

**Swachh Bharat Abhiyan and the Media**

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**Abstract**

The high voltage Swachh Bharat Abhiyan launched by the Government of India in October 2014 has completed two and half years. One and half years of the deadline remains for target the mission to be achieved. High visibility of the campaign, of course has brought cleanliness to the centre stage of the public sphere discourses in the country. Meanwhile the government has claimed in May 2017 that over two lakh villages have become open defecation free. However, inadequate facilities to process the solid waste remain big challenges. Surveys indicate that conditions in cities has not improved substantially. Currently, about 80% of the total 1.7 lakh tonnes of waste generated daily is dumped without processing. The use of city-waste generated compost remains at low level of only two lakh tonnes. Despite the government taking several initiatives including annual cleanliness surveys and social media campaigns focusing on behavior change, there has been no significant improvement on the ground. This paper analyses the role of the media, a key player in the campaign, in taking the message to the people, and impact of the campaign on the public attitude towards cleanliness.

**Introduction**

India generates close to 60 million tonnes of garbage every day and of this, around 45 to 50 million tonnes is left untreated. The metros themselves generate 10 million tonnes of waste daily. By 2040, urban India alone would be generating close to 170 million tonnes of garbage daily. India's sewerage system is among the poorest in the world. Throwing of household garbage on the streets is not unusual. Open defecation remains a part of rural life in India, as millions of houses are yet to build toilets. Spitting and urinating in the open, unmindful of the defacement it causes, is ordinary practice for millions. Much of these actions add to growing filthiness, cause illness and make the country sicker. Avoidance of these actions can make India a clean place to live, decrease diseases and hugely reduce the treatment burden on the economy.

Even if we stress personal hygiene, our collective responsibility towards cleanliness of our surroundings such as roads, parks, drainage systems, river banks remains rather weak. Indians are so accustomed to throwing the waste on the open that garbage bins hardly come to our mind. We dislike others throwing garbage on the open but never mind our own actions. So, what is imperative to make India clean is change in our approach to cleanliness-it must be ingrained in our behaviour. The Swachh Bharat Abhiyan (SBA) is a national campaign to towards this end. Action and communication programmes are the two vital dimensions of the campaign. Besides eliminating the practices through creation of alternative facilities-toilets, sewage systems, waste disposal systems and recycling plants, it also talks about public communication campaigns to create wider awareness, induce pro-healthy behaviour among the people remains at the core of the campaign.

The media has the capacity to spread and make widespread awareness about cleanliness and its advantages and provide the right ambience for behaviour modifications. Of course, interpersonal communication is more effective in changing the behaviour of the target population to prevent them becoming vulnerable to infection. Mass media can make a topic popular, fashionable or worthy of attention. The newspaper is expected to play a very significant role in educating and empowering the public towards cleanliness. Is the Indian print media effectively playing the role expected of it? Is the editorial space devoted to SBA in keeping with priority of the campaign? Is the media reporting in tune with the theme of the campaign? This study attempts to answer these questions through content analysis of four mainstream newspapers.

**Objectives of the Study**

The main objectives of this study are

1. To quantify the coverage of SBA in the selected newspapers;
2. To analyze the space provided to the SBA in two English dailies;
3. To understand the SBA impact on public perception on cleaner environment;
4. To explore the impact of SBA campaign on cleanliness;
5. To analyze the newspaper updates on the status of health and hygiene in Aligarh

### **Importance of the Study**

According to a UN report, India leads the world in open defecation in rural India due to lack of toilets. According to government estimates urban India generates 68.8 million tonnes of solid wastes per year (1.88 lakh tonne every day), which is estimated to touch 16 million tonnes by 2041. One third of the garbage in urban areas remains untreated. According to census 2011, 5.48 crore households (32.7%) has access to toilets which means that 67.3% of the rural households in the country still do not have access to sanitation facilities. As per a Baseline survey, 2012-2013, 40.35% rural households have access to toilets.

Over two million people, mostly children die each year from diseases associated with lack of access to safe drinking water, inadequate sanitation and hygiene (WHO and UNICEF, 2000).

The problem is compounded by about 38 billion litres of sewage generated every day in 498 Tier I cities (2009 figures). Out of this, 26 billion is left in the open untreated. Rural India generates 0.4 million tonnes of solid waste. According to a UN report, India leads the world in open defecation. 88% of disease in rural India is due to lack of clean water, sanitation and solid waste management. In urban areas, people throw litter and dust on the roads, outside their homes, footpath instead of putting it in dustbins, which slowly accumulate and transforms into huge garbage. If not cleaned in time, this garbage smell stink and welcomes diseases affecting people. Public defecation in open fields lead to human contact with excreta via various water routes: contamination of fingers, field crops, food, flies etc. (Cairn Cross and Valdmanis, 2006). The WHO reports about 600 million episodes of diarrhoea and 400,000 childhood deaths a year due to contaminated water and lack of sanitation, with an estimated 80% of all diseases and one third of all deaths in developing countries induced by consumption of contaminated water (Rajgire, 2013).

However, still 600 million of the 1.2 billion people in India have no access to toilets. Government report in May 2017, claims that over two lakh villages have become open defecation free (Dash, 2016). However, urban areas struggle to manage their daily municipal waste and open urination. In rural areas, the challenge is the liquid waste generated. Shirking responsibilities of those responsible and inadequate facilities to process solid waste remain big challenges for this flagship programme. Online survey by local circles shows a rise from 35 % to 57% of respondents who said their cities haven't become cleaner due to Swachh Bharat, clearly indicating the cleanliness drive is losing steam in urban areas . Despite the government taking several initiatives including annual cleanliness surveys and social media campaigns focusing on behaviour change, there has been no significant improvement on the ground. One of the main reasons is the slow progress in setting up of plants to process solid waste. Currently, about 80% of the total 1.7 lakh tonnes of waste generated daily is dumped without processing. Despite all efforts, the use of compost remains at low level of only 2 lakh tonnes. The local bodies in most of our cities find it difficult to manage the cleanliness, sanitation and hygiene in satisfactory state. Often the government's helplessness comes to the fore on the cleanliness front due to shortage of resources.

Sustainable and active participation of public in the national cleanliness drive can help proper development of our cities, towns, and villages. This is possible only if adequate steps are taken to create awareness, impart education and develop a sense of responsibility towards our surroundings. Besides, the media can play a pivotal role in generating awareness about the need for cleanliness and, induce behaviour change towards cleanliness and mobilize the people to join the campaign. A proper study of the role of the Indian media in fulfilling its

above obligations can provide useful inputs for future campaign strategies, which justifies the timing and relevance of this study.

### **The Swachh Bharat Abhiyan**

Swachh Bharat Abhiyan was launched by the Prime Minister, Narendra Modi as a nationwide cleanliness campaign on 2 Oct.2014, the birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi. It was visualized as a mass movement to make India clean by 2019. To convert it into a mass movement, the prime minister nominated nine celebrities to help galvanize public support for his SBA and asked them to nominate nine more people each to make the initiative go viral and transform the move into a national mission. The citizens were called upon to spend 100 hours each per year towards cleanliness in their surrounding areas or other places to really make it a successful campaign. An estimated fund requirement of Rs. 38,000 crores, for setting up of waste treatment facilities across the country. The Centre was supposed to contribute 20% (Rs.7600 Crores), states one-third and rest from private sector.

To trace the historical roots of the campaign, the government of India launched Nirmal Bharat Abhiyan in 1999, which aimed at universal household sanitation coverage by 2012. This was an integral part of the Total Sanitation Launched in 1991. It was rechristened as "Swachh Bharat Abhiyan" with the objective of making India "clean", by eliminating the practice of open defecation, building up of toilets for all households, providing running water supply, treating of solid and liquid wastes in a proper manner. This drive also includes cleaning of roads, pavements and clearing of encroachments in unauthorized areas. Above all, the project aims at creating awareness among people about the need for proper sanitation and hygiene facilities.

Urban sub-mission of the campaign, known as the Swachh Bharat Mission of urban areas aims to cover almost 1.04 crore households in order to provide them 2.6 lakhs of public toilets, 2.5 lakhs of community toilets together with the solid wastes management in every town. Gramin Swachh Bharat Mission, earlier the Nirmal Bharat Abhiyan, is aimed at making rural areas free of open defecation till 2019 for which the cost has been estimated is one lakh thirty four thousand crore rupees for constructing approximately 11 crore 11 lakh toilets in the country. A major dimension of the campaign is a plan of converting waste into bio-fertilizer and useful energy forms, for use in farming. There are various implementation policies and mechanisms for the programme including three important phases such as planning phase, implementation phase and sustainability phase. This mission has targeted to solve the sanitation problems as well as better waste management all over the India by creating sanitation facilities to all. The endeavour of the Government is to turn it into a mass movement requiring not just toilets, but also a change in behaviour and mind-sets of people (The Hindu, October 4, 2014).

### **Swachh Bharat Abhiyan and Indian Media**

Media plays a crucial role in our society by determining what issues the public should think and worry about and push the government to mould the policies accordingly. It is assumed that the more the media attention an issue attracts, the greater will be the importance assigned to it. Media not only keeps the people abreast of the latest development in different sphere of life but also build opinion on important issues by informing and educating the people. In other words, media has iron grip on the imagination as well as thinking faculties of society. Media is so much embedded in our lives that some scholars suggest that the "Public may not know how deep the interlocking media reach into every phase of our lives, our reading, our viewing, our entertainment, our politics and our education" (klotzer, 2007).In all scenarios, the most important is the content of news media, which include off all day- to -day issues such as environment, health, socio-economics, politics, culture, business etc. The public rely heavily on the media for the information.

Media has been playing a very important role in spreading the SBA to the nook and corner of the country and changing the behaviour of the public towards cleanliness. Mass media happens to be the most readily available and potentially most economical means of

imparting information about SBA. Along with other forms of communication, the mass media can effectively raise public awareness and concern about sanitation and can also play an important role to promote a positive attitude towards SBA. Moreover, every day public see a lot of advertisements in newspaper, TV, radios where they tell public to support this Abhiyan. This helps the Abhiyan to widen and make everyone a part of it. It also tells about the importance of cleanliness around us, about diseases caused due to the lack of cleanliness, about proper domestic waste disposal system. Moreover, it reminds people of their duty to clean the surroundings to make India clean and free from diseases.

The newspapers have been reporting India's poor sanitation through news, articles, features and editorials. Besides, it gives report on consequences of unhealthy behaviour- from malnutrition to diarrhoea. The SBA campaign utilizes social media- in an attempt to increase transparency and publicize, globally, the country's efforts to improve its image on sanitation.

### **Conclusion**

There is no least shadow of doubt that cleanliness is very important in our life as well as for the nation. Huge population are dying daily just because of diseases caused due to the lack of information and knowledge about cleanliness issues, health and hygiene, environmental issues etc. The main objective of a sanitation is to protect and promote human health by providing a clean environment and breaking the cycle of diseases. Efforts are on to turn SBA into a mass movement so as to bring a change of people's behavior and mindset. The campaign will not only help to adopt good habits of cleanliness but also boost our image as a nation. To take this programme forward, familiarize and involve others the role media is regarded as an effective social and technical tool. Media play an important role to develop positive attitudes towards cleanliness. spreads awareness and change other people's behavior towards SBA. Besides, it disseminate the knowledge about diseases which spreads due to lack of sanitation and keep update people regularly about the conditions of garbage issues in market areas, street, parks, roadsides, public places which further inspire the others to actively participate in the SBA programme.

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