



Swachh Bharat: Some Issues and Concerns

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Abstract: Swachh Bharat programme launched on October 2, with Mahatma Gandhi as the inspiration, to create a clean India of his dreams by 2019, his 150th birth anniversary. The Department of School Education and Literacy, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India has flagged a leaflet Swachh Bharat and Swachh Vidyalaya Campaign detailing the number of government schools without toilets the average cost of construction, maintenance and repair of toilet blocks, and inviting donors individuals or corporates or Institutions . The Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation, Government of India has launched the National Sanitation Awareness Campaign from 25th September, 2014 to 23rd October, 2014. Two of India's biggest companies, Tata Consultancy Service and Bharati have committed Rs.100 crore each to build toilets in schools for girls. Coca-Cola has committed to further build on its ongoing sanitation Programme to construct toilets in schools.

Key words: Swachh Bharat, Clean India, Mission

Introduction: The Honourable Prime Minister Sri Narendra Modi announced the making of "Swachh Bharat " (Clean India) into a mass movement and linking it to economic activity to ensure greater participation, Mission Swachh Bharat has been launched. This programme launched on October 2, with Mahatma Gandhi as the inspiration, to create a clean India of his dreams by 2019, his 150th birth anniversary. The Prime Minister has said that the pursuit of cleanliness can be an economic activity, contributing to Gross Domestic Product growth, reduction in health care costs, and a source of employment. Linking Cleanliness to tourism and global interest in India, the Prime Minister has said world class levels of hygiene and cleanliness are required in India's top 50 tourist destinations, to bring about a paradigm shift in the country's global perception.

Issues & Concerns: The clarion for 'Clean India' (Swachh Bharat) campaign on 15th

August must be acknowledged, appreciated and adopted by every citizen of the country as an actor in the making of the nation. However, it must be noted that the 'Clean India'. However, it must be noted that the 'Clean

India' campaign should not be a rechristened version of the similar such campaigns like total Sanitation Campaign or Nirmal Bharat Abhiyan which aimed at Universalising safe sanitation. In this context, the present article endeavours to briefly review the significant efforts and initiatives for clean India in the recent past and the lessons that could be taken for making 'Clean India' campaign a reality. This inter alia means that even in 21st century our rural masses are compelled to either open defecation practice or to the unhygienic toilets and even the dry latrines. The practice of open defecation is a shame on the nation and a serious affront on the dignity of women. The dry toilets, apart from the a store house for the vectors of diseases



and epidemics, sustain the in human practice of manual scavenging where by our fellow human beings belonging to specific caste groups are compelled to clean the human excreta in the most inhuman conditions. In consequence there are positive developments on part of Government Departments and Corporate Sector. The Department of School Education and Literacy, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India has flagged a leaflet Swachh Bharat and Swachh Vidyalaya Campaign detailing the number of government schools without toilets the average cost of construction, maintenance and repair of toilet blocks, and inviting donors individuals or corporates or Institutions. The Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation, Government of India has launched the National Sanitation Awareness Campaign from 25th September, 2014 to 23rd October, 2014. Two of India's biggest companies, Tata Consultancy Service and Bharati have committed Rs.100 crore each to build toilets in schools for girls. Coca-Cola has committed to further build on its on going sanitation Programme to construct toilets in schools.

Further to add vigour to its implementation Government of India launched an award based Incentive scheme for fully sanitized and open defecation free Grama Panchayats, Blocks, Districts and States called 'Nirmal Grama Puraskar' in October, 2013 (Guidelines Nirmal Grama Puraskar, Nirmal Bharat: Abhiyan December, 2012, Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation, Govt. of India, New Delhi). The objectives of the Nirmal Gram Puraskar are to promote safe sanitation and clean environment as a way of life in rural India; to incentives

Panchayati Raj Institutions to make the villages open Defecation free and to adopt Solid and Liquid Waste Management; to sustain the initiative of clean environment; and to encourage organizations to play a catalytic role in social mobilization in the implementation Nirmal Bharat Abhiyan.

Gandhiji's Concept On Sanitation: In the school of freedom struggle, 'Safai' and 'Swachhata' was the test to graduation Vinoba Bhave, Takkar Baba, J.C.Kumarappa and innumerable youngsters with sparkling brilliance, joined the freedom struggle and took to safai and swachhata root to independence. As a researcher of truth, Gandhiji maintained meticulous lifestyle and accorded highest importance to cleanliness. As father of the Nation, he realized the indispensable place of sanitation in nation building and stated 'cleanliness is only next to Godliness'!

Spearheading freedom struggle, he explained the dimensions of freedom and highlighted the importance of 'clean behaviour'. In this context, he stated 'before we think of self government, we shall have to do necessary plodding. From the stand point of health, Gandhiji termed the condition of villages as deplorable. "One of the chief causes of our poverty is the non-availability of this essential knowledge of hygiene. Gandhiji who saw nonviolent living as the best means to worship God, Truth, saw every act that serves life as a way to God. He deemed cleaning as an act of purification and drew immense joy. Gandhiji proposed 'Every village should have the most inexpensive water closets built at one place'. The whole sanitation is unexplored; the profession, far from being a dirty one, is a purifying, life protecting one. Only we have debased it.



We have to raise it to its true status. Gandhiji called Satyagraha and Constructive Programme as two wings of the same bird, without one the other has no sense. The irrevocable connection Gandhiji built between constructive programme such as sanitation and freedom struggle was evident all over the country. Toilet cleaning and "sanitation work became the qualification of a satyagrahi". Every public meeting, whether a call for satyagraha against the British or a initiative of social reform, the meeting had 'village cleaning' as an inalienable beginning.

A section of Indians known as scavengers were engaged for generations in the task of removing night soil from the old-style basket-type(dry) latrines, and who were therefore looked down upon. Gandhiji was very concerned with the suffering of these people because he felt that though they were considered to be at the bottom of society, they executed the most important tasks of organizing community sanitation and health. Innumerable institutes took up on Gandhiji's call and started 'Safai' Campaign; Safai Vidyalaya – Dehu Road, Nirmal Gram Nirman Kendra, Nasik are some of them that took it religiously. Harijan Sevak Sangh established Safai Vidyalaya (Sanitation institute) in 1963 at the Sabarmati Ashram, Gujarat, with purpose of liberating the scavengers from this kind of work.

Challenges:

About 590 Million persons in rural areas defecate in the open. The Mind set of a major portion of the population habituated to open defecation needs to be changed. Many of them already have a toilet but prefer to defecate in the open. The biggest challenge therefore is triggering behaviour change in vast section of rural

population regarding need to use toilets. Other problems like problems of convergence between MNREGA and Nirmal Bharati Abhiyan, need for availability of water for use of toilets, how to deal with toilets already constructed which have become defunct or dysfunctional, inadequate dedicated staff at the field level for implementation of rural sanitation have also to be dealt with.

The 'Clean India' campaign must capitalize on the momentum generated by the existing sanitation initiatives and net works in India especially the rural India. The agenda now must be for the 'total sanitation 'in the country is it villages, slums, towns or cities. It must move from the provision of sanitary toilets to the sustainable safe sanitation and clean environment. It emphasis must also be placed on analyzing budget allocations to make sure that money is spent appropriately and effectively and that implementers should be held accountable for their roles and responsibilities. Most importantly, the target based deadlines shall not be jumped and the mission 'Clean India' shall be achieved as per the fixed deadline i.e. 2nd October, 2019.

Therefore, the 'Clean India' campaign must focus on the complete prohibition of dry latrines and total rehabilitation of persons liberated from manual scavenging in terms of skilled trainings and gainful employment. It must also ensure that it should not be a game of numbers, affidavits and declarations where by the district administration and state governments vociferously claim for 'Clean India' achievements while remaining oblivious to the existing reality of manual scavenging.



Conclusion: Changing mindset is very important. Since most of the I.E.S. funds are with states, the State Governments will have to focus on inter personal communication through students, ASHA workers, Anganwadi workers, Doctors, Teachers, Block Coordinators etc., including house to house visits. Also, distribution of information through short films, use of T.V., Radio, Digital Cinema, and Pamphlets will be carried out. Local and National sports/Cinema icons are required to be engaged by states to spread the message of safe sanitation practices to change mindsets. Inter personal Communication through N.G.Os., SHG's, School Children, and Local Women's Groups etc., for dissemination of information and for motivation of the people would also be explored.

Herein is the opportunity to and responsibility of the citizens, media, social media, civil society organizations, professionals, youths, students, and teachers etc., to declare their ownership of the campaign by simply reporting the instances of manual scavenging. We all can at least do that.

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