

# A Ray of Hope

## Ayush's Journey Back to Learning



Eight-year-old Ayush Behera is a quiet and gentle child from Sanamadhapur village in Kholikote Block of Ganjam district. His friends lovingly call him "Ayar." Ayush lives with his mother, Lili Behera, who struggles every day to support their small family.

Ayush lost his father, Late Jitendra Behera, when he was just five years old. Since then, his mother has been the only earning member of the family. She works as a daily wage labourer and receives a small widow pension. With no land for cultivation and limited work opportunities in the village, she often travels to nearby villages in search of work. Sometimes she returns home without any income. On days when she falls ill or cannot do heavy labour, the family faces even greater hardship.

Growing up in such difficult circumstances, Ayush often accompanied his mother in search of work instead of going to school. He is also a physically weak child and frequently suffers from cold and fever. Because of these challenges, his schooling became irregular and eventually he dropped out.

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The turning point in Ayush's life came when Swarnnalata Das, a Community Learning Facilitator at the "Khel Vatika" Community Learning and Support Centre in Sanamadhapur, noticed that he had dropped out of the Government Primary School. The learning centre was established by Youth for Social Development (YSD) to support children who are at risk of falling behind in their education.

Swarnnalata visited Ayush's home several times and patiently spoke with his mother about the importance of education. She also started supporting Ayush with basic learning at home. Around the same time, YSD organised a mothers' workshop at the village school to raise awareness about children's education. Ayush's mother attended the workshop and realised how important schooling was for her son's future. From then on, she began encouraging Ayush to attend school regularly.

Ayush soon joined the Sanamadhapur Learning Centre and started going to school regularly with the support of Swarnnalata Didi. The joyful learning activities, teaching-learning materials, and storybooks at the centre made learning interesting for him. Gradually, Ayush regained confidence in his studies.

Today, Ayush is a regular student of Class III. He can read and write well and shows particular interest in mathematics. He enjoys reading storybooks from the learning centre library and actively participates in school activities. Ayush also has a sweet singing voice and sometimes sings during the school assembly. Apart from studies, he loves playing cricket with his friends.

With regular guidance from the learning centre, his handwriting has improved and he has become a disciplined and enthusiastic learner.

Ayush's mother now feels hopeful about her son's future. She says that the support from the YSD learning centre has helped Ayush return to school and develop a love for learning.

Today, Ayush dreams of becoming a police officer when he grows up – a dream that once seemed far away, but now feels possible.

## Support



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