



I CAN

by

SRIRAM SRINIVAS

(a child born with Cerebral Palsy and Mental Retardation)

SRIRAM SRINIVAS - EARLY LIFE

SRIRAM SRINIVAS RAJASEKARAN was born with Cerebral Palsy and Mental Retardation in the year 1993. He couldn't walk from his early childhood and he underwent various treatments on the sole purpose to stand on his own. He couldn't stand till his age of 10 years. He underwent rigorous physiotherapy and ayurvedic massages for his leg without any improvement. We used to carry him where ever we went, and he used to be bed ridden. On the advice of a doctor then, we learnt that his mental disability was also a factor which disabled him to walk. Thus, we needed to train his brain monotonously while strengthening his legs. In such of such activity we introduced him to walking with support and cycling with support. He also showed equal efforts and was determined to walk. Gradually there was improvement and he was able to stand but in an inclined posture. Initially he used to stand for a minute or two and his timing gradually increased to five minutes. Even now he will not be able to stand in a place for more than 5 minutes.

With the intention to increase the timing he would be able to stand, we introduced him to walking in water in a swimming pool. Gradually his instructor trained him in swimming. It all started as a casual activity to improve and strengthen his legs. With his determination to break free above his disability and through rigorous hard work soon he was able to swim across a swimming pool which was nearly 25 metres without any support. Identifying his inner strength, we appointed a trainer who coached him. Today even though he cannot stand in a place for more than 5 minutes, he can swim in sea for more than 5km. He can swim at the depths covering distances more than 5km. With this ability he started participating in various swimming competitions across the country at various levels for such disabled children. He has won many awards in recognition of his swimming capabilities.

Parallel to his swimming competitions he also took part in BOCCE events organised in our country and won awards for the same. In the year 2016 he represented India in TAFISA Games 2016 held in Jakarta and won Gold and Bronze medals in team and individual events respectively.

Being a child affected with mental retardation and cerebral palsy, he cannot understand what a competition means in any event he takes part. To him a gold medal and a bronze medal still mean the same. But the joy he -

arrives at by achieving the feat is immense and unexplainable. The social recognition that such laurels bring him gives him immense joy and acts as a vibrant motivating factor which pushes him to push beyond his boundaries. Through sports he was able to channelize his aggressive behaviour traits in him into more meaningful purposes. His transformation from a kid who could not stand to a boy who can swim at sea for more than 5km is immense and is no ordinary feat. The amount of hard work, self-determination, discipline and commitment is commendable.

As a parent, we never thought our son would reach such great heights with all his disabilities. Having said that he has made us proud, but his achievement doesn't stop there. His life is definitely an inspiration to many parents of kids with such disability. Many parents of such kids are clueless that their disabled kid can achieve in a field of their interests. They don't realise that these kids too can make wonders, reach great heights and bring happiness to their family.

INSPIRING OTHERS and SPREADING THE LIGHT through a short-docu film on SRIRAM

We as Sriram's parents, were broken and was under dark when he was a small kid. Our world was shattered on seeing his condition. Fortunately, everything fell in place for him and we realised that our disabled child who was crippled with mental retardation and cerebral palsy could do wonders and bring immense joy to our family. Today we celebrate his every move and every achievement as we stand by his dream. We wanted this kind of celebration to happen in every family with such kids. To spread the word and inspire we documented his life in the form of a short film. We launched the short film "I CAN" along with a panel discussion where in experts from Social Work, Psychiatry, Medical advancements and Sports for special children presented on the following topics

- 1) Dr.K.Sekar, Professor of PSW and Registrar NIMHANS,Bangalore on "Resilience among families with special children"
- 2) Fr.Joseph Xavier SJ, Former Principal, Loyola College, Chennai on "Stress management for families with special children"

- 3) Dr. Henry Prakash, Senior Professor, CMC Vellore on “Recent advancements and trends in medical management of Special Children”
- 4) Dr. Paul Deva Sagayam, Area Director, Special Olympics, Tamil Nadu on “Externalizing the interests of special children through sports”

The launch of the short film and the panel discussion which was held at Prasad Studios marking the 25th birthday of Sriram attracted around 200 families. After watching the life of Sriram on screen, the parents were speechless and really motivated and inspired to stand by their child affected with cerebral palsy. The panel discussion added healthy insights and provoked many parents who attended the event to come out of their shell. We honestly shared our experience with the motive that a small spark out of our experiences might be a huge ball of fire to keep parents of such children motivated towards great heights. We also uploaded the short-film on Youtube. With almost 6500+ views on the internet, many parents have called us to congratulate and called us to learn more about our experiences. We are happy that we have managed to spread light in a small way to a small set of families with such affected children.



You can search **You Tube** for:

“I CAN (Shortfilm)

An inspiring true success story of a boy born with cerebral palsy and mental retardation”

(or) you can watch through the following link

“ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0l-nogk5Jn4&t=4s> ”



SUCCESS IS BURIED ON THE OTHER SIDE OF REJECTION

Having won 2 gold medals at National Level Qualifying Competitions in 2016, he qualified himself into the list of 32 probables' selected for the first level from all across our country to take part in SPECIAL OLYMPICS which is to be held in 2019 at Abu Dhabi, however he did not make the cut to the next level as he was rejected orally by the authorities of Special Olympics (Tamil Nadu) citing reasons that he cannot independently manage his day to day activities. Disappointed that he could not go ahead in the selection process, and dejected that he lost an opportunity to represent our country at world stage, we continued to search for other opportunities in aim to fulfil his dream of bringing laurels to our country.

Having lost an opportunity, we decided not to stop his efforts and continue to channelize his disappointment in a more positive way. We decided to push his boundary to take an attempt to make him swim at sea. Even though we were reluctant and sceptical initially due to the dangers of sea, he responded positively. He pushed his limits with his inner strength. Today he undergoes 8 hours of rigorous at training at gym, swimming pool and swimming at sea under the guidance of 2 coaches with a sole intention to create a record of some sort which would gain him social recognition and acceptance. From a boy who cannot stand to a boy who won laurels at many swimming competitions, today SRIRAM SRINIVAS can swim more than 5kms at sea braving all dangers. He is continuously motivated to say to the world that "I CAN".

We are confident that SRIRAM SRINIVAS RAJASEKARAN will achieve this feat too in the near future and continue to inspire many parents of such children. After all, its only true that he portrays to the world that

**"Strength doesn't come from what you can do,
it comes from overcoming things you once thought you couldn't"**

- Vanitha Rajasekaran
(Proud M/o SRIRAM SRINIVAS RAJASEKARAN)

19.03.2018



Some photographs taken during some of the events in which he participated and recieved recognition



Some photographs of Sriram's workout to undertake sea swimming



Sriram has been rigourously practising swimming at sea under the guidance of 2 coaches, Mr.Sathish Kumar and Mr.Selvam R

ACHIEVEMENTS

2013 - 4th Place, Swimming, 50mtr Free Style

Mandya (Karnataka)

2014 - 3rd Place, Soft Ball Throw

DIV M-13, Special Olympics National Championship, New Delhi

2014 - 3rd Place, 100mtr Walking

DIV M-13, Special Olympics National Championship, New Delhi

2015 - 1st Place, Swimming 100mtr Backstroke

South Zone Paraolympic Swimming Championship, Theni (T.N)

2015 - 1st Place, Swimming 100mtr Freestyle

South Zone Paraolympic Swimming Championship, Theni (T.N)

2016 - 2nd Place, Bocce Doubles Event

Special Olympics National Championship, Patna (Bihar)

2016 - 1st Place, 25mtr Free Style

Special Olympics National Championship, Mumbai (Maharashtra)

2016 - 3rd Place, 25mtr Backstroke

Special Olympics National Championship, Mumbai (Maharashtra)

2016 - 1st Place, Boccee Team Event

TAFISA GAMES-6-TAHUN, Jakarta (Indonesia)

2016 - 2nd Place, Boccee Team Event

TAFISA GAMES-6-TAHUN, Jakarta (Indonesia)

2017 - One among 32 probables selected for 1st Camp towards selection for participation in Special Olympics which is to be held in Abu Dhabi 2019

2018 - Completed 2.5km swimming at Sea

Squareoff Sports. Goa

2018 - 1st Place, Aquatics Event

Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, Chennai (T.N)



*"I am not what happened to me,
I am what I choose to become"*