

Time has Come to Eradicate Leprosy and Tuberculosis from India: Way Forward

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India has always been a country full of diversities and amazing capabilities in adversities. Today in the field of medical education, on the front of growth and development and sustenance of economics, it has done reasonably well. The Government at the Centre and even in the states has been proactive in tackling the health challenges, amalgamating the private public partnership. Being a country home to nearly one-sixth of the world population, we owe a real big responsibility to care for health of people. Amply emphasized in all the treatise of medicine “Prevention is Better than Cure and is more Economic,” hence focus and investment on this strategy is worth. Development of vaccines has been the most potent weapon to prevent and eradicate a disease. Edward Jenner’s observational ingenuity and perseverance, led to the introduction of small pox vaccine. The joint resolve of WHO and world community to go for en-mass vaccination of its people to protect from smallpox, not only saved countless lives and morbidity but the dreaded disease which was afflicting humanity for over three thousand years, disappeared from the world. Similar is the success story of Polio Eradication through mass vaccination program involving the whole world community as one. In spite of so many victories over so many diseases, yet the struggle will always continue. The COVID-19 pandemic has been a terrible jolt to the whole world, rich or poor alike, causing a big halt in almost every one’s life. With astounding leadership provided by our Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modiji and tremendous scientific, social, and philanthropic will of our country and the whole world, we are sure to win over the COVID-19 menace in a short time as never witnessed before. Here also, vaccination against COVID-19 is the main tool in containing this pandemic.

However, the great worry for India is to have its face down in the world community when being quoted that 60% of the world’s leprosy and 30% of Tuberculosis (TB) patients are from India.^{1,2} India has to take it as a challenge to eradicate Leprosy

and TB from the country. Our Prime Minister has set the target for TB by 2025, indeed a mammoth task. These two diseases are not only sharing causative lineage of closely related pathogen MYCOBACTERIUM family but their prevalence and nature of affecting poor people living in poor environment is also alike. The drug therapy is also alike and the regimen has also to be long lasting. The BCG vaccination strategy has considerably contained childhood TB, but this vaccine does not have significant effect on prevention or treatment of adult TB or Leprosy.

But coupled with chemotherapy, if we use the potent vaccine prepared from *Mycobacterium indicus pranii* (GP Talwar), well proven scientifically, to be potent immune enhancer for leprosy and TB,^{2,3} more effective than BCG, already being marketed by Cadela India. There is a need to use this vaccine as an adjunct in treatment of MDR-TB and Leprosy patients through a dedicated task force, making it a model for implementation in the areas where the disease is prevalent. The concerted efforts are likely to be able to bring desired results. The results analyzed and if found successful will serve as a role model to be followed in the country and elsewhere, to make it possible to eradicate TB and Leprosy from India. The country can emerge as a leader in tackling these two rampant diseases afflicting humanity for centuries.

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