

Accomplishment of the Vision of 'Clean India' By 2 October 2019: A Collective Responsibility

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Abstract

Making an appeal for a non-political movement driven by patriotism, Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi launched the Swachh Bharat or Clean India Mission on 2 October 2014. About 3 million government employees, school and college students in India participated in the event and it is considered as India's biggest ever cleanliness drive. The prime objective of the mission is to create sanitation facilities for all and aims to provide every rural family with a toilet by 2 October 2019. However, some academics were skeptical about the success of mission's implementation on the grounds that it failed to address certain important issues such as inadequate water supply, defunct toilets, difficulties in availing microloans for constructing individual household latrines, caste ethos etc. Therefore, an attempt has been made in this paper to examine these issues and provide suggestions to address them.

Keywords: Clean India, sanitation, rural family, bottlenecks, clean water, defunct toilets, open defecation, caste ethos

Statement of the Theme

Cleanliness is next to godliness' a famous proverb signifies that practicing cleanliness is a very good habit and leads us towards goodness in every walk of life by keeping our body, mind and soul clean and peaceful. Realizing the virtues of cleanliness Mahatma Gandhi, the great son of India has not only preached it but also practiced thought his life. His dream was total sanitation for all and said "Sanitation is more important than political freedom". Inspired by Mahatma Gandhi, great political and spiritual leaders such as Martin Luther King, Nelson Mandela, His Holiness Dalai Lama, Aung San Suu Kyi, etc. have followed the path of Gandhi and have brought prosperity to themselves and their societies. To accelerate the efforts to achieve universal sanitation coverage and put focus on sanitation, Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi launched a nationwide Swachh Bharat Abhiyan or Clean India Campaign on October 2, 2014 on the occasion of Mahatma Gandhi's birth anniversary. The mission has two major sub-missions, rural (gramin) and urban, focused on sanitation improvement in rural and urban areas respectively. The concept of Swachh Bharat is to provide sanitation facilities to every family, including toilets; solid and liquid waste disposal system, village cleanliness, and safe adequate drinking water supply. This initiative is also expected to lift India's image in the international arena so that the world looks at it as a better place to live, travel and invest. Achieving the goals of the Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) by October 2, 2019, will be an appropriate tribute to the father of the Nation, Mahatma Gandhi, on his 150th birth anniversary. However, the progress of the (SBM) has been impeded by certain bottlenecks or issues such as inadequate water supply, defunct toilets, difficulties in availing microloans for constructing individual household latrines, caste ethos etc. These issues perhaps may come in the way of realizing the desired goals of providing sanitation facilities to every family and achieving 100 % Open Defecation Free coverage in rural areas by 2019.

Against this backdrop, an attempt has been made to examine the accomplishment of the vision of the clean India by 2 October 2019 based on the following broad objectives

Objectives

1. To highlight the past efforts to clean India
2. To examine the bottlenecks such as caste ethos, inadequate waste disposal, processing, inadequate government spending on sanitation, incidence of death of waste cleaners etc.

3. To assess the incidence and trends of open defecation and the various causes namely inadequate water supply and microloans for individual toilet construction, defunct toilets, caste ethos etc.
4. To document the mixed reactions of the national and international community's towards the progress of the Swachh Bharat Mission or Clean India Campaign
5. To study the collective efforts needed to achieve the desired goals of Clean India Mission
6. To provide suggestions to address the issues relate the various aspects of sanitation

Methodology

The study is based on secondary data. The required information and related literature on the theme have been drawn from government reports, records, books, magazines, journals, articles, newspapers which have been duly acknowledged. Wherever necessary related website are also consulted for acquiring relevant data. Descriptive analysis technique has been used for the purpose of the study.

Results and Discussion

The Clean India Campaign launched by the Government of India on 2 October 2014 has a noble objective of making India cleaner by improving the sanitation conditions in the country. The Campaign draws attention to few significant issues, which went unnoticed and undiscussed during its launching ceremony.

1. Past Forgotten Efforts to Clean India

Several pragmatic cleanliness programmes or efforts have been taken in the past much before these issues became a part of the government and the United Nations Programme. For instance, Sant Gadge, a saint who believed to live between 23 February 1876 to 26 December 1956 from Amaravati district of Maharashtra, used to promote public hygiene and cleanliness. The revered baba started revolution in the state by going from village to village with a broom in his hand for cleaning and preaching hygiene and an upturned pot on his head for food. To honour Sant Gadge, the Maharashtra government ran a weeklong cleanliness programme and launched innovative programme known as Clean Village Campaign in 2000-01 in his name. Government of India restructured the Rural Sanitation Programme and launched the Total Sanitation Campaign (TSC) on 1 April 1999. To give fillip to the TSC, the government in June 2003 has launched an incentive scheme in the form of an award for total sanitation coverage, maintenance of clean environment and Open Defecation Free panchayat villages, blocks and districts called Nirmal Gram Puraskar. The TSC on 1 April 2012 was renamed to Nirmal Bharat Abhiyan. However, following high profile public cleanliness drive on 2 October 2014 all these efforts seem to have been willfully forgotten.

2. Issues that Impede Sanitation Progress

The progress of the Swachh Bharat Mission (Gramin) has been impeded by bottlenecks such as caste ethos, inadequate waste disposal, processing, inadequate government spending on sanitation, incidence of death of waste cleaners due to health hazards etc. which have been examined in this section.

Every human activity creates some kind of waste. As countries develop economically, socially and technologically industrializing, urbanizing and expanding in population-waste generation increases. However, majority of the people believe that cleaning the dirt or filth is someone else's job not theirs. Has this thinking been morally right? Why should we identify cleanliness only to designated communities who have been "forced" into this dehumanizing profession since centuries? These designated communities go by many names such as Bhangi, Valmiki, Methar, Chuhra in Delhi; Dhanuk in Uttar Pradesh; Han and Hadi in Bengal; Mehtar and Bhangi in Assam; Methar in Hyderabad; Paki in Coastal Andhra; Thotti in Tamil Nadu; Mira, Lalbegi, Chuhra and Balashahi in Punjab, (Ramaswamy, 2005). They are compelled to undertake cleaning activities such as sweeping the roads, cleaning dry and wet latrines,

cleaning gutters, manholes and canals, scavenging garbage, etc. The most humiliating and degrading public cleaning activity is cleaning of dry latrines. Still millions of people in India, carry human excreta on their heads. As Vivek Kumar (2014), describes, in an interview, one of the personnel who was involved in this job said painfully, it becomes worse in the rainy seasons when the head load of human excreta in the bamboo baskets trickles down from holes on to our faces. In the same vein, in summer we do not get enough water to wash our hands and take our lunch. So, we have to travel a kilometer or two to fetch water to wash our hand and be fit to take our food. "Till that time we have to remain hungry. Why all these dehumanizing forced practices still continues?. This may be due to the Hindu notions of purity and pollution, inextricably linked with the caste system and the practice of untouchability. The availability of cheap Dalit labour to do these dehumanizing jobs can be cited as one of the reasons why development of toilet facilities and a modern garbage and sewage management system have been neglected so far, (SubhashGatade, 2015).

Until we recognize and deal with this entrenched belief system, it is unlikely that we will understand why Indian cities are the filthiest in the world. If a small community of these scavengers, treated worse than shit and exploited to the hilt, is vested with the responsibility of clearing the filth generated by 1.25 billion people with impunity, the country destined to remain unclean, (Anand Teltumbde, 2014).

In addition, Indian cities are now considered as some of the dirtiest in the world because of lack of adequate waste disposal. Every city is dotted with mountains of waste. According to Central Public Health and Environment Engineering Organization has estimated that waste generation in India could be as much as 1.3 pounds per person per year. Whereas 2011 census reveals that 68 million Indians live in slums without required infrastructure at their disposal to carry out the task dealing with waste. All these necessitate us to ask few important questions namely; where are the plans to deal with municipal waste?, what about disposal?, where is the land for dumping?, and where are the facilities for processing waste?. In the absence of adequate facility of collection of waste from source, compel the general public to dump waste on the streets, open spaces, drains or whatever places and causing unsanitary conditions which have direct impact on the environment, (Shanthakumar, 2015).

It is here the role of scavengers comes to their rescue to sort and recycle the garbage. It is here at this critical point that the state has to intervene and play an important role to facilitate the disposal of waste. But, is government spending enough on sanitation so that we can achieve the goal of "Clean India" by 2019?. Because, budgetary allocation by Government of India for Total Sanitation Campaign were Rs. 2500, 2300, 2850, 6265 and 9000 crores in 2012-13, 2013-14, 2014-15, 2015-16 and 2016-17 respectively. However, the part of the jump from Rs. 2850 crore in 2014-15 to Rs. 9000 crore in 2016-17 was due to the introduction of the Swachh Bharat Mission Campaign. The budgetary allocation for total sanitation was shockingly less than 1% of India's GDP, which in no way sufficient enough for a big country like India with population of 1.25 billion to maintain cleanliness. These specific issues have not been addressed by our leaders when the Clean India Campaign was being launched.

Above all, the heart breaking sad story has been thousands of ex-untouchables die every year because of inhaling poisonous gases while cleaning sewers, manholes that too in cosmopolitan cities like Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, and Chennai etc. Where is the plan to integrate their efforts into a system of waste disposal and to ensure that they are spared the health hazards of such work? Also, how will we ensure that the dumps and waste processors do not create further hazards for people, usually the poorest, who live near such places? These untold troubles of the voiceless people should be heard and appropriately supported by the voiced by the leaders to take forward the mission.

3. Incidence and Trends of Open Defecation

The prime objective of the Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) is to create sanitation facilities for all. It aims to provide every rural family with a toilet by 2019, (Rukmini, 2014. The Hindu).

According to official figures, India happen to be the number one country as far as Open Defecation is concerned, where more than 60 crore people have no sanitation facilities at home, and they either go out in the fields or use dry latrines to relieve themselves. However, this scenario has been changing with the launching of SBM in 2014. The number of people defecating in the open in rural India had reduced to less than half of what it was in 2014. As per baseline survey conducted by Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation, the number of persons defecating in open rural areas, which was 55 crore in October 2014 declined to 25 crore in January 2018, at a much faster pace compared to the trend observed before 2014. The baseline survey further reveals that so far, 3, 07, 349 villages (41%), 296 (49%) districts and Eight states and two Union Territories, namely Sikkim, Himachel Pradesh, Kerala, Haryana, Uttarkhand, Chhattisgarh, Arunachal Pradesh, Gujarat, Daman & Diu and Chandigarh all over the India have been declared as Open Defecation Free (ODF), (The Hindu 2018). However, this survey also reminds us that still there is an urgent need to bring the remaining 51 % of the districts, 59 % of the villages and the rest of the states in the country under ODF coverage

Thus, the Swachh Bharat Mission (Gramin) has the primary task of building Individual Household Latrines for the remaining uncovered ODF districts, villages and states in the country before 2 October 2019 appears that the mission achieving 100 % ODF coverage in rural India is appeared to be a tough task because of the following reasons;

- Firstly, SBM (Gramin) provide incentives for the construction of individual household latrines varied from Rs 10,000 to Rs 12,000 for most states in India which are inadequate and is shared between the central and states government in the ratio of 75:25 respectively. However, construction of vast majority of latrines in rural India cost at least Rs. 20,000 and have large pits that are mechanically emptied or never emptied. Government provides latrines that have soak pits that need to be emptied manually. It is likely that the poor did not have means to 'invest first' in toilet building through own funds or loans and be reimbursed in the post construction period. This is a prime cause that is slowing down the progress of UDF coverage. The poor may indeed require free provision of toilets or community toilets to shift from open defecation.
- Secondly, apart from lack of toilets, prevalence of substantial number of defunct toilets in the country which contribute for open defecation issues. According to Comptroller and Audit General Report said that of the constructed toilets, around 30% were found to be dysfunctional. While NITI Ayog Report of Sub-Group of Chief Ministers on SBM states that "visible improvement in toilet coverage across Indian States is deeply undermined by the poor quality of operation and maintenance of these facilities".
- Thirdly, improper use of funds or grants also affect the maintenance work and water supply. By the end of January 2016, the Swachh Bharat Kosh had received donations to the tune of Rs. 369.74 crore. Though the guidelines of kosh priorities the repair of defunct toilets and expenditure on augmenting water supply. Most of these funds are now being spent for building new Individual Household Latrines (IHHLs), (Rama Mohan 2017).
- Fourthly, lack of doorstep water supply affecting the initial acceptance of IHHLs and inadequate funds that has led to half-built, poor - designed toilets end up waste of spending money without making a noticeable impact on the incidence of open defecation.
- Finally, behaviour change is the key priority of the SBM as sanitation is a behavioural issue. It involves a change of mindset amongst people to stop open defecation and to adopt safe sanitation practices. Cultural, traditional and lack of education are the prime reasons for this unhygienic practice. According to Diane Coffey and Dean Spears (2018), Open defecation in rural India is not driven by poverty: it is common even among households that own assets such as televisions and mobile phones. Open defecation in rural India is robustly correlated

with religion, as originally explored by Geruso and Spears (forth coming): Hindu households are more likely to report open defecation than Muslim households, despite the fact that Muslim households are poorer, on average. Open defecation in India is not a result of lack of access to water: about a third of households that have water on the premises defecate in the open.

4. Mixed Reactions of the Communities

The launching of Clean India Campaign on 2 October 2014 has brought about a significant change in the drinking water, sanitation and living environment in the country. However, there are certain mixed reactions to the progress made in this regard from national and international communities and which are pinpointed below;

➤ Adil Zainulbhai, Chairman, Quality Council of India, in his message in Swachh Surverkshan Gramin 2016 has stated that improving the lives of the India's 125 crore population particularly the 80 crore rural citizen is what Swachh Bharat Mission is all about. While some were skeptical about the success of mission's implementation, this is one programme where on ground execution has been excellent. By the fact that 2 crore toilets have been built in rural India since the launch of the mission. It is encouraging to know that more than 95% of 70,000 plus households surged under Swachh Surverkshan 2016-Gramin were found to be using toilet.

➤ As per Swachhta Status Report 2016 and Factchecker Analysis of government data of the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, "as many as 49.62 million more households in India have toilets-rising from 38.7% in 2014 to 69.04% in 2017 and 250,000 of India's 649,481 villages have been declared open defecation, but the claims of 150,000 (63%) of these villages have not been verified and there is no way of knowing if the rest are using the new toilets.

➤ In contrary, the World Bank has termed the scheme's implementation as moderately satisfactory. However, an August 2017 survey conducted by an autonomous government body-Swachh Surverkshan 2017 found that nine in 10 (91.29%) rural households having access to a toilet using it.

➤ Not surprisingly a study conducted by the Institute of Development Studies, Water Aid and Praxis, which was published in October 2017, claimed that several ODF villages are not free from open defecation. The study was done in 3 villages of Madhya Pradesh's Sehore district, two of Uttar Pradesh's Shamli districts and 3 of Rajasthan's Pali districts. All of these villages were not only declined ODF but even verified so by a third party for the government. It may be mentioned here that after the declaration of ODF the government gets a survey conducted to verify the ODF status. In all the surveyed villages of Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan, the researchers could found open defecation households were surveyed, they found that the total current usage of toilet was only 1%. While in two villages of Shamli, it was 63% and 16% respectively. All claims neither can be taken ignored nor taken lightly but to introspect and work for further strengthening the Swachh Bharat Programme for the good health of the people of the nation.

5. Collective Responsibility

It is recalled from the earlier discussion: The health of the nation is closely related to clean drinking water, sanitation and good living environment etc. Considering the importance of the role of cleanliness in healthy living, and to accelerate pragmatic efforts to achieve universal sanitation coverage and to put focus on sanitation, the Prime Minister of India Shri Narendra Modi launched the Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) on 2 October 2014. The implementation of the SBM involves tremendous human as well as financial resources. "The government committed itself to achieving a target of building 6 crore toilets across the country in five years" and this initiative will expected cost the government Rs 62,009 crore; out of this amount a sum of Rs 14,620 crore will be contributed by the government and the remaining will be raised from corporate sector and other sources, (Times of India 2015). It is also being emphasized that main objective of the programme is to end open defecation in the country, as nearly half of India's 1.2 billion people have no access to toilets. All this sounds good and very

soothing to the ears of the non-resident Indians (NRIs), who are worried about the image India carries in the comity of nations, (SubhasGatade, 2015). Given this commitment, is it possible to realize the objectives and achieve the target of the mission within the time frame? Because, many serious issues relate to sanitation have not been addressed in the Clean India Campaign. How to address these issues? Who should address these issues?. Certainly, it is not only the government but every citizen in the country should own the responsibility and contribute for creating a clean and healthy India.

- Community action to ensure that nature's bounty is not degraded, leads to sustainable development and enables opportunity for livelihood for the weaker section. This is more easily said than done. Because, we do not mind throwing garbage outside our windows, litter, spit and create dirt all around us, but expect somebody to clean up our mess. This attitude and mindset that have been ingrained from generation to generation need fundamental change. People's 'Not in My Backyard' syndrome should also change drastically. For this change to take place there is an urgent need to educate and create awareness among the people to prevent pollution, minimize waste, use of water, energy and other resources efficiently, support local action and community participation, and promote practices, methods and technologies that reduce negative impact on the environment. Moreover, fixing the responsibility of dealing with the waste they generate through implementing suitable laws and regulations. In short, if clean India Mission is to be a fact, the government and citizens both have to engage with all aspects of sanitation work.
- Education can also be used as a strong tool to deal with sanitation issues by introducing environment and sanitation as a compulsory subjects in the curriculum and strengthening the social work or fieldwork activities of National Service Schemes and other social work related courses in colleges providing necessary infrastructure and financial assistance. This would work as multiplier effect in dealing the various aspects of sanitation. Because, children or students have a very powerful voice which the elders cannot ignore but to listen. Once they are convinced about a cause they devise ingenious methods to convey their concerns. We may not listen to others but when our own children caution us, we pause and ponder and often feel embarrassed for our wrong actions against Mother Nature.
- It is likely that the poor did not have means to "invest first" in toilet building through own funds or loans and be reimbursed in the post construction period. This is considered as an important factor in slowing down the progress of coverage. The poor may indeed require free provision of toilets or community toilets to shift from open defecation.
- According to Comptroller and Audit General Report said that of the constructed toilets, around 30% were found to be dysfunctional. Therefore. Policy innovations are needed in different directions: Fund or donations mobilized by the Bharat Kosh should be utilized for repairing defunct toilets and expenditure on augmenting water supply purpose only instead of diverting it for building new Individual household.
- The government may seriously think of establishment of state and district level Rapid Action Learning Units that capture innovations and field level best practices and feed the implementation structures. Further, performance based incentives scheme may be taken for the states that increase sanitation coverage and reduce the incidence of open defecation.
- The budgetary allocation for total sanitation was shockingly less than 1% of India's GDP, which in no way sufficient enough for a big country like India with population of 1.25 billion to maintain cleanliness. Therefore, sufficient budget must be allotted to undertake a desirable sanitation activities instead of bits and pieces, which in no way address the main issues of sanitation.
- Swachh Bharat Campaign may take the matter of sanitation more seriously to mechanize and modernize the sanitation system with functioning toilets everywhere instead of forcing few designated sections of people to clean the dirt or filth contributed by many.
- There is al so a need for starting social movement to promote the practice of cleanliness and hygiene and this could be possible and become real through mass participation. Social movement as rational, purposeful and organized actions, (Donatella Della Porta *etal.* 2006).

While Union Minister for Health Shri J.P. Nadda, has said that 'Swachhata' should become a social movement and awareness about cleanliness and sanitation should reach every village of this country.

Conclusion

The launching of Swachh Bharat Mission on 2 October 2014 with the prime objectives of creating sanitation facilities for all and achieving the target of a complete Open Defecation Free rural India by 2 October 2019 will definitely be an appropriate tribute to the father of the nation, Mahatma Gandhi, on his 150th birth anniversary. Can these desired goals be realized within the stipulated time frame? Why not? It is certainly possible provided if some of the serious un discussed or unaddressed issues at the time of launching the mission are set right at the earliest and if all the citizens join together and work collectively. Because, mere launching campaigns and uttering the right words will not make much of a difference, after all, the first sanitation bill in India was introduced in 1878. The sustainable use of nature's bounty will have a significant effect on the lives of future generation. We owe to them a legacy that would not deny them their fundamental rights to clean water to drink, clean air to breathe and clean surroundings to explore, away from filth and quagmire that is being created. For all this to happen, a concerted effort has to be made without waiting for someone else to do. Clean environment is every one's concern and collective action is the only answer to prevent its degradation before the damage is beyond repair. As Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has rightly remarked that even if 1000 Mahatma Gandhis or 1 lakh Narendra Modis or all Chief Ministers and all governments join hands, the dream of cleanliness cannot be achieved. However, this can be achieved if 125 crore people of this country join hands.

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