

HEALTHCARE 2019: THE AGE OF RAHUL GANDHI & NARENDRA MODI

Posted on August 29, 2019 by Edmond



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The General elections 2019 is fast approaching and political out-reaches have started. In all those popular conversations, dinner table talks, the idea of healthcare continues to be unheard.

The idea of health as a human right sets in legal obligation on states to provide affordable healthcare which addresses underlying outcomes of health factoring in the quality component.

It is extremely fascinating that Indian electorate has never battered political outfits on the agenda of healthcare which remains essential to human dignity, liberty, survival and progress.

At the very heart of the medical question is the fact that most parliamentarians have no idea about the diseases that exist, ailments thereby and what has been inherited over the centuries because they do not visit healthcare establishments, have no idea of the people who work there and who make up their cooperatives and workplaces.

The science of medicine and public health, through the collective work of many, registers new and very important findings which serve as sweet victories regularly. The entire public must be oriented to their medical obligations and must also take responsibility for their health. I am batting for a political integration for healthcare and medical sciences in our new age.

The 2030 agenda for Sustainable Development and UHC pitches for a rights based approach to

health by aspiring for greater equity.

All these aspirations and documents appear extremely motivating from a classroom perspective. But real change can only appear from strengthening health systems and building power from below. Even with all popular schemes which remain politically motivated and less strategic in nature, the change is not directly proportional to the money invested which by its very self is abysmally poor.

There is no direct declaration of health as a human right by the Indian Government ever, however there are ways leading to the same if there should be an interpretation of sort.

The Supreme Court of India opined that Article 21 of the Constitution of India in relation to human rights must be interpreted and viewed in conformity with international law. The right to health has also been borrowed as a mark of interpretation from Article 7 (b) of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in Article 25. The Supreme Court further goes on to say that it remains the obligation of the state to maintain health services.

The WHO Constitution of 1946 envisages the highest attainable standard of health. What does all this mean in perspective?

Failure of government health systems to provide timely care to patients results in violation of patients' right to life. India faces a triple burden of diseases and our health systems are simply crumbling inspite of all those narratives. Fragmented ideas, isolated efforts and inability to engage in sincere dialogue have marred the growth story in healthcare. Tall claims mean nothing to the last man on the ground, whose world is surrounded by abject poverty, preventable diseases and a rapidly deteriorating social system bereft of all values.

Breakthrough deliverables need to be built by transformational leadership where investment inefficiency and investment insufficiency is replaced by inclusionary ideas working with the young and the young at heart.

The burden of depression in India is among the highest in the world, in terms of road traffic injuries, we become global leaders. Cardiovascular diseases, diabetes mellitus and cancer combined with changing lifestyle patterns have added disproportionate burden on citizens where over 80% engage in out of pocket expenditure.

Disasters continue to damage health systems leading to GDP losses and becoming a water shed moment in the development trajectory, primary health continues to be crisis driven care and the production of medical post graduates in the market space still exceptionally poor in terms of global averages.

In the wake of these developments, political outcomes of healthcare must assume the highest priority in electoral governance. The political manifestos leading up to the general elections are yet to come out, but how serious will Rahul Gandhi or Narendra Modi be to address this triple burden of disease only time will tell.

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