

An Indian-Origin Organ Donor in Singapore Receives a Prestigious Award for Saving a Baby's Life

Sujatha Suriyamoorthi, Sunil Shroff
MOHAN Foundation, India

'The Straits Times Singaporean of the Year 2021', a prestigious award by the Singapore Government was conferred upon Sakthibalan Balathandautham, an Indian-origin Singaporean sales executive for donating a part of his liver to a one-year-old girl whom he had never met before. The award included a trophy and 20,000 Singaporean dollars was presented by President Halimah Yacob in February 2022.

A young Indian couple posted a plea on social media seeking a liver donor for their one-year-old daughter Rheya, who had been diagnosed with biliary atresia. It is a rare liver disease that occurs in infants and often found shortly after birth. Responding to the plea, Sakthibalan Balathandautham donated 23 per cent of his liver to baby Rheya.

Corresponding Author: Dr. Sunil Shroff,
MOHAN Foundation, Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India
Email: shroff@mohanfoundation.org

At the award ceremony, President Halimah Yacob stated that the finalists had reminded Singaporeans of the importance of serving a greater purpose. "It was inspirational to all of us to see Sakthibalan's act of courage, generosity, and willingness to put his own health and well-being at risk while helping others. He is indeed deserving of this award," she added.

When asked why he had stepped forward, Sakthibalan said, "There's a young girl out there who is looking for a living liver donor. I felt it would be the right time for me to participate in something bigger." Sakthibalan is now an advocate for organ donation, encouraging as many people as possible to support organ donation and help patients in need.

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