

Learning to live again

“We used to live together in a village near Chennai (Sri Perambur). My father had set up a Ragi mill (flour mill) there and everything was going on well. During the agricultural season, he used to spray pesticides on the plants and he used to earn around Rs. 500 per day. He worked day and night strenuously. During these tough times, he started complaining about a burning sensation in his stomach. He said that he could not work. He stopped eating properly. He used to sleep all the time. Then, I don't know what happened to him. He tried committing suicide by hanging himself. In another instance, he climbed up the transformer to electrocute himself. But somehow he was saved. He also went and jumped into a well, 3 km away from our village. Some workers around, who knew our family, saved him again. A local doctor said that there was a danger to his life. So we took him to a general hospital in Chennai. He was admitted to the hospital for 4 months. Then the doctor said that there was no more danger to his life and so we took him back home.

We used to be very careful after that. After coming back home there was no sign of any improvement in him. He used to wander about aimlessly. Mother said, ‘ nanna maga chanaagirabeku.. Yeshtu karchadru parvagilla.’(My son should get well, at any cost.) Then we got him admitted in Sri Ramachandra Hospital in Chennai. He was there for 4 months. He went through ECT (Electro convulsive Therapy). He was prescribed many medicines. We spent Rs 50,000 on this treatment. Before the treatment we had 10 acres of land, afterwards we have only 1 acre. Even after this treatment there was no improvement in his condition. The doctors gave up hope and said that his condition is incurable. We stayed in village for 6 years after this and my father lived his life like a doll. He never spoke to anyone. We had to tell him everything 10 times. We had to look after him like a baby. He lost his appetite. We had to take care of his activities of daily living. We lost all hope of his recovery. We have taken about 1 lakh loan. I quit my studies as I had to look after him. My brother and sister studied elsewhere, so they don't know the hardships we went through”- eldest daughter shared.

Finally light at the end of the tunnel

“We then moved to Bangalore. We have been living here for the past 9 years. My mother's mother used to work in College canteen. Her job is cleaning the rice before it is cooked. She gave her job to my mother. Now my mother works very hard there. She leaves home at 6 am and comes back at 8.30 pm. She was paid Rs 1000 earlier. Now she earns Rs.2000. Even here his condition never changed. Since we were facing financial crisis, we decided to let him be however he is. We had resigned ourselves to the fact that his illness was not curable until Guru Sir and Isaac sir came into our lives”.

The first time when a NGO worker went to their house and spoke to Chandra. He told him that he would help him to get better. He held his hands and assured him that he would come back and get treatment for him. This brought tears in Chandra's eyes. This was a remarkable moment as it was 15 years since Chandra displayed any emotions.

Later, NGO worker took him to NIMHANS and got him treated. He was diagnosed with Depression. He was given antidepressants, which he used to take regularly. He used to sleep a lot during the first few days of medication. Then he started asking for tea, water and breakfast. Earlier others had to bathe him, after taking treatment he does it himself. He goes for a walk and comes back home without getting lost

The way family has supported Chandra through thick and thin is marvellous. Their survival strategies and their resilience are truly astonishing. So is their will to support their family honorably and live their life with dignity. Chandra is en route to complete recovery.