

Sight again after years in darkness

A helium cylinder explosion left Manjunath blinded in both eyes. He was completely dependent on family members to move around, but now doctors have restored vision to his right eye

Suchith.Kidiyoor
@timesgroup.com

Manjunath G watched eagerly as a hawker inflated a brightly-coloured balloon with helium, just outside his home in JP Nagar. Eight years old at that time, he was one of several children crowded around the hawker, all waiting to buy a balloon. Then tragedy struck. The cylinder exploded and Manjunath's world turned dark.

Shards from the cylinder, mud and stones struck Manjunath's body and face, leaving him completely blind in the left eye and with severe injuries to his right eye. Two other children died in the July 2008 blast while three others suffered injuries. Manjunath, who was in the III Standard then, had to drop out of school.

Manjunath was treated for burn injuries at Victoria Hospital and was then shifted to Minto Eye Hospital where doctors confirmed his worst fears — he won't see again. He had to depend on his mother and the other members of his family to move around and do simple tasks. But his father, Gyanappa, a tailor by profession, decided to take Manjunath to Narayana Nethrayala. Now, after years of groping in the dark, Manjunath can finally see again. Doctors at Narayana Nethralaya, using stem cell transplantation, have restored vision to his right eye. The left eye remains completely damaged, but Manjunath can now play with his friends and hopes to resume his studies soon.

"After the incident, I could not play with my friends," Manjunath said. "My mother had to guide me all the time. Without her help, I could not step out of the house. When other kids were playing outside, I yearned to join them, but I could not. I spent my time listening to the television. I have often fallen and hurt myself while trying to get from one room to another. I missed classes for three years. All my friends are now in the VI Standard."

Dr Himanshu P Matalia, who has treated Manjunath all these years, said, "Manjunath had sustained burns to his face and severe injury to both eyes. He had lost vision in both eyes. He was taken to a hospital where both eyes were sutured. He was brought to our hos-



Manjunath

pital 25 days after the blast. By then he was completely dependent on his parents for day-to-day work and he had also become extremely insecure. On preliminary examinations, we found both eyes were still loaded with small stones. The corneas had turned white and multiple blood vessels had grown on them."

The left eye was too badly damaged, so Matalia and his team decided to concentrate their efforts on saving the right eye.

"Through surgery we removed the stones and then covered the eye with biological tissue to help advance the healing process. Following the surgery, Manjunath was very comfortable. However, the injury had damaged the stem cells in the ocular surface. Using some of his own surviving stem cells from the damaged left eye, we grew the limbal stem cells in our laboratory. After 12 days, he underwent a major stem cell transplantation. He then began to slowly recover vision."



Anjan Kumar

ANOTHER SUCCESS

LIKE MANJUNATH, Anjan Kumar also lost vision in both eyes when the blast occurred. For almost a year, he was totally dependent on his family members to perform the even simple tasks. Anjan was forced to discontinue his education and he too has completely lost vision in the left eye.

Anjan was treated in a hospital in Hyderabad where doctors restored vision to the right eye. He is no longer dependent on his family to get around and he has resumed his studies. He is now in the IX Standard.

Anjan said, "I was riding a bicycle when the blast occurred. Shards from the cylinder struck my abdomen. I sustained multiple burn injuries to my legs, hands and face. I was admitted to Victoria Hospital for treatment. My parents later took me to several eye hospitals, but all the doctors said I would not regain my sight. Finally, I was admitted to a hospital in Hyderabad and after a year of treatment and surgeries I regained vision in the right eye. Like Manjunath my left eye is completely damaged."

ESHWAR S



Dr Himanshu P Matalia

Manjunath claims he has gained in confidence and now leads a normal life.

"When I realised I could see, I felt like running around just to see the world around me," Manjunath said. "Now, I feel very good. I can read, play with friends and watch television. I can even go out with my father. Now I want to go to school and continue my studies."

His father Gyanappa said, "We are very grateful to Dr Himanshu. If my son can see again, it is because of him. We are from a very poor background and could not afford the treatment. The hospital did not charge us for the treatment. I am handicapped and had to drop out of school. With great difficulty, I got my son admitted to an English medium school. We had great hopes for him, but the cylinder blast wrecked our dreams. It was very painful to see my son sitting at home without doing anything. But now, we are planning to send him to school when the academic year begins."



MUTHU P

Star wars crush Cubbon Park's lawns

Atul Chaturvedi
atul.chaturvedi2@timesgroup.com

When the stars descended on Chinnaswamy stadium for the Celebrity Cricket League match on Sunday, it was Cubbon Park's lawns that bore the brunt of it. Over a 100 vehicles were parked there destroying the lawn and creating problems for walkers.

Walkers allege that it was all done for money. "It was shocking to see so many vehicles parked on the lawn on Sunday evening," one of them said. "Parking is allowed inside, but only at specific places. Though the fee is only Rs 20, it was Rs 50 on Sunday."

According to officials, there was a

serpentine line of vehicles near the entrance of MG Road. Fearing a jam, cops allowed vehicles to enter the park and onto the lawns.

Deputy director of the horticulture department M Jagadish said, "Cops allowed around 15 vehicles on the lawn. The lawn is hard and it cannot be easily destroyed by vehicles. If something has been destroyed, we will restore it. We had proposed to build a new lawn near Bal Bhavan at a cost of Rs 15 lakh. The damage may have been caused by the fencing and digging work."

The pictures taken by BM photographer, however, tell a different story. There were definitely more than 15 vehicles parked on the lawns.

Jagadish added that police had identified four places for parking during cricket matches at Chinnaswamy Stadium. However, due to Metro work near Bal Bhavan (one of the designated parking spots), people were allowed to park vehicles on the lawns on Sunday.

Police said they had sent a number of SMSes to people telling them not to park near Chinnaswamy Stadium, but at Kanteerava Stadium. Despite this, rules were bent to enjoy the celebrity cricket match. "We had allowed parking on the stretch between Bal Bhavan and Press Club, but parking on the lawns of Cubbon Park has not come to my notice," said Assistant Commissioner of Police (Traffic Central) M G Subramanya.

Deputy director of horticulture department M Jagadish claimed that only 15 vehicles were parked on the lawns, but this picture of just one area tells a different story