

*Donor Story***Honouring Umang Galada**

Ujjawal Galada, Jyoti Galada
Kolkata, India



Master Umang Galada

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Only 12, yet Umang Galada from Kolkata left a mark far beyond his years - a legacy that will live on forever. Battling end-stage renal failure, Umang underwent a kidney transplant - with his mother selflessly donating her kidney in the hope of giving him a new beginning. But life had other plans. Just hours after the surgery, Umang suffered a cardiac arrest that led to irreversible brain damage. He was declared brain dead on May 21, 2025.

In their darkest hours, his family chose to turn tragedy into hope - donating Umang's organs. His liver gave a second chance at life to a patient in need, and his corneas helped giving the gift of sight to two others.

This tribute honours Umang, whose short life left a lasting legacy, and his family, whose selfless act gave hope to others. It was penned by his parents, **Ujjawal Galada** (Head, Partnerships & Fundraising, India Autism Center) and **Jyoti Galada** (journalist, writer, and kidney donor).

As his name suggests, Umang was full of enthusiasm, intelligence, curiosity, and creativity. He was a keen learner, always eager to try new things, whether it was cooking, coding, or playing the tabla. Whatever he did, he gave it his 100%. Maths and science were his favourite subjects, but his love for them went beyond textbooks. He enjoyed building models, conducting science experiments, and playing with numbers.

He was deeply loved by everyone for his simplicity, his infectious smile, and his zest for life. Even after being diagnosed with End-Stage Kidney Disease (ESKD), his smile never faded. Despite the exhausting routine of dialysis, he remained positive and full of life. He had a beautiful way of connecting with people, always making an effort to understand others and ensure they were happy in his company.

The reflections of Umang that time cannot erase

Umang had a big heart, especially for those in need. He would always notice and care about people who were sad or struggling. If he saw a street child begging or someone in trouble, he would try to help or ask me to help them.

I remember one moment during dialysis, after it was confirmed that I would be his kidney donor. He saw a six-year-old girl in the unit who was also undergoing dialysis but hadn't found a donor. He asked me to speak to the doctor and see if his own kidneys, which had little function, could be donated to her. I later explained that it wasn't medically possible, but his willingness to help even in his condition, showed the depth of his generous heart. Another memory that stays with me is from a tabla

competition. He had to submit a 7-minute performance video. He recorded three versions and sent them to his tabla teacher, who replied saying they were "okay." But Umang wasn't satisfied. He said, "I'll keep sending more until sir says 'good', not just 'okay'." He recorded two more, seeking perfection.

He also learned how to operate the dialysis machine, check blood pressure, and even give injections. The nurses used to joke that he could do his own dialysis!

There are so many memories... I could go on and on.

The journey of loss and the decision to donate

Even during his final days, Umang remained his usual energetic and curious self. While admitted for his transplant, he kept asking the nurses, technicians, and doctors endless questions about plasmapheresis, the transplant procedure, and how the machines in the transplant unit worked. He was deeply interested in the roles of all the medical staff.

He was also making plans with his friends and teachers over the phone, excited to return to the school he loved. He even tried to get permission to use his laptop in the transplant unit so he could complete the coding for a game he had started creating. Umang was looking forward to living a normal life after the transplant.

The strength behind saying 'Yes' in the face of heartbreak

Organ donation was not a new concept to us. We had been aware of its importance and process long before Umang was



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born. It's something we had openly discussed within our family, and many of our elders had already pledged their organs.

And of course, we had personally experienced the emotional toll of waiting for an organ for a loved one. We knew what it meant to be on the other side to be desperately hoping for a donor.

Hospital experience & reflections

In our case, organ donation wasn't brought up by the hospital, we were the ones who offered to donate Umang's organs and tissues. Once we expressed our wish, the hospital quickly acted and began the process of finding suitable recipients across India.

In our moment of profound grief, that decision brought a sense of pride and purpose. When Umang was given a 'Guard of Honour' for his donation, it felt like his death wasn't in vain and that his life, though short, was full and meaningful.

From waiting to giving - walking the journey firsthand

During the year he was on dialysis, we experienced firsthand the stress and urgency of finding a suitable donor. My husband's kidney, though of the same blood group, was not found suitable. Eventually, we had to opt for an ABO-incompatible transplant, with me as the donor despite having a different blood type.

We met many families during this time especially parents of young children desperately waiting for a deceased organ donor. The waiting list is tragically long, and the number of actual donations still fall short. That reality strengthened our resolve.

Unlocking the potential of informed families

With the right awareness and support, many more families would be willing to donate. There are too many myths and misunderstandings surrounding organ donation that need to be addressed.

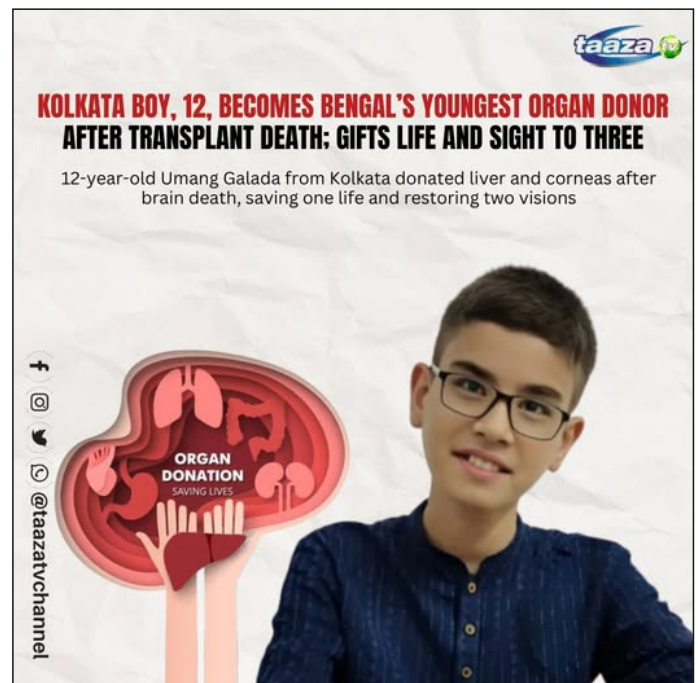
Because the final decision lies with the family, it's crucial that people discuss their wish to donate with their loved ones in advance. If a family has already talked about it and agreed, there's a much higher chance they'll say 'Yes' in that critical moment.

Hospitals, government and private, must have trained counselors or staff to guide families sensitively when the opportunity for donation arises. It's a small effort that can save countless lives.

Your message to other families

Life and death are not in our hands but how we choose to live and respond to death can be. Organ donation is one of the most powerful acts of kindness and service, and I believe it brings peace to the departed soul.

Knowing that your loved one has saved or transformed someone else's life brings not just comfort, but a deep, lasting pride. It's a legacy of love that lives on long after we're gone.



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