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TRIBUNE IMPACT Ludhiana boy finds feet in Chennai

Arup Chanda
Tribune News Service

Chennai, June 13

The scars on his face tell a tragic, yet courageous, tale. On October 5 last year, Prabhdeep Singh (19), a Ludhiana resident, was involved in a tragic car accident. He lost his friend in the ghastly incident and was left with paraplegia.

However, in February this year, this aspiring musician came across an article in The Tribune that stated the **miraculous recovery of Akbar Ali**, a man who was paralysed waist downwards after he suffered a spinal cord injury while working at a construction site in Abu Dhabi.

Ali was treated for paraplegia at Lifeline Institute of Stem Cell Therapy and Research in Chennai.

Not wasting anymore time, Prabhdeep, accompanied by his widowed mother Surinder Kaur and 20-year-old sister Gagandeep, packed bags and left his Pakkhuwal Road home to get cured of an ailment that people have to battle for a lifetime.

Today, he is able to walk with the help of crutches and leads an otherwise normal life. "I would lie in my bed and stare at the ceiling all day while my mother and sister watched helplessly. Being the sole earning member of my family through my musical group 'Masti', my hopes and dreams were reduced to an illusion till I read about the stem cell institute in Chennai in the columns of The Tribune."

Dr R. Ravi Kumar of Lifeline said, "Out of the 120 cases with spinal cord injuries we have treated so far, Prabhdeep's case was the most critical. His spinal cord was smashed and entirely cut off."

Doctors took autologous stem cells from his bone marrow and injected them into the spine. Prabhdeep got the treatment for four days before being discharged.

"We took him back home and after a few weeks, he could feel some pain and sensation in his waist and legs. After two months, he could walk with the help of crutches and be leaning on somebody," his sister said. Incidentally, Prabhdeep's father had died in a motorcycle

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accident in 2003.

Recounting the fateful day, Prabhdeep said, "We had gone to Ganganagar to perform at a marriage function. While returning, I was driving while my friend was sitting next to me and four girls were sitting at the back. Around 5 am, the brakes failed and the car collided into a tree. My friend died on the spot. After the accident, I did not remember anything."

Now, everyday, Prabhdeep walks for half-an-hour in his home with the help of crutches and takes the support of his sister.

Following a speedy recovery, Prabhdeep returned to Lifeline, this time for the second leg of treatment.

"Considering his injuries, he has recovered fast. Thus, we have decided to inject some more stem cells. Going by the pace of his recovery, he should walk like any ordinary person by the end of this year or early next year," said Dr Kumar.

The entire treatment cost Prabhdeep's family around Rs 1 lakh. Considering the financial conditions of the family, Lifeline also offered them a discount.

"I will soon be organising musical events with 'Masti' and my sister, who was managing the group, can go back to doing stage shows, which she loves," said a Prabhdeep, clearly aware of the second life he has been gifted.

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