

70 years of Independence

Special Feature – I-Day 2017

Swachh Bharat- Gandhi's obsession, Modi's passion



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During a recent visit to the Sabarmati Ashram in Ahmedabad where a photo gallery vividly depicts the ideology and life style of Mahatma Gandhi, my thoughts went around to connect the Father of Nation with an independent and clean India. The Ashram serves as a source of inspiration for we, young Indians, from the life of a Mahatma who fought a non-violent battle against the mighty British empire and won us Independence. In 2014, Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi launched the Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM), thus so aptly on 2nd October, Gandhiji's birthday.

"A clean India would be the best tribute India could pay to Mahatma Gandhi on his 150th birthday anniversary in 2019", the Prime Minister had said after launch of the mission.

"Swachata" or Cleanliness was a way of life for Gandhiji. As he fought the Britishers, he disliked several of the western customs but was candid enough to say that he learnt sanitation from the West. His dream was to introduce and spread that level of cleanliness in India. "I learnt 35 years ago that a lavatory must be as clean as a drawing-room. I learnt this in the West. I believe that many rules about cleanliness in lavatories are observed more scrupulously in the West than in the East. The cause of many of our diseases is the condition of our lavatories and our bad habit of disposing of excreta anywhere and everywhere. I, therefore, believe in the absolute necessity of a clean place for answering the call of nature and clean articles for use at the time. I have accustomed myself to them and wish that all others should do the same. The habit has become so firm in me that even if I wished to change it, I would not be able to do so. Nor do I wish to change it". His words are pertinent and relate eminently to the Swachh Bharat Mission, a dream project of Shri Modi, who is passionate about cleanliness.

Launched under a mission mode, the SBM has surely achieved some measurable targets in the last three years. These include construction of 28, 96,367 household toilets across the country,

while 43,200 wards have been covered for 100 per cent door - to - door waste collection. As per the 'dashboard' (real time figures) of the Swachh Bharat portal, over a million (10, 29,124) Indian Household Toilets have been constructed only in the last eight months since January 2017.

The work has really picked up pace in the recent months is evident from a huge jump, in fact more than double in the number of community and public toilets since January this year. There number has gone up from 1, 09,639 in January to 2, 71,766 in August this year.

Hundred per cent target has been achieved under the Swachh Vidyalaya initiative of the Narendra Modi Government with Bihar leading the table. As many as 56,912 schools have been given toilets with half of the number of toilets constructed in the girls' schools. The other states doing commendable work under this initiative include Andhra Pradesh with 49, 293 toilets completed and about 22,000 being meant only for girls' schools. Assam achieved the figure of 35,699, Chhattisgarh 16,629, Jharkhand 15,795, Rajasthan 12,083, Telangana 36,159 and Odisha 43,501.

The Swachh Bharat programme has been linked directly with Beti Bachao Beti Padhao initiative. Under the joint programme initiative it is being ensured that there are girls' toilets in all Government schools in 100 districts which have the lowest child sex ratio. These districts include Vaishali in Bihar, Raigarh in Chhattisgarh, Kamrup in Assam and D & N Haveli.

The mission aims to eliminate open defecation in all statutory towns by 2nd October, 2019. In addition, it also proposes to eradicate manual scavenging, introduce modern and scientific waste management, induce behavioural change with respect to healthy sanitation practices and generate awareness for sanitation. SBM also aims to augment the capacity of Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) and create an enabling environment for the private sector in waste management.

Deliverables for Swachh Bharat Mission under the NITI Ayog 's Three –Year Action Agenda 2017-2019-20

Outcome/Deliverable	2017-18 (Cumulative)	2018-19 (Cumulative)
No. of ODF towns	4,041	4,041
Compost Production (Lakh Metric Tonnes)	54	54
Waste to Energy Generation (Mega Watt)	330	511
Wards with 100% door-to-door collection	100 %	100 %

ULBs spend about Rs. 500 to Rs. 1,500 per tonne on solid waste management, according to the NITI Ayog Three Year Action Agenda. Out of earmarked budget, about 60 - 70 per cent is spent on the collection of waste and 20 - 30 per cent on transportation. However, a negligible percentage is dedicated towards the treatment and disposal of waste.

Some of the sustainable disposal solutions include: Waste to energy (Incineration), thermal pyrolysis and plasma gasification technologies. While pyrolysis is not suitable for MSW due to

diverse composition and plasma gasification technologies are very expensive, waste to energy is the most suitable technology as it has multi-fold benefits. In countries like Singapore, more than 37.6 per cent of waste is used for waste-to-energy plants for incineration and energy recovery.

Elimination of Open Defecation is another crucial aspect of SBM. In order to achieve the objective of becoming Open Defecation Free (ODF) by 2019, 55 million household toilets and 115,000 community toilets need to be constructed under the SBM (Gramin), as per the NITI Ayog document. Focus should be on how to ensure that there is easy access to sanitation for women, children, senior citizens and the differently abled and also that these toilets have continuous piped water supply.

The Swachh Bharat roadmap laid out before the country is clear and well defined. But to ensure a result oriented programme, there is a need for all stakeholders, mainly the citizens of India to join the campaign being led by the Prime Minister. No effort can be spared and no avenue left unexplored to achieve the target of a cleaner India.

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