

Health for all

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Rakesh: Dr Kafeel Khan, a pediatrician who was working at the BRD Medical College Hospital in Gorakhpur in Uttar Pradesh at the time of what is now known as 'Gorakhpur tragedy' has launched a 'Health4All' campaign yesterday ahead of Lok Sabha Elections. This campaign was launched along with other public health activists to pursue political parties to give priority to health issues in their manifestos. Khan said he will be meeting all political parties with health policy proposals and will support the party which would promise to work for those.

Khan is one of the nine accused in the case involving the death of 63 children within four days due to disruption in the supply of oxygen at the [Baba Raghav Das Medical College](#) in Gorakhpur in August 2017. He was arrested by the [Uttar Pradesh](#) Police in September 2017 and released on bail in April 2018 after massive public pressure

The campaign, 'Health For All', focusses on access to good quality [healthcare](#) services without anyone having to face financial hardship irrespective of age, caste, religion, region, gender, disability or economic status, he said. Ahead of this important announcement, we spoke to Dr Kafeel Khan for The Suno India Show to know about his life post the tragedy and what he hopes to achieve through this campaign.

Kafeel khan: This is Dr. Kafeel Khan. I am a MD Pediatrics, I am a pediatrician. I have done my MBBS and MD from KMC Manipal, Karnataka. And I was working there as an Assistant Professor in the department of Pediatric before coming to Gorakhpur. I joined as a lecturer in 2016, 8th of August 2016, as a permanent employee in B.R.D. Medical College. when I came to Gorakhpur, there are so many encephalitis cases already there in the B.R.D., I started learning with that. And because I have worked already in a corporate, a good corporate hospital. I tried to change a government hospital to a better hospital. Anyway. B.R.D. oxygen tragedy happens on 10th of August, 2017. B.R.D. Medical College is supplied by liquid oxygen which goes through pipelines to each bed in the ICU's and PICU's. The supplier, the Pushpa Sale, who was supplying liquid oxygen was asking for his dues for the past six months. He wrote his first letter on 6th of April, 2017. That is, four months before the incident happened. And he wrote around 14 letters, including Principal, District Magistrate, Principal Secretary, DGME, Health Minister, and even into the Chief Minister, Yogi Adityanath. He warned them, that I'm going to stop the oxygen and he stopped. We have a WhatsApp group, doctors are there. In that WhatsApp group, on 10th of August, night, I got a message from one of our senior residents, Dr. Satish Chaubey, saying that there is no liquid oxygen and the reserve cylinders were there, 52 reserve cylinders that also are going to finish, and kids are dying. I still remember that night when I called everyone, I called my Principal, I called my HOD, I called all the consultant there and I rushed to the spot. When I reached there, I could hear the crying of mothers from far. There was so much chaos. Every half an hour, one hour, one kid was dying. People were screaming, howling, because they knew that there was shortage of oxygen and my kids are dying. So first we tried with the nearby local hospitals. Went there, we got cylinders, we came back, cylinders were finished, we again went back, came back. And that fight continued for next 56 hours. The next batch of liquid oxygen reached to B.R.D. only on 12th of August, night. And started at 2 a.m. on 13th of August. So there was no liquid oxygen for 56 hours. Liquid oxygen supply finished at 7:30 p.m. on 10th of August, 2017 and started only at 2 a.m. on 12th of August, 2017. So 56 hours, there was no oxygen.

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Rakesh: For Dr Kafeel Khan, the 9 months in the jail were one of the worst. Not only was his reputation in shambles, he says, he also missed out on watching his daughter grow.

Kafeel khan: So, those nine months were really worst, but not only for mine, but my whole family. My daughter was just small when I left her, and when I came back, she was running. As a pediatrician, jab hum log pediatrics karte the, toh my teacher used to told me, you will learn the milestone when your daughter started walking, when your daughter started running, when you will become a father. And when that time came, I was in jail. When I left her, she couldn't, you know, walk. When I came back, she was running. She used to call me Papa but she doesn't know what this Papa means. Anyway. That was...my mother, when I came out and she started crying, I told her, at least you've got your son back. Vo roti rahi, aa, mere kaleje lag ja, aa mere gale lag ja. Aa mere dil mein sama ja. Maine us se kaha, kam se kam aapko apna baccha toh wapis mil gaya hai. There are seventy families who are still, after two years, they are waiting for justice. Judiciary is one thing you always believe, and you have faith, but the same judiciary didn't hear my plea for nine months. But when Manish Bhandari got bail, that time, we decided, my whole family decided that enough is enough. People should know the truth. And then I wrote a ten page letter from the jail. And then came out as a, I even didn't expect that the social media storm will give, will help me to get the bail. 18th of April I wrote the letter, and I got the bail on 25th of April. That is one I am, when I came out of jail, there are thousands of people waiting for me. Including those parents who lost their kids. And that was one surprise for me. Because no...nine months, nobody came. Nau maheene koi milne nahi aata tha. Wahi mooli ki sabzi, patli daal kha ke zindagi guzaari. Phir poori duniya se phone aane lagein, puri India se aane lage. And then things started changing. Par ladai shayad khatam nahin hui thi.

Rakesh: When Dr Kafeel was released from jail, he became a symbol of what is ailing the public health system. Breaking away from the shambles of victimhood, Dr Kafeel spent months after his release from the jail traveling across the country and understanding the health system.

Kafeel khan: Anyway, then I, then people started calling me, come to Kerala, come to Mumbai, come to Hyderabad, come to Ahmedabad. And I started going everywhere. I started meeting people, and as I started seeing the health system, how contrast our system is in India. Toh then I realized ki B.R.D. Medical College, B.R.D. oxygen tragedy is just the example of our health system, which is already in shambles. Already broken. Aur, corruption is involved everywhere. So we started talking about how to improve our health system.

you imagine that health, facility of health is given as a right since Independence, solid 75 years. Those people have thought about that. But our leaders are not thinking in that way. They are thinking about teen talak, halala, four marriages, Ram Mandir. But these are not the real issue. The real issue of any community, either Dalits, either OBCs, either they are you know, backward class or Muslims, or any minorities, anyone. Roti kapda makaan. The basic three things. Us se aage jaaoge toh health, employment and education. So we met a lot of health activists. It's non-political. We made a team of health activists. And we are making a health for all policy, a proposal. The main demand will be that they should increase the GDP, the percent of GDP but from 1.2 to 2.5%. At least 2.5. The whole world is using around 6-8%. And access to the good quality health facility, irrespective of caste, irrespective of religion, irrespective of gender, irrespective of geographical State, irrespective of your socioeconomic status. Free consultation, free medicine, free diagnostic facilities, free emergency

services. And that goes to all village level. Make medical college to all parliamentary constituency. Out of 543 MPs, they should have one medical college. Why there is 50 medical college in Karnataka, and there is only 10-20 medical college in Uttar Pradesh? When you have big population of 20 crore here. So these discrepancies has to remove by making new, opening new medical colleges, by filling all these vacancies, by really have a vision to improve this health system. GST rate when we are putting 18% to the OPD drugs, that is too much. For poor patient to buy 300 rupees medicine for cough and cold, and forget about the hypertension, diabetes and carcinoma drugs. New technologies, we have to accept that new technologies, new medical terminologies, all the researches are going outside India. US, UK, Germany. And they made machines, and when we import them, we put 18% GST. So these all big hospitals, they get. They buy. But when you talk about the village, and when you go to Gorakhpur and you go to any other, they can't buy 5 lakh machine, so they use the old machine. So we have to cut GST rate to these medical technology equipment. We have to cut GST rate on insurance policies, that is 18%. And if you talk about really Pradhanmantri Swasthya Bima Yojna, give money. Don't talk only jumla like this, ki I will give this. So that's my aim. We'll make a health policy and we'll go to all political party, and we'll give them proposal. Whichever party will include in their manifesto, we'll support them. That's all.

Rakesh: Other demands of the campaign includes: Doubling total Health budget to Rs 1.5 Lks Cr/every yr for the next 5 years;Filling all the 1.5 Lks existing vacancies and create new jobs every year; Regularize NHM employees ,Equal pay for equal work ,social security for them; ASHA workers to get 20000/m and Aganwadi workers to get 15000/m minimum salary.

Rakesh: What do you think really needs to happen for public health, for such a serious topic like public health to actually become a point for contention j

Kafeel khan: People awareness. See, jab bhi election aata hai toh kuchh aise mudde jod diye jaate hain ki people jo hai vo bhool jaate hain basic mudde ko. Maine aapko bataya na the basic mudde jo hain vo roti, kapda, makaan, education, health and employment hain. Aaj employment hai nahi, education hai nahin. Agar hum aware honge, toh aisa nahin hai ki vo usko sahi karenge. Aur voh nahin bhi aayenge. Aapko Gorakhpur ka example hi dekh lijiye. BRD oxygen tragedy ke baad jis jis gaaun se ek bacche ki bhi maut hui hai, us pure gaun ne Yogi ko kabhi vote nahi diya. Aur Yogi ji Lok Sabha ke election mein bi-pool mein haar gaye, jo 30 saal se nahi hare the. 30 years, he never lost. But he lost this time because the, jis ghar se bhi ek baccha mara tha, pure gaun ne vote de diya. Humne aware hona chahiye ki koi bhi political parties ho, vo gumrah na kar sake. Baat sirf BJP ki nahin hai, baat kisi bhi political party ki hai. Vo us cheez ko sahi nahi karna chahiye, kyunki vo gareebo se jude hue mudde hain. Aapko bata doon ki Gorakhpur mein encephalitis se 25 saal mein 25,000 bacche mar chuke hain. Aur 1 lakh se zyada apahij ho chuke hain. Toh aisa nahin hai. Yogi toh, BJP government toh abhi aayi hai. Us se pehle bhi bohot se government thi, kya kar liya unhone? Health system ko sudhaarne ke liye aapke paas vision hona chahiye. Aapke paas vo badi soch honi chahiye. Aap sirf baatein karke, ki hum usko sudhaar denge, toh nahin hoga. Logon mein is baat ko awareness hona chahiye, ki hamara jo primary health system hai, jo basic backbone hota hai, usmein koi facility hi nahin hai. Aapke medical colleges ya phir jo district hospitals hote hain, vahaan tak aate aate bacche ki haalat itni kharaab ho jaati hai, ki achhe se achha doctor bhi use na theek kar paaye. Accha, middle class ke saath kya hai India mein, middle class jo voter hai, vo abhi bhi private health sector pe ja raha hai. Aapko ek data bata doon. private sector consists of 58% of hospital in the country and 81% of doctors. 81% doctors private hospital mein kaam kar rahe hain. Ab middle class family ke paas, jab uska baccha beemar hota hai, ya khud kabhi beemar hota hai, toh vo private doctor ke paas chala jata hai, vo apne primary health system ki baat hi nahin karta. Par jo hamare 70% population jo gaaun mein reh rahi hai, vo mar rahi hai. Aur uski koi dhyaan isliye nahin deta hai kyunki vo jab chunaav aayega, toh unko jaati mein baat diya jaayega. Tum Dalit ho, tum Yadav ho, tum ho Bhumiyaar, tum mujhe vote do, tum mujhe vote do. Aur vo bechaare itne masoom hote hain, unki liye bechaaron ki roti-kapda-makaan mein hi

guzar jaati hai, vo bechare usmein hi chale jaate hain, ki shayad yeh jo hamaare rehnuma hain, yeh baat keh rahe hain, yeh bade hoke humein karein. Hamara saath denge, hamare liye kuchh karenge. Aur jeetne ke baad chahe koi bhi party hoti hai, vo vaade bhool jaate hain. Toh shayad, agar health system ko improve karna hai, toh humein khud apne andar awareness palni padegi. Humein gaun-gaun jaake logon ko batana padega, aapko yakin nahi hoga, ki vaccination se agar, matlab jab main, 12 saal main Karnataka mein raha, maine tetanus aur depecteria ke patient kabhi dekhe hi nahin. Aur aap UP aa jaiye, uski vaccine hai, uska 100% vaccination hai uska. Phir bhi jo hai, yahaan pe vaccine karate hi nahin hai. Ab aap aise example dekho. Japanese encephalitis ka vaccine jo hai, picchle 25 saal se WHO de raha hai UP ko. Phir bhi picchle saal bhi kareeb kareeb jo hai, mere khayal se, 150 bacche kareeb mar gaye, Japanese encephalitis se. Toh jo bacche mare hain, Japanese encephalitis is caused by mosquito. Ab machhar ye kaise pehchanega ki yeh gareeb ka baccha hai ya yeh ameer ka baccha hai? Ab saare bacche mare gareeb ke. Toh ameer ke bacche ko Japanese encephalitis kyun nahi hota hai? Kyunki gareeb ka baccha immunisation ke liye sarkar pe depend hai. Toh agar aap mujhse poochhengi ki health system kaise improve kiya jaaye, toh humein awareness phailani padegi, that is most important thing. Humein apne primary health center jo backbone hai unko theek karna padega. Aur humein ek bada vision lekar aana padega. Ek Health Minister aisa hona chahiye jisko health ki knowledge toh ho. Ab aap Ashutosh Tandon se aap poochh lijiye ki Japanese encephalitis aur encephalitis mein kya difference hai, voh bata hi nahin paayenge. Mujhe yaad hai jab BRD mein ek baar ek health minister aaye the. Unhone, Health Minister! Union Health Minister. Unhone ek bayaan diya ki main Japanese encephalitis ko polio ki tarah khatam kar dunga. Toh is tarah ke bayaano unko pata hi nahin hai, ki Japanese encephalitis kya hota hai, dengue kya hota hai. Toh humein awareness ke saath-saath, jisko baitha rahe ho post pe, uske baare mein bhi sochna hai. Aur sirf aur sirf voting aur political usse nahin lena hai. Gaun mein jaake, the poor should get the best treatment. And health facilities should be not on the basis of caste, religion, gender and any socioeconomic status. Everybody should have access of good quality health, irrespective caste or religion.

Rakesh: In a few weeks' time voting will begin, what is your message to people who will go out to vote

Kafeel Khan: I would like to tell everyone who is going to vote, please be sensible when we vote. I'm not asking for vote for one party. Just don't deviate yourself with the all those non-issue. Like teen talak, halala, Ram Mandir. All these issues will be there always, but the basic issue will be your health, your farmers' issue, your employment. Whichever party you think that yes, they are determined to do good, and they can do it, like that Kejriwal's mohalla clinic in Delhi, like your farmers' issues they have tackled in Telangana by KCR. So like that if somebody comes with a really determination, you go ahead with that and make that party and change this regime.

I want you to ask me, who are the real culprit? When High Court has given you a clean chit, High Court has said that Kafeel has not, no evidence against him for medical negligence, no evidence against him for corruption, he has got cylinders. So who are the real culprits? And why they are still roaming? I demand Yogi Adityanath ji to sack, fire these two, Ashutosh Tandon and Siddharth Nath Singh as the Health Minister. Start an independent inquiry by outside Uttar Pradesh by a retired Supreme Court judge or a CBI inquiry, and give compensation to all 70 family,

Rakesh: Dr Kafeel had filed an RTI on the BRD Medical College tragedy. He says the response from UP government states and accepts that "there was a shortage of liquid oxygen for 54 hours in the hospital on August 10, 11, 12, 2017 and Dr [Kafeel Khan](#) indeed arranged jumbo oxygen cylinders to save dying kids". He has also demanded a CBI probe into the tragedy which claimed the lives of 63 children and to transfer the case out of [Uttar Pradesh](#) as those responsible for the "massacre are still at helm and they only are heading the current inquiry". He said he will either approach the [High Court](#) with a review petition about his case or the [Supreme Court](#) against his suspension.

You can support Dr. Kafeel khan and follow his work on his facebook page or you can look up his Youtube channel

