



Pak dad braves odds for girl

Robbed In Lahore, Donates 20% Of Liver To Fight Cancer

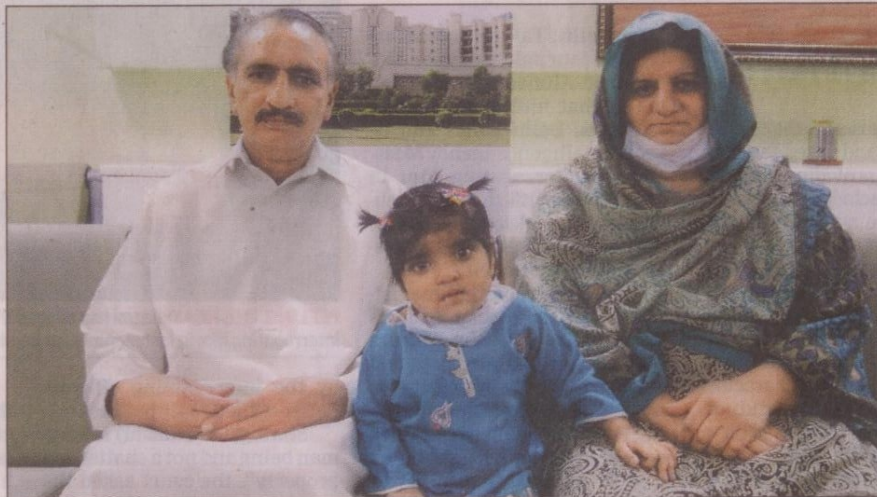
Kounteya Sinha | TNN

New Delhi: Malik Sarsa Khan had lost five children before. So when his daughter Samreen Fatma (3), who was born seven years after the death of his last child, was diagnosed with liver cancer, Khan, a Pakistani driver, decided to "beg, borrow or steal" to fund her liver transplant surgery in India.

Though the government of Punjab in Pakistan stepped in to help him financially, he was robbed off at gunpoint in Lahore while on his way to India. A determined Khan, somehow, managed to reach Apollo Hospital in Delhi. When finding a liver donor became difficult, he decided to donate 20% of his organ to his daughter.

A 10-hour surgery has cured Samreen. "Liver transplant surgery for children is not conducted in Pakistan. I was told to go to either China or India. I had more faith in Indian doctors and decided to do whatever it takes to get my daughter under their care. I cannot believe that my daughter, who barely spoke a word, used to be down with high fever almost every alternate day and could not stop itching her body and vomited blood, is talking non-stop these days. She is behaving like any other normal child," a beaming Khan said.

He added "I had lost my last



HOME CALLING: Samreen is doing well and ready to go back to Pakistan with her parents

child also to liver disease. However, this time I was not going to give up. Doctors said Samreen was suffering from an inherited disease and it could be because I am married to my cousin sister — a practice being followed in my family for over three generations."

Samreen's case transcended "against all odds", said Dr Anupam Sibal, group medical director of Apollo Hospitals. "It was heart-warming to see the commitment of the father to save her daughter. Samreen was very ill when she came to our hospital and we were worried whether she would be fit to

withstand the liver transplant. Now, she is cured, and is expected to go back home on March 21," said Sibal, a paediatric liver specialist.

Transplant surgeon Dr Subhash Gupta said Samreen was suffering from an inherited condition — progressive familial intrahepatic cholestasis (PFIC). The liver, one of the largest organs in the body, cleans the blood and helps fight infections. It also stores vitamins, sugars, fats and nutrients that travel to the rest of the body. It also removes bilirubin whose presence causes jaundice. The liver is responsible

for making bile. The build-up of bile in PFIC causes the liver to be damaged. "This eventually leads to scarring in the liver that leads to cirrhosis or cancer. If Samreen hadn't undergone the transplant, she would have died soon," Dr Gupta said.

He added, "She was malnourished, unable to walk, eat and be mentally alert. The surgery took about 10 hours. In the 70 transplants I have done on children, I can recall only three instances when a father donated for a daughter. Though she is cured, she will have to be on anti-rejection medicines for the rest of her life."

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