother got to know about the services provided at the Department of Special Education for such children through other parents enrolled in a similar therapy program. When she approached the Department of Special Education, after the evaluations, the child was enrolled into the Parent Infant Programme (PIP), which is an educational service provided for the children of the age group 0 to 2.5 years. The main focus during the therapy was the infant stimulation through all the modalities for all round development. Arya started availing this service since June 2011.

Initially when Arya came to the Department of Special Education she had just started wearing the hearing aid and getting used to various sounds. Hence initially auditory stimulation was provided and the child was made aware of the various sounds in the environment. The child was also made to respond to her name call. Slowly various other activities such as peek a boo and simple finger rhymes were taught to the child. A play way method was used during the training. The child was always encouraged to vocalize. The child was made to play with toys and various kinds of rattles. Arya slowly started listening to various sounds. Later she was also exposed to various other environmental sounds. Other activities like finding hidden objects and matching of objects were carried out. She was responding well to the play way method during the intervention and showed quick progress. Slowly Arya started talking in one word utterances. From then on the progress made by the child was overwhelming. She was quick to learn the different concepts. She also learnt to read and write a few alphabets and numbers. The mother was well motivated and carried out the training at home in a very systematic manner.

By the time Arya was 2 ½ years of age she was able to speak in simple three to four word sentences. She was able to identify and match alphabets from /a/ to /a: /. She was able to recite numbers from 1 to 20, able to categorize and remember the names of fruits, vegetables, animals, birds, vehicles, and food items.

Arya was re-evaluated and it was found that she was acquiring age appropriate skills. Hence Arya was directed to a mainstream school in Kerala without enrolling to the Preschool Parent Empowerment program and the preschool training at the Department of Special Education, which is the path generally, children take before getting into mainstream. Since there was all round age appropriate development in the child, she was admitted in to LKG at Chavara LP School, Kerala. The child was admitted in a classroom of 51 normal children.

During the follow up evaluation it was found that the class teacher had been impressed with Arya's performance, although Arya showed some difficulty in understanding the teacher's instructions. Currently she has passed LKG and now is promoted to UKG for the next academic year. Teachers at mainstream found that she is doing much better than other children of her age group and is already aware of the concepts taught to her in her school syllabus. Without the support and consistent efforts of her parents, the child could not have excelled at the school. They played a key role in identifying the problem early and initiating the rehabilitation services. Arya comes to AIISH every year for a re-evaluation and she is availing another advanced educational service from the Department of Special Education called the Curricular Support Services (CSS).

When Arya was brought to AIISH she could say only one word for all her needs; that is "amma". However currently she narrates incidences in complex sentences and also can read and write. The parents never thought that the child will speak like any other normal child and there was a social stigma in their heart related to her acceptance in her school and society. However all these fears are a thing of the past. The parents are very confident now that their daughter has a bright future ahead.

We hope that this success story will spread awareness about early identification, intervention and the importance of multidisciplinary approach of different rehabilitation professionals so that any child with an hearing impairment can achieve successful inclusion and acceptance from the society. We also hope to motivate the parents to work harder and provide good home training for their children since the rehabilitation of such children is a long term process.