

## **CORNEAL TRANSPLANTATION – A NEW BEGINNING... LIFE. PASS IT ON**

Balan, 48 years old, has a family of 2 female children aged 23 and 20 respectively, was living in Dindigul. He was earning his livelihood by working as a cook in a hotel. His wife took care of the family. Only, last year he got his first daughter married. Life has been a bit relaxing thereafter. The second one is going to college. It was tough making the ends meet, but somehow they were able to survive decently.

Fate had a cruel blow on him when a hot oil droplet splashed in his right eye while he was cooking. He consulted a local physician and was given some eye drops. The medications only alleviated the pain, but his vision deteriorated day by day. He continued to work as a cook as he is the sole breadwinner of the family. It has been 2 years and he accepted this torturous way of leading his life with one eye. He thought he had no other option, but to be blind in one eye till his end.

His wife felt that her prayers were answered, when a friend told them about Aravind Eye Hospitals, in Madurai. Finally in 1982, Balan came to Aravind Eye Hospital, went through all the routine examinations, and was referred to cornea Clinic. Upon diagnosis, Dr.M.Srinivasan assured him of regaining his vision and advised him to get admitted for corneal transplantation. Balan was so excited and was positive of getting back his vision.

It was a period where the need & importance of eye donation has not gained momentum among the masses. So, he has to stay in the hospital for a week for somebody to donate a cornea. His dreams were shattered when a patient attendee staying in the same ward demotivated him about corneal transplantation. Balan was so dejected that he left the hospital and stealthily went home. He didn't turn back after that. He continued to live with this, accepting his fate.

His life was shattered, when he developed viral infection in his left eye. Before he could do anything he was blind in both the eyes. It was a nightmare to think about who is going to feed the family, as he had to leave his job. For the next 4 months he was completely blind in both the eyes & very much dependent on his daughter for his daily living skills. At this time, he fondly remembers the caring, indulgence & sacrifice of his daughter, without which life would have been a hell. Both mother and daughter were supporting the family by doing some household works. He felt very depressed and even had strange thoughts of ending his life.

With some intuition he took a last chance and came back to Aravind in 1996. He underwent corneal grafting in his right eye successfully. He felt very happy to regain his vision. He went home and with some help started a petty shop in his house to feed the family. His happiness didn't last long as his vision was deteriorating and within a year, he was again blind in one

eye. He immediately came to Aravind and upon diagnosis it was found that he had rejection in the graft.

After a week, he again had a transplant in the same eye. It was a pity that within a year he had a rejection in the second graft. He was completely devastated, but now he felt he can always go back to Aravind. So, in 2000 he had a successful third graft in the same eye. Due to his financial constraints, the subsequent grafts were done at a subsidized rate in the paying hospital. Now, Balan has now become a regular visitor to the cornea clinic for examinations & medications to avoid further rejection in the graft. He fondly reminisces the service of the staff and all the donor families for restoring his sight and rejuvenating his family.