

THE BEST BIRTHDAY EVER!

KASTURI | Dreamt of a special birthday party.



What's so special about birthdays? The charm of a birthday might fade as you grow older but for a child, it is a day to celebrate and cherish life!

16th June was one such special day for 11-year-old Kasturi Panjiyar, a young girl who lived with her parents and

brother Yashbardhan in a tiny house. Her father struggled to make ends meet with a meagre monthly earning of around ₹7,000 to 8,000. The family's financial position made birthdays, gifts and parties unattainable dreams. Kasturi and Yashbardhan would look at others enjoying celebrations and wondered if they would ever get to experience such things.

Their situation became worse when Kasturi was diagnosed with a very serious illness and admitted at the Institute of Child Health in Kolkata. It was a very tough time for the family as her medical expenses had to be met as well.

Despite her circumstances, Kasturi had always been a happy, spirited child. She

would never let the hardships of life affect her. Even now, when she was fighting a severe illness, she bravely smiled and tried to be happy.

But a beacon of light was about to enter Kasturi's life. On 5th June 2015, Himanshu Sutradhar, a senior volunteer of Make-A-Wish India's Kolkata division, came to Kasturi's bedside and started a conversation. Kasturi enthusiastically told him about her hobbies, her interests and her favourite cartoons. Himanshu then started telling her about Make-A-Wish foundation and explained how they would fulfil her wish. She smiled broadly, as she spontaneously announced, "I want to celebrate my birthday in a fun way!"

Himanshu was surprised. He thought to himself, "Why would she request such an ordinary wish?" Kasturi intuitively answered his unsaid question. "I have seen others celebrating their birthdays—wearing new clothes, inviting their friends, cutting cakes and having a great time. People do this every year, but I never had the opportunity. I want to call my friends and cut a cake. I want to wear a pretty dress and look beautiful. I want to celebrate my special day and feel like a queen!"

Understanding her dream, he asked her, "What gifts do you want on your birthday?" The excited girl couldn't decide and said that she would let him know later. Touched by this exceptional wish, Himanshu said goodbye and promised to meet her soon.

16th June, 2015 was coming and the Make-A-Wish team started preparing for

Kasturi's birthday bash. We arranged for Kasturi's gifts from her list of wishes and packed them in one big box. Meanwhile, another team from Make-A-Wish took up the task of decorating her home and filled it with colourful balloons and decorations. A big chocolate cake was ordered. Everything was set for the perfect birthday!

It was finally time for the celebrations to begin! Kasturi had long waited for this day and dressed herself in a pretty dress. With a beautiful smile on her face and excitement in her eyes, she looked every bit like a happy birthday girl.

Kasturi's brother and all her friends started gathering for the party. The cake lit with beautiful candles was brought forth. Kasturi rapturously blew the candles and cut her cake. The room filled with strains of birthday music and wishes. Everyone savoured a piece of the delicious cake. And then there was music and dancing. Everyone joined in to dance their hearts out. Kasturi was lost in all the celebrations, and for that moment, forgot her woes.



It was time to open the gifts. One by one, she opened all the gifts. A huge teddy bear, a kitchen set, a toy bus, a pretty doll, binoculars and lots of other toys filled her with astonishment and joy.

When our team asked her about the gift she loved the most, she immediately pointed to the big teddy bear. The party was a huge hit, but what really made it memorable was the smile on Kasturi's face. She said to us, "This is the best birthday of my life, and spending it with you all has made it extra special and unforgettable."

It was a special day not just for Kasturi but for us too. It reminded us that the things we take for granted in life could be unattainable dreams for others. We realised that birthday celebrations are not just about new clothes, parties and gifts; it is an opportunity to share joy with friends and family. It is an opportunity to celebrate life!



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