

INSPIRATION

This woman entrepreneur born with a cleft deformity is helping children like her

Divya Dinesh, Founder and CEO of Addvantis Enterprises, is helping children with cleft lip and palate to get free surgeries, as well as training hospitals with Smile Train.

By Nirandhi Gowthaman

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In India, every year, **more than 35,000 babies are born with cleft lip and palate**. The deformity forms when the tissues forming the face during pregnancy, don't join. It results in an **opening in the upper lip in case of a cleft lip, and an opening in the roof of the mouth, in case of the cleft palate**.

Divya Dinesh, Founder of Addvantis Enterprises, was also born with a cleft lip. When Divya was 11-months-old, she underwent surgery for it, which left a scar above her lips. At the age of 18, she underwent another corrective surgery for it.



With the media constantly talking about beauty, people with scars, especially on their faces, can become conscious. Divya reveals that **the scar on her face made her an introvert**, and eventually, she shied away from conversations, dropped-down her volume while talking, and changed her personality.

It was only at the **age of 23 that she was finally able to overcome the hurdle that the scar posed to her**. At a personality development class, an instructor noticed that she was holding herself back. The instructor decided to let Divya see that the scar should not hold her from being herself.

He conducted a small experiment. Of the 100 or more participants present, the instructor asked how many of them noticed the scars. Less than five hands were raised, of which two-three of them were doctors. That day, Divya decided to let go of her insecurity and be her true self.

Making a difference

An ardent animal lover, Divya always had a tough time finding skincare products that were vegan and were not tested on animals. Plagued by sensitive skin, she also had to find products that were free of harsh chemicals. This led her to learn aromatherapy and start creating products with a few experts.

In 2016, along with her mother Asha Dinesh, Divya set up Addvantis Enterprises and launched the brand **Vedaearth**. Its **vegan and PETA-certified** line of products include facial oils, face washes, body washes, as well as hair and essential oils.

She noticed that people had the choice to go vegan while buying products, however, while availing services the choices were restricted. To cater to this, Divya launched **a vegan spa, Vedaearth Lounge**, that offers beauty and spa treatments with vegan products and are also free of harsh chemicals like sulphates.

Divya says that veganism is an emerging concept in India. During the early stages of the brand, she had to create awareness about vegan products and its meaning to expand her target market.

“By choosing a brand that uses only vegan ingredients, you are contributing to ensure none of the products are tested on animals. Every time you purchase a product from a brand that tests on animals or sells in a country which requires you to test it on animals, you're just promoting that cause, which is where it's important to choose,” says the 29-year-old entrepreneur.

Divya also works with **Smile Train, an international children's charity for cleft lip and palate** that provides free surgeries for children affected by it. Further, she is an investor for the organisation and sponsors surgeries for kids, as well as training for nurses and doctors at various hospitals.