
Vision of Clean India Campaign: Prospects and Challenges

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Abstract:

Mahatma Gandhi once stated that "*Sanitation is more important than Independence*" and equated cleanliness next to godliness. Gandhi ji had two objectives: "Quit India and Clean India". He accomplished the first one and his cleanliness drive was once again revived by our Prime Minister, Narendra Modi on 2nd October 2014 as 'Swachh Bharat Abhiyan'- Clean India Campaign. The goal is to make India Open Defecation Free (ODF) by the 150th birth anniversary of the Father of the Nation in 2019. If we are able to achieve this goal, it would be a befitting tribute to him who always advocated for cleanliness. In spite of being a highly spiritual nation, India tops the world in open defecation. The problem is more severe in rural areas.

This initiative envisages a vision of Clean India and to bring about an improvement in the general quality of life of Indians by promoting cleanliness and hygiene. The vision is quite comprehensive and it has a potential to bring a significant improvement in Indian society, economy, polity and environment.

However, the vision presents huge challenges in realizing the goals. These challenges pertain to various aspects such as social inertia, lack of political will, comprehensiveness of the vision; inter ministerial coordination, technological bottlenecks in waste management, sustainability and convergence of sanitation programmes, soliciting proactive and integrated contribution from various stakeholders etc.

Nonetheless, "Vision of a Clean India" has huge prospect for India to evolve into an even greater nation. However, dealing with the challenges is not going to be easy and it will require ample amounts of social and political will. The Clean India campaign is just a great start. We have a long way journey to go. It requires support and commitment from all genres of people of India.

Keywords: Sanitation, Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, Open Defecation Free (ODF), Hygiene, Polity, Social Inertia.

Introduction:

“The poor need respect and it begins with cleanliness. I therefore, have to launch a ‘Clean India’ campaign from 2nd October this year and carry it forward in 4 years”

-PM Narendra Modi in speech on August 15, 2014

This clarion call made by our Prime Minister got the formal fillip on the birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, who launched “Clean India Mission “on 2nd October 2014. The goal is to Clean India and makes India Open Defecation Free (ODF) by the 150th birth anniversary of the Father of the Nation in 2019. If we are able to achieve this goal, it would be a befitting tribute to him who always advocated for cleanliness. In spite of being a highly spiritual nation, India tops the world in open defecation. The problem is more severe in rural areas. As per Census 2011, only 32.70 per cent of rural households have access to toilets.

Mahatma Gandhi once stated that “*Sanitation is more important than Independence*” and equated cleanliness next to godliness. Gandhi ji had two objectives: “Quit India and Clean India”. First one he accomplished with the great support of all countrymen, but second one remained unfulfilled. He very well understood that sanitation and cleanliness are integral parts of healthy and peaceful lives. It is for this reason Mahatma Gandhi (Bapuji) encouraged his fellow citizen to always live a clean and hygienic life. However, after the sad demise of Bapuji, this objective was lost and the Indians continued to lead an unhygienic and dirty lifestyle. His cleanliness drive was once again revived under the aegis of this campaign popular with the name 'Swachh Bharat Abhiyan (SBA)'.

It is rightly named as mission and not simply a scheme. This initiative envisages a vision of Clean India and to bring about an improvement in the general quality of life of Indians by promoting cleanliness and hygiene. The vision is quite comprehensive and it has a potential to bring a significant improvement in Indian society, economy, polity and environment.

Vision and Targets:

The vision and targets of this Campaign is to:

- Stamp out open defecation system and achieve ODF status by 2nd October 2019 by having access to sanitation which includes toilets whether at school, community places or at household level;
- Safe and adequate drinking water availability;
- Sanitation infrastructure like sewage treatment plants etc;
- Convert insanitary toilets into clean flush toilets;
- Strengthen the sanitation system in rural and urban areas;
- Waste management with complete disposal and reuse of liquid and solid wastes;
- Motivate and spread cleanliness awareness among people;

- Motivate communities and Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) and Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) to adopt sustainable sanitation practices and facilities through awareness creation and health education;
- Create user friendly environment by encouraging cost effective and appropriate technologies for ecologically safe and sustainable sanitation;
- Developing community managed sanitation systems focusing on scientific solid and liquid waste management systems for overall cleanliness;
- To seek proactive engagement with the corporate sector leveraging corporate social responsibility (CSR) opportunities created by Companies Act of 2013 and funding assistance from multilateral resources;
- Behavioural changes in society at large and at individual level as this mission resides on a premise that cleanliness is not responsibility of "safai karamcharis" but responsibility of 1.25 billion Indians also;
- Ancillary objectives like social inclusion by removing menaces of manual scavenging and untouchability;
- Equity by making sure everybody supports the idea of Clean India and everybody gets basic sanitation facilities.

However, the vision presents huge challenges in realizing the goals of 'Clean India'. These challenges pertain to various aspects such as social inertia, lack of political will, comprehensiveness of the vision, inter ministerial coordination, technological bottlenecks in waste management, sustainability and convergence of sanitation programmes, soliciting proactive and integrated contribution from various stakeholders, awareness and education etc. It has multivariate components such as eradication of manual scavenging, construction of toilets, spreading awareness in people about sanitation and cleanliness, disposal and recycling of urban and rural solid waste, ensuring a cleaner environment (clear air, water etc) overall which poses innumerable challenges and prospects.

Prospects:

Social prospects of Clean India

India is traditionally hierarchical society where caste system has been prevalent. Eradication of manual scavenging and construction of water based toilets will lead to freeing of people of some lower castes from this practice which should be called a national shame. If their rehabilitation is ensured by the government, it will lead to breaking of shackles on marginalized castes in Indian society and this has been envisaged in this mission. But on the ground level did it really make any difference?

People, who collect garbage from our houses and roads still faces the same situation every day. They are not provided with safety gloves or any other equipment which can safeguard them from fatal infections and bacteria. They sacrifice their time, energy and to a great extent their

health too to do their job and keep our surroundings clean. Moreover, they are prone to or rather imprisoned to social stigma. People put their hand on nose while walking past them. People are inspired by all celebrities who picked up broom for one day or a few hours but those same people outcast the real celebrities who do this job every day. Really, we do live in a dual-faced society.

Women and children are especially vulnerable to the risk of open defecation. Their safety is compromised especially if a person is sick than a lack of toilets within the premises of the house is quite curse. A cleaner society is healthier society. "Prevention is better the cure", this quotation applies very well here. Sanitation and an overall clean environment would lead to better health outcomes. The component of the mission that ensures awareness and education is key to such social transformation.

Economic opportunities

Good hygiene and sanitation are the indicators of social and economic development in a society. Sanitation and health status of a country significantly affects nation's economic development and performance. As per UNICEF report 54 per cent people defecate in the open in the India as against just 7 per cent each in Brazil and Bangladesh. Only 6 per cent rural children below five years in India use toilets. To a large extent this is the cause of India accounting for the largest number of under five deaths- nearly 1.5 million a year. A cleaner India would lead to a healthier India which means a significant cost cutting over disease and health. This means lesser out of pocket expenditure for individuals and more fiscal space for the government.

As estimated the completion of Swachh Bharat Abhiyan would indirectly attract many business houses to clean India. This in turn will improve the GDP growth and generate variety of sources of employment. It can play a great role in reducing death rate, health expenses and lethal disease rate. It has been recognized that huge expenditure in health care cost is a big drain on the resources of many a family and is major contributor to poverty. According to WHO's report due to diseases created by lack of cleanliness every Indian loses additional 6500 rupees. And if we take out affluent households then burden on poor people go up by rupees 12000 – 15000. Cleanliness will save poor people from diseases and unemployment. Serving Mother India is Serving India. A nation with a healthy population is more capable of contributing to and achieving its development goals and making India vivid and vibrant.

Clean India would draw more tourists and improve its economical condition. It is for this reason the Prime Minister has urged every Indian to devote their 100 hours every year for the cleanliness of India. This is sufficient to make this country a clean country by 2019. A filthy environment leads to loss of education of children which further harms the demographic dividend of the nation. Energy from solid urban waste is clean energy and it helps in ensuring energy security of the nation. Also, recycling of waste will mean lesser loose of polybags and other harmful material. A cleaner India would mean more attraction for tourists thus giving a boost to the economy.

Information Support System

The implementation of this all inclusive comprehensive mission requires various types of information support to endure the optimum and effective utilization of available resources. The development of Management Information Systems (MIS) and the regular input of programme progress data on a household basis have opened up the opportunity of analyzing the data available, to provide information and suggestions that is useful to inform the programme policies, and implementation and allow corrective measures.

The issues related to planning, implementation and monitoring such a massive and complex programme makes it necessary for a steady flow of information and data, regarding the changing status of outstanding problem and the implementation of the programme so as to analyse and understand the work being done across each unit of administration over time, and enable the taking of appropriate pragmatic measures aimed at moving towards the national objectives. Thus this new vista has become base for all planning and monitoring.

Environmental Prospects

Waste recycling will reduce “ecological footprints” of India. Waste – energy will reduce use of fossil fuels. An overall cleaner environment will mean cleaner air, water and land. It will help India in meeting its environmental commitments globally.

Political prospects

Domestically, cleanliness needs to become a political issue. Clean India mission has generated some awareness in people about it. Once they realize the full significance of cleaner environment, political parties will be bound to keep it as one of the main points in their agenda.

Internationally, India’s global image will improve and will provide a greater say to India in global scenario. Also, it will be an inspiration for global community. Swachh Bharat Abhiyan has been appreciated at the UN, too as 2nd October is observed as the World Toilet Day around the world. However, all these opportunities will be realized only if the challenges in making India clean can be overcome.

Challenges in implementation:

Two year down the line, the initiative of Clean India seems to be fizzling out in its enthusiasm and massive drive has now slowed down. Lack of robust but flexible framework for implementation is the main problem.

Mission’s progression is still lopsided which failed to bring effective behavioural changes in society at large and at individual level. Building toilets will not suffice the purpose but require changing the mindset regarding the sustained use of toilets. There is more focus on toilet and latrine, but other issues are untouched, as infrastructure, growing urbanization and needs, attitude of people, global image, e-waste recycling, reuse, recycle, reduce (RRR), pollution,

community participation, many more issues incorporated by SBA.

Voluntary commitments on citizens can't be long term solution. Dedicated personnel for the mission need to be deployed. Though the mission garnered much fame, ground realities are different. There are garbage-heaps just below the boards of Clean India.

Challenge of integration and coordination

The mission needs greater cohesiveness and proper integration with education system, skill development, Make in India initiative, Digital India mission etc. Clean India can't be achieved if the mission works in silos. Awareness can be achieved through making cleanliness and environment a compulsory part of syllabus. Smart cities and Make in India contemplate solar panels manufacturing and solar energy. A database of cleanliness parameters needs to be prepared with the help of Digital India mission and a framework of incentives and disincentives can be prepared.

Moreover, there is equivalent uphill task of coordination between three ministries who are technically handling this mission.

- Rural Sanitation is under the Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation (MDWS).
- Urban areas are vested with the Ministry of Urban Development (MoUD).
- School Sanitation under programme like 'Swachh Vidyalaya Abhiyan' is taken care by Ministry of Human Resource Development.

Absence or presence of coordination and synergetic relationship among these ministries can make or mar the prospects of mission accordingly.

Lack of comprehensiveness

There is a need of a comprehensive idea of cleanliness, which includes air, water, solid waste, noise pollution. Even nuclear waste is a threat that must be heeded upon. 'Namami Ganga' aims to ensure effective abatement of pollution and rejuvenation of the holy river with availability of clean drinking water. It also contemplates establishing sewage treatment plants across Ganga's course. Cleanliness of rivers is linked with the mission which must be appreciated. So, this mission has scope of large scale participation of various stakeholders for multidimensional implications with cross linkages with other societal movements.

Focus on Awareness Component

Not only us but even our Prime Minister was impressed with Media for their role in Clean India campaign. He said, "You have turned your pen into a broom" All News Channels and Journalists did a commendable job in Swachh Bharat Abhiyan. Government's awareness campaign which roped in celebrities has been able to bring issues such as sanitation and hygiene in the public discourse. However, still a lot is desired on this front too. Regular IEC innovations, capacity

building of natural leaders, motivational sessions with children, youth and women SHGs, constant interactions with community in the form of gram sabhas etc will have major impact on the sanitation scenario.

Behavioural issues

Changing people's attitude towards sanitation is the biggest challenge being faced by the mission. Government has spent a lot on mass media but with little impact. Toilets are built at rapid pace but are not being used either the household or community/public toilets. It is necessary to understand why people don't like to use toilets. Is this because of sheer habit of going for open defecation or due to non-cleanliness and poor upkeep?

Hence the key to achieve an ODF India lies in bringing about behaviour changes propelled by mass media and innovative IEC activities and appeals which will combat a culture of open defecation by mobilizing communities for collective decision to check this tendency.

There are numerous success stories revealing how community processes have worked wonders. Also, there are several incidents of children, women and people with disabilities who have acted as real brand ambassadors of the mission by persevering and inspiring their communities to bring about a positive change. Those young brides who refused to marry into home which does not have toilets; a panchayat chief who touched people's feet to convince them to build toilets or a physically challenged person who went around his town to spread the sanitation message are real crusaders in the mission of cleanliness. Following success stories need a special mention to be replicated across nation for vision and mission to come true.

- Banko Bikano- a peoples' movement in Bikaner

The sanitation programme in Bikaner district in heart of Thar Desert in Rajasthan state would have failed with the traditional approach to sanitation. Unlike other target oriented government programmes, this one focused on being community led and driven. Basic premise of the programme was pride and self-respect for the women, family, village and ultimately for the district.

Communities were 'triggered' by igniting in them disgust and exhorting them to feel pride in clean, ODF village. Once a collective mindset change was ensured, communities came together to generate innovative methods to ensure that each person in the village constructed and used the toilets. Toilets, therefore, became an aspirational need and a symbol of the dignity and pride of the family and community as whole, instead of merely a financial subsidy provided to an individual government. By reorienting the administrative set up in Bikaner to act as facilitators of behavioural change rather than providers (of individual toilets), the collective conscious of community was provided a spark. This thought and vision using local language and customs, caught on in the social fabric of rural Bikaner and the programme became almost self propelling.

Initially dedicated team of District Resource Group was made and then there was intensive capacity building of stakeholders. While toilets were built by householders themselves, they were

checked by 'Nigranisamitis' and monitoring focused on ODF achievement culminating into a remarkable achievement with all 219 GPs and 890 villages declared as ODF in 2015.

(Source: Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation)

- Kabirdham District in Chhatisgarh- Children who won over their parents

On July 2015, 1.38 lakh students from 1738 schools in the age group of 7-17 years in district participated in a letter writing exercise who wrote their parents appealing them to build a toilet at their home mentioning health benefits of having a toilet at home. Student's firm resolve of seeking blessings for their appeal brought results better than anticipated. Every child came back with positive feedback with a date of commitment, a deadline by which their homes will have a toilet. Thereafter motivated administration has been making regular follow up on the commitments made and children are seeing that it happens and are sure that Kabirdham will achieve the ODF status between December 2016 and February 2017.

(Source: Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation)

Conclusion:

Though there remain certain weaknesses and challenges that have made Clean India mission an incomplete venture. Government has undertaken construction of toilets on a war footing especially in rural India with special attention on schools, the maintenance of toilets is a huge issue. It requires manpower, money and government institutionalization of related issues. Open defecation is still rampant and realistically it looks tough going to achieve the target of no-open defecation by 2019 with issues of behavioral changes still unanswered.

A healthy mind is as important as a healthy body. Healthy mind means pure and clean thoughts. Comprehensive idea of cleanliness needs to be seen in this light. A good education will develop a good thought process in the future generations, so education has to supplement the action. "Swachhta" is not essential only in our country, but in our countrymen's perception, too. If a child is brought up in an environment where cleaning and other chores are considered as low people's work then no campaign of any kind can make any desirable changes. Perception is the core-real problem and not the unclean roads and behavioral change is the key for solution and effective use of media is a must. The mission needs to focus on this aspect.

In the discussions above, we observed that though the mission success has been a mixed one but no challenges are big enough to overcome as proved from above discussed case studies. These case studies endorse our faith that novel, innovative and brain storming ways to implement the programme will always pay rich dividends. These all are stories of change that is palpable not just in outcome but in a transformed mindset that necessitates and celebrates the change. It is an outcome that has not resulted from a fear or force but from sheer willingness to be part of change.

“Vision of a Clean India” has huge prospect for India to evolve into an even greater nation. However, dealing with the challenges is not going to be easy and it will require ample amounts of social and political will. The way charity begins from home, same way cleaning begins from us, Not only in our home, neighborhood, roads but in our thinking too.

The Clean India campaign is just a great start. We have a long way journey to go. It requires support and commitment from all genres of people of India.

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