



It is never too late to be what you might have been.

—George Eliot



Edit

## A paradigm shift needed

It has taken this publication a great deal of pain to say it out loud, but in our society, a child's future is no longer shaped in the classroom but negotiated in the marketplace. The core message we spoke about for years now in this newspaper, makes an unfortunate case for itself once again. India's coaching culture, or coaching mafia as we call it, is hollowing out education. The recent NEET controversy only stamps this assertion. And it is as unfortunate as it can get. Education is the cornerstone of a society's progress, the means through which individuals cultivate knowledge, build character, and prepare to contribute meaningfully to the world around them. In the ideal scenario, the purpose of education is not just to impart facts and figures but to foster a holistic development of the individual intellectually, emotionally, and morally. The ideal teacher serves as a guide, helping students explore their potential and develop a deeper understanding of themselves and the world. Unfortunately, in India, the current state of education is increasingly being shaped by private coaching institutions, both online and offline, which are deeply entrenched in the commercial landscape. These institutions, masquerading as paragons of academic excellence, have evolved into profit-driven enterprises that commodify education, often at the expense of students' well-being and personal growth, while impacting their future. A lot has been said about the NEET paper leak and its subsequent cancellation and rescheduling and yet again it is the coaching mafia that has emerged as a culprit, ruining future of lakhs of young boys and girls who are this country's future. Moving away, we are asking the society a harder question. Why have families lost faith in schools? Until classrooms become spaces of real learning, the coaching market will continue to flourish. Until exams stop deciding the entire worth of a child, coaching factories will keep multiplying. Until teachers are empowered, public schools strengthened, and parents reassured, the industry of fear will remain profitable. The National Education Policy speaks of moving away from rote learning towards understanding, character and holistic development. That vision must now leave policy documents and enter classrooms. What is needed now is a paradigm shift. The government must step in to regulate coaching sector and put an end to the rampant commercialization of education. A blanket ban on private coaching institutions, though extreme, may be the necessary measure to halt this dangerous trend. Instead, the focus should be on strengthening the existing education system, investing in public schools, training teachers, and providing students with a learning environment that encourages exploration, creativity, and emotional growth. Schools should become spaces where students can thrive without the pressure of endless coaching and exam preparation. Teachers should be seen as mentors who guide students in their intellectual, emotional, and personal development, not just as instructors who prepare them for tests. Education should not be a race for grades or a means to secure a job. It should be about the holistic development of a person, their body, mind, and soul. If we continue to let the education system be hijacked by profit-driven coaching institutions, we risk creating a generation of young people, who when impacted adversely may not have another chance at making it right in life and who succeed, may be highly qualified on paper but lack the depth, empathy, and critical thinking skills necessary to navigate the complexities of the modern world.

DR D K GIRI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi just concluded the five-nation tour (15-20 May) with quite a few goodies in his bag as well as at least one monkey on his back. In this column last week, I had mapped the possibilities before the tour. Today, we will assess the outcomes. Notably, the optic in Norway should define the outcomes domestically.

Prime Minister Modi certainly embarked on crisis diplomacy wearing an aviator's jacket. He covered five countries with 24.5 hours of flying securing four new strategic partnerships. The context was the threat in Strait of Hormuz, oil at \$120 and Rupee at a record low. The overriding tour objective was the quest for energy and technology. In current geo-politics, these two imperatives define the national security of any country.

Analysing country-by-country, what actually landed on the trip are the following. In UAE, on 15 May, Modi secured Energy Insurance Policy. He ensured the strategic petroleum reserves which was long overdue. In addition, LPG supply pacts were signed; plans for 8-exaflop supercomputing facility in India were formulated; a ship repair cluster at Vadinar in Gujarat was established. Master Application for International Trade and Regulatory Interface (MAITRI) corridor was operationalised. UAE announced 5b USD fresh investment in India's financial and infrastructure sectors. Abu Dhabi has taken an independent and strong stand on Iran. As the relations between India and UAE are deepening in a few hours' stopover, Modi firmed up the alliance with UAE.

The Netherlands was the next stop of Prime Minister where semi-conductors, green hydrogen and defence deals were expected. Modi bagged chips, water and Chola copper. Talks were conducted on semi-conductors, AI, maritime security and clean energy. A historic development was the return of Chola copper plates. Netherlands agreed to hand back Anaimangalam Chola copper plates, 21 plates, the Chola dynasty legacy. We could say from ASML to Anaimangalam—a single visit secured India's tech future and its civilisational past.

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Grand Cross. In fact, Stockholm is where 'Make in India' meets 'invent in Sweden'. India-Sweden relations go back a long way in multiple sectors—academia (remember, Gunar and Alva Myrdal), civil society-defence, development and politics. Olof Palme the former Swedish Prime Minister remains popular in the memory of Indians. A road in Delhi is named after him.

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A particular incident in Norway became the domestic peg. Hence, it should be addressed. After joint statements with Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Store, Modi, as his wont, left without addressing the press. Helle Lyng, a journalist from Dagavisen almost yelled, "Why don't you take some questions from the freest press in the world?" She was in one sense right. Norway ranks number 1 in Press Freedom Index whereas India is 157.

The Norwegian Prime Minister stayed back and took questions from the press. Modi

dia's position in his press conference. He asserted that India is a civilisational country of 5,000 years with citizens' rights enshrined in a written Constitution. To a question on trust, he elaborated the services provided by Government of India to about 120 countries during Covid, supplying relief and vaccinations etc. He also pointed out the joint statement issued by G-20 Summit in India in 2023 which was a rare achievement. Such leadership and altruism wins confidence of other countries.

On balance, the optics in Norway did not leave a good taste in the mouth. Prime Minister appeared to be running away from the

## Modi's Five-Nation Tour

# OUTCOME VS EXPECTATIONS

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did not address press in India and sought to avoid them abroad. For a leader of the largest democracy, it certainly looked odd. Modi told Nordics we share rule of law values. The question was on human rights and persecution of minorities. So, the rule of law certainly includes answering the press, the fourth estate. One cannot lecture on rule-based order and dodge the rules of engagement.

Taking a Realist approach, diplomacy is not played out in press conferences. Modi focused on substance over spectacle securing four strategic partnerships in six days and rapid increase in bilateral trade. He stuck to the same format in UAE, Netherlands, Sweden and Italy. This would be a fair defence of Modi's style put up by the government. Sibi George, the Secretary, Ministry of External Affairs (West) formidably laid out In-

journalists. If Modi does not answer a foreign journalist, he hands out a video clip to his critics and the Opposition. The Chola plates came home but did the democratic optics land well. The Helle Lyng moment will linger for a while. Whatever may have been her motivation, to embarrass Modi or seek clarity on a question, Modi with his usual charm and wit could have disarmed her. That was not to be.

In 2014, Modi promised 'minimum government, maximum governance'. In 2026, India and the world are asking for 'minimum speeches, maximum answers'. Modi secured the fuel in Abu Dhabi, but in Oslo, we saw the price of silence. The five-nation tour gave us strategy, but the one question (not answered) gave us the story. Could the Prime Minister Modi do otherwise? ---INFA

# The Crisis in Healthcare, now Hospitals Breed Fear

LALIT GARG

The true strength of any nation is not measured by its military power, economic achievements, technological advancements, or towering infrastructure. It is measured by how sensitively and responsibly it safeguards the life, health, and dignity of its citizens. The healthcare system is the soul of a nation. Hospitals are not merely buildings; they are centers of hope and survival. Doctors are not just professionals; they are compassionate guardians standing between life and death, commanding the deepest trust of society. But when this very healthcare system falls prey to corruption, fraud, profiteering, and unethical practices, public trust begins to collapse, leaving behind fear, uncertainty, and darkness. The recent incidents emerging from India's healthcare sector—particularly those reported from Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan—have exposed this grim and disturbing reality.

India today is moving rapidly toward becoming a developed nation. Ambitious visions such as Developed India 2047, Prosperous India, and Self-Reliant India are being pursued through economic reforms, digital transformation, infrastructure expansion, technological progress, and rising global influence. These achievements inspire optimism. Yet, at the same time, growing irregularities in the healthcare sector—fake doctors, counterfeit medicines, profiteering

hospitals, and the commercialization of medical services—raise serious questions about the sustainability and credibility of this development journey. If citizens' lives themselves are not secure, all claims of progress begin to appear hollow.

The exposure of fake doctors appointed in government hospitals in Damoh and Jabalpur in Madhya Pradesh is not merely an administrative failure of one state; it symbolizes the vulnerability of the entire healthcare system. Even more alarming was the revelation in the Rajasthan Medical Council, where individuals lacking proper medical education and mandatory internship qualifications were reportedly registered as doctors. This is not simply a procedural lapse—it is a grave crime against human life. When an unqualified individual sits before patients wearing the identity of a doctor, he does not provide treatment; he conducts dangerous experiments on human lives. Under such circumstances, healing can easily turn into tragedy.

The biggest question is: How do such people enter the system? Can an individual alone execute such large-scale fraud? Certainly not. Behind these scandals lie failures in verification mechanisms, institutional collusion, and systemic corruption. When medical councils, hospital administrations, and registration authorities themselves come under suspicion, it becomes evident that the disease is no longer limited to individuals—it has spread across the system itself. The crisis in healthcare today is not confined only to

fake doctors. Profiteering in private hospitals has severely damaged the humanitarian character of medical services. Patients' helplessness is increasingly being converted into economic opportunity. Numerous complaints point toward unnecessary diagnostic tests, unjustified ICU admissions, prolonged ventilator support, inflated bills, and deliberate extension of treatment periods. A patient enters a hospital seeking relief, but many return carrying financial devastation and emotional trauma. Healthcare was originally meant to alleviate suffering; in many places, it has now become a mechanism for commerce and profit.

The condition of government hospitals is equally worrying. Institutions established for the poor and vulnerable often struggle with resource shortages, negligence, corruption, and the interference of middlemen. Free medicines frequently fail to reach patients, medical equipment remains non-functional, diagnostic delays persist, and patients are forced into endless rounds of hospitals and offices. For the poor, illness no longer remains merely a physical burden—it becomes an economic and psychological catastrophe. Another alarming concern is the growing obsession with becoming doctors through shortcuts. Irregularities surrounding examinations such as NEET have already shaken the nation. If admission processes themselves become questionable, and fake degree holders subsequently enter the system, the credibility of the entire medical profession stands threatened. Becoming a doctor

demands years of rigorous education, disciplined training, ethical grounding, and emotional sensitivity. But when merit is replaced by money, corruption, and forgery, the consequences can only be disastrous. This is not merely a healthcare crisis; it is a crisis of national security and social trust.

When citizens begin doubting a doctor's qualifications, enter hospitals with fear instead of faith, and question the authenticity of medicines before purchasing them, it signals a dangerous situation for any nation. A collapse of trust in healthcare is nothing less than an injury to the moral soul of society. In many developed nations, crimes related to healthcare are treated with utmost seriousness. Fake medical practitioners face lifetime bans, heavy penalties, and criminal prosecution. Medical registrations and certifications are regularly verified, while strong digital monitoring systems significantly reduce the possibility of fraud. In contrast, investigations in India often become lengthy, complicated, and slow. Cases continue for years while offenders frequently escape accountability. Such delays do not create fear among wrongdoers; they breed impunity. The time has come not merely for concern or formal assurances, but for decisive action.

India urgently needs a live digital database of every registered doctor, enabling citizens to verify qualifications, registration details, medical institutions, and service records instantly. Medical councils must transform from paper-based institutions into active oversight bodies. Hospitals

should undergo regular inspections, doctors' credentials should be randomly verified physically, and in cases of fraud, not only fake doctors but also officials and employees involved in document verification should be held equally accountable. Without accountability, reform remains impossible. Simultaneously, medical education must restore ethical values and human sensitivity. Medicine is not merely a profession; it is a sacred service. A doctor's foremost duty should not be profit, but preservation of life. If compassion disappears from healthcare, machines may survive—but humanity will not. Today, society is passing through a period of deep fear and insecurity. When protectors become exploiters, when those entrusted with saving lives become threats to life itself, and when hospitals replace trust with suspicion, where should citizens turn? This question is not limited to Madhya Pradesh or Rajasthan—it confronts the entire nation. It is not merely a healthcare problem; it reflects moral decline and social fragmentation. The vision of Developed India 2047 cannot be achieved through economic growth alone. It will become meaningful only when citizens feel safe; when hospitals become centers of hope; when medicines inspire confidence; and when the very mention of a doctor evokes trust and respect. Roads, industries, technology, and capital are important—but human life is paramount. If life itself remains insecure, every dream of development will remain incomplete.