

## Creating a Clean India

*Parameswaran Iyer*



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**O**n August 15, 2014, the Hon'ble Prime Minister gave a clarion call to the nation from the ramparts of the Red Fort to wage a war against filth and open defecation, and achieve a clean and open defecation free India as Mahatma Gandhi had dreamed of, by October 2, 2019, the 150<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary of Gandhiji.

This was arguably the most ambitious and bold declaration by a head of state towards cleanliness and sanitation in the world. From the highest level, the discussion on sanitation was removed from the closet and put in the forefront of national policy and development. The age old practice of open defecation causes over 1 lakh preventable child deaths every year through diarrhoeal infections. A study by the World Bank estimates that nearly 40 per cent of India's children are stunted, primarily because of lack of sanitation. This has an adverse impact on their economic potential, and is estimated to cost India over 6 per cent of our GDP. Women's safety and dignity are often comprised due to open defecation. Our Prime Minister saw that there is a strong need for affirmative action on this, and that the issue needed to be addressed in a time bound manner in mission mode. A 21<sup>st</sup> century India on the path to becoming a global economic super power should have no place for filth

and open defecation. He decided to put his political capital behind sanitation and cleanliness and make it a national priority!

### The Progress of SBM

The Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) has almost completed three years. Overall, progress is very good, with some States performing better than others. Rural sanitation coverage has gone up from 39 per cent at the start of the mission to the current figure of 68 per cent. Over 230 million people in rural India have stopped defecating in the open, 193 districts and about 235,000 villages across the country have been declared as open defecation free (ODF). Five States – Sikkim, Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, Haryana and Uttarakhand have become ODF. One of the biggest achievements has been that all the 4000+ villages on the banks of the holy Ganga have become ODF!

### How is SBM unique

The SBM is a globally unique programme, different in scope and scale from any other sanitation initiative in the world. Bringing 550 million rural Indians out of open defecation is unparalleled and carries a high degree of difficulty. It is one thing to build physical infrastructure like roads, bridges and power plants. Changing habits and getting millions

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Household Toilet Coverage across India  
**66.30%** (As on Date)  
**38.70%** (Oct 2, 2014)



of people to voluntarily engage in a *janandolan* to fight the centuries-old practice of open defecation is quite another! SBM is about bringing changes in people's minds and not about creating infrastructure, and that's what makes it different from earlier sanitation programmes in many significant ways.

The first key differentiator is the genuine focus on behavior change through Information, Education and Communication (IEC), and shifting the focus from outputs (number of toilets built) to outcomes (ODF villages). The community is at the centre of the entire process. They

are leading the Swachhta revolution. Children, women, senior citizens and specially-abled citizens have emerged as the biggest Swachhta Champions. They are inspiring their communities to come together and fight the menace of open defecation together. The Hon'ble Prime Minister awarded 10 such inspirational women Swachhta Champions at a special event for nearly 6000 women Sarpanches on International Women's Day.

Lakhs of sanitation motivators, called Swachhagrahis, are being trained in community approaches to sanitation. Virtual Classrooms are being run by the Ministry of Drinking



Water and Sanitation (MDWS) to scale these trainings up where a central trainer interacts with trainees across multiple locations on tools for effective community mobilization and behaviour change triggering. They work under an incentive-based system at village level to explain the importance of sanitation and trigger behaviour change by stimulating community-level demand for toilets. Currently there are over 150,000 Swachhagrahis across the country and this number is rapidly increasing. The SBM aims to have at least one Swachhagrahi per village in India.

The MDWS and States are attempting to involve locally elected representatives, grassroots-level organizations, NGOs, youth organizations, school students, corporates and civil society organizations in making the SBM a *janandolan*. Electronic and print mass media is being used to reinforce the sanitation messages and broaden its appeal. Bollywood stars and cricketers are also getting involved. Superstar Amitabh Bachchan is leading a "Darwaza Bandh" (on open defecation) campaign on TV, radio and outdoor hoardings across the country. Akshay Kumar has made a blockbuster Bollywood movie on the subject of open defecation – *Toilet-Ek Prem Katha* which has been the biggest hit of this year.

Once a village declares itself as ODF at a Gram Sabha, verification of the latter status becomes key. Currently verification of ODF villages stands at around 60 per cent, up from only 25 per cent a few months ago. The SBM-G guidelines provide for a 90-day window for third party verification of a village's self-declared ODF status. Any gaps found need to be immediately identified and addressed by the community during verification. This focus on timely verification of ODF status is the second big difference between the SBM and previous sanitation programmes.

The programme also has a fairly robust system of verification at district





*Women Swachhta Champions getting felicitated by Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi during the Swachh Shakti 2017 event.*

and state level. At the national level, the MDWS, carries out separate checks as well as also third party sample surveys by independent organizations. The

most recent one, a national 140,000 household survey, carried out by the Quality Council of India during May-June 2017, found that usage of toilets across the country was an encouraging 91 per cent.

There have been instances in previous programmes where ODF declared villages witnessed some "slip back" into open defecation, as old habits are hard to break out of. Sustaining of ODF is no easy task and states, districts and villages will need to continue the focus on IEC to ensure that they remain ODF. Incentive mechanisms are being developed for sustaining ODF, including prioritizing ODF villages for centrally sponsored schemes like piped water supply. The MDWS has also issued sustainability guidelines to states and provided

### Swachhta Hi Seva: An Unprecedented Nationwide Campaign on Swachhta

Responding to Prime Minister's call a nationwide mega 15-day campaign **Swachhta Hi Seva (Cleanliness is Service)** has been launched from 15<sup>th</sup> September to 2<sup>nd</sup> October (Gandhi Jayanti). Under this campaign, the whole country is taking various sanitation initiatives, for over 15 days making **Swachh Bharat Mission a jan aandolan** (mass movement). This was being coordinated by the Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation, the convening Ministry for the Swachh Bharat Mission with participation of people from various walks of life and reaching out to the poor and marginalised and providing them with sustainable sanitation services being the hallmark of this campaign.

Under the campaign **Swachhta Hi Seva**, there was mobilisation of people from all walks of life to undertake *shramdaan* (voluntary labour) for cleanliness and construction of toilets and to make their environments free from open defecation. The objective of the campaign was to mobilise people and reinforce the "Jan Aandolan" for sanitation. The campaign targeted the cleaning of public and tourist places. The participation ranged from the President of India to the common citizen and involved Union Ministers, Governors, Chief Ministers, legislators, celebrities and top officials. Celebrities, faith leaders, eminent personalities from the corporate sector etc. were also involved the campaign in their respective areas of influence.

Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation had identified special dates during the campaign period. It included three Sundays, 17<sup>th</sup>, 24<sup>th</sup> September and 1<sup>st</sup> October when people were mobilised to do large scale *shramdaan* for toilet construction, cleaning of public places, bus stands, school and colleges, statues, hospitals and ponds in rural and urban areas. A special cleanliness drive is planned in 15 identified tourist places on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2017. Several media houses have voluntarily come out to mount special campaigns for Swachhta during the fortnight.

At the culminating event of the fortnight on October 2 Gandhi Jayanti, which is also the **Swachh Bharat Diwas** (Clean India Day), national awards for essays, films and paintings, and other Swachh Bharat awards will be presented to Swachhta Champions from across the country and all walks of life. The Ministry has created a special portal and web page on **MyGov.in** facilitating people to upload pre and post intervention (before and after) photos of their *shramdaan* and other interventions.



*The President, Shri Ram Nath Kovind launching a nationwide sanitation campaign, 'Swachhta hi Sewa', at Ishwariganj village in Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh on September 15, 2017. The Governor of Uttar Pradesh, Shri Ram Naik, the Union Minister for Drinking Water & Sanitation, Sushri Uma Bharti, the Chief Minister, Uttar Pradesh, Yogi Adityanath and other dignitaries are also seen.*



afinancial incentive framework to them for sustaining the ODF. Districts are also being ranked under *Swachhta Darpan* based on their performance, sustainability and transparency on SBM-G, spurring healthy competition between districts.

Another very important differentiator between the SBM-G and previous sanitation programs is the inclusive focus cleanliness through management of solid and liquid waste. In fact, waste is now being viewed as a resource, and the name has been re-christened to Solid and Liquid Resource Management (SLRM). Villages are self-ranking themselves on the Village Swachhta Index, with nearly 1.5 lakh villages having already completed this process. This helps them benchmark their present Swachhta levels with the desired state that they aspire to reach. Villages which are ODF and also have adequate SLRM are called ODF+.

### SBM is Everyone's Business

As the Prime Minister has reiterated time and again, sanitation must become everyone's business and not the responsibility of one

Ministry or Department alone. A major step in this direction was taken when initiatives like the Swachh Iconic Places (SIP) and Swachhta Action Plans (SAP) were launched. The SIP has seen identification of 20 iconic places of historical and cultural significance and work is going on in full swing to make them islands of excellence with respect to Swachhta, a gold standard for other sites to aspire to achieve. 80 more sites will be taken up in subsequent phases. The SAP has successfully gotten all Ministries and Departments of the Government of India to pledge to take up Swachhta and sanitation related activities in their respective sectors, and have pledged a total of Rs. 12,000 crores for FY 17-18 from their existing budgets for these tasks. The SBM is probably the only government program which is being integrated with the works of the entire government machinery.

Even the private sector has been inspired to contribute to the SBM, not only by contributing money under CSR, but also leveraging their human and managerial resources to help in direct implementation of SBM. One of the biggest contributions

has come from the Tata Trusts who have hired and are sponsoring 600 young professionals to work in each district of India with the district administration, tasked singularly with taking their district towards ODF and good SLWM. These professionals, called the Zila Swachh Bharat Preraks, have infused the exuberance of youth into the implementation of the SBM-G and have been thoroughly appreciated by all State governments.

### SBM becoming a janandolan

As the SBM nears its third anniversary, we are at a tipping point from where the mission can spiral into a massive janandolan provide given some higher impetus. Inspired by the Hon'ble Prime Minister's call of ushering in a New India, the SBM-G has launched a slew of new initiatives to engage the general public with the Swachhta revolution in India. The first of these is the *Swachhathon – the Swachh Bharat Hackathon* which invites innovative technology based solutions to some of the most challenging questions being faced by SBM-G. The questions being answered include how to measure

### Swachh Sankalp Se Swachh Siddhi

The nationwide mega campaign *Swachhta Hi Seva* was preceded by another countrywide campaign *Swachh Sankalp Se Swachh Siddhi* in which Essay, Short Films and Painting competitions were organised for general public, with a special focus on school children from 16<sup>th</sup> August to 8<sup>th</sup> September, 2017.

**Short Film Competition:** In this, individuals were requested to make 2 to 3 minute films on the theme of Swachhta and show how they can contribute to the Swachh Bharat Mission. The Topic for the Film was '**My Contribution towards Making India Clean**'. The short film could be made in all major Indian language.

The awards will be provided under the two categories of Age : 0-18 years and, 18 and above. Three winners from each category will be awarded at the National Level and also at the State and District levels.

**Essay Competition:** Under this, individuals were invited to write essays of not more than 250 words on the theme of Swachhta and describe how they can personally contribute to the Swachh Bharat Mission. The Topic for the Essay was '**What can I do for a Clean India?**' The essay could be written in any of the major Indian languages.

Three winners will be awarded at the national level. Awards will also be given at the State and District levels. Senior citizens (above 60 years) and differently abled were encouraged to apply and will be given special recognition at the national awards.

**Painting Competition:** A Painting Competition was also organized as another major step in making Swachhta a *Jan Aandolan (mass movement)*. The Topic for the Painting Competition was "**Clean India of my dreams**". This competition was only for Class 1 to 5 Schools students.



usage of toilets in a non-intrusive manner at scale, how to leverage technology to spark behaviour change at scale, frugal toilet technology designs for difficult terrains, ways to leverage technology to promote maintenance of school toilets, technological solutions for safe disposal of menstrual waste and technologies for early/instant decomposition of faecal matter. The Swachhathon has received over 3000 entries from across the country, and has contributed many innovative ideas which will help further the goals of the SBM-G.

Inspired by the Hon'ble Prime Minister's *Sankalp Se Siddhi* initiative, the SBM-G has launched the *Swachh Sankalp se Swachh Siddhi* Film, Essay and Painting Competition across India as another major step in making Swachhta a *janaandolan*. Various groups like school children, armed forces, youth organizations and the public at large are being engaged to participate in huge numbers and pen down through an essay or video record through a film, their experiences with and plans for Swachhta. We expect to get over 1 crore essays and over 50,000 films on Swachh Bharat, thereby integrating Swachhta into the consciousness of millions of citizens and generating even more public enthusiasm towards the Swachh Bharat Mission.

Probably the most ambitious of these initiatives was announced by the Hon'ble Prime Minister during his Mann Ki Baat address on August 27, where he made an appeal to the nation to get involved with a time-bound, nation-wide mass mobilization campaign to construct twin-pit toilets, clean-up public spots and spread awareness about the SBM through *shramdaan* between September 15 and October 2, 2017. He named this initiative *Swachhta Hi Seva*. The MDWS is engaging government leaders, PRI representatives, community organizations, youth groups, armed forces, corporates and citizens to get involved with this initiative. The Hon'ble President of India initiated the fortnight on 15<sup>th</sup> September at an event in Uttar Pradesh, with Swachh Bharat National Awards and Swachh Sankalp Se Swachh Siddhi Awards being presented on October 2, 2017.

With all of these initiatives picking up steam, the SBM has become an even stronger force through the country and is inspiring people to play their part in this transformational journey. It has captured the imagination of the country and is being owned by one and all. Lying dormant for seventy years after independence, Gandhiji's dream of a clean India is finally becoming a reality. It took courage and conviction for the Prime Minister to publically commit to make India open defecation free in a span of five years, a goal which many thought was impossible to achieve. There is still a fair way to go but, given the progress made so far, the acceleration expected over the coming 12-15 months and the active engagement of millions of people, the goal is definitely achievable. □

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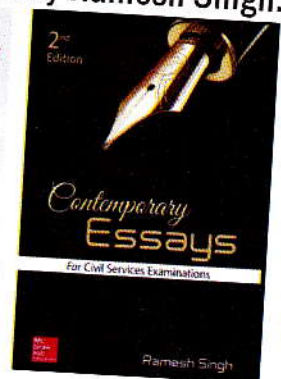
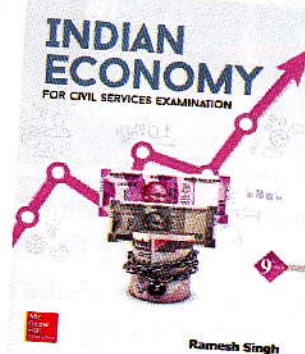
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