

Article **FAMILY**-21

TOWARDS CLEAN AND SWACHH BHARAT

Your simple contributions.

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Everyone dreams and everyone wishes to have only sweet dreams, but nobody has control over the dreams. Yet everyone wishes and hopes to have only sweet dreams. Not only that everyone wishes for the sweet dreams to be converted to reality. Well, nothing wrong in it, but the sad part is that it just does not happen and is virtually impossible.

one such dream that every adult Indian would have dreamt some time or the other is a clean house, clean environment, clean surroundings, in fact cleanliness around. Alas, this dream too, like all other good dreams, gets shattered the moment one wakes up from sleep, opens the eyes and looks around. One may find many things one wishes to look at but the cleanliness is always missing from the scene. All we do at that moment is just shrug our shoulders and think. 'Oh! It is not possible to have cleanliness in our country.'

"Virtually nothing is impossible in this world if you just put your mind to it and maintain a positive attitude", said Lou Holtx, the famous American football player, coach, author and motivational speaker. How true! And it could turn out to be true in our context of cleanliness as well provided we just 'put our mind' to the problem. But the problem has been that we have not done so till date. All we have done is to put the blame on the civic authorities. We expect them to come and clean the dirt and muck that we create.

"I don't mind cleaning my own shit, but I do mind cleaning others" is what one of my professors had said way back in the late 1970s at the Indian Institute of Science, Banglore. This was his instant reaction as he entered the class and looked at the black board that was full of writing by the professor. This simple sentence, though not considered decent by many of my classmates, more so the way in which it was said, nonetheless left a permanent positive impression on me.

Come to think of it, the dirt and the fifth all around us that makes our living difficult, are all due to us. We throw our garbage and waste for others to clean. It is as simple as that. But this simple act of ours has assumed monstrous proportions. The dirty state of even the Holy Ganges speaks volumes on this issue. Not only do we have unprecedented rise in diseases every year, it is affecting our tourism as well. Both these factors affect our economy to a large extent. A time has come to take a national call on this so-called national shame. The clarion call by Prime Minister Narendra Modi is the first gaint step in the right direction. I wonder why no one else during the past decades gave it the importance it deserves.

A clean and *swachh* Bharat' is badly needed. It can be achieved only by our collective efforts. By collective efforts, by no means do I mean only getting together a group of people and doing some sort of *shramdan* once in a while. Though such a type of collective *shramdan* has brought fruits, like cleaning up of the 16 km long Kali Bein rivulet in Punjab by Baba Singh Seechwat, yet such success stories are like drops in the ocean. By collective effort I mean each individual contributing a bit which could lead to a massive improvement in the unhygienic conditions that prevail throughout the country. For that we have to handle our garbage effectively.

Garbage is something that is no longer useful or wanted and has to be thrown out. In our day-to-day life we generate many things that fall in the category of garbage. Presently we just throw them out and the civic authorities are just not in a position to handle such huge volumes, since disposal of all garbage is a problem





of a gigantic proportion and is definitely not possible in our country, at the moment. However, there is a really simpler way out provided each of us contributes towards that. The problem can really be sorted out by adopting the methodology of the 'Three Rs namely Recycle, Reuse and Reduce as advocated by the environmentalists across the world.

Recycle

Presently it is possible only on a large scale and is carried out, though not effectively, by the civic and municipal authorities. However, recycling of waste through composting by institutions, industries and housing societies is picking up. We individuals, living in flats obviously can't resort to this method, yet we can contribute a lot towards this. Let us remember the basic fact that while most of the waste constituting garbage can be recycled (biodegradable) by means of composting, it is not possbile to recycle all the waste.

Therefore, separate non-biodegradable material like glass bottles and plastic from biodegradable like food-waste, vegetables and fruit skins. Various other items that one can segregate and store separately in a bigger bag for a fortnightly or monthly disposal for recycling elsewhere include:

- Polythene bags (after rinsing and cleaning) of milk and curd
- Silver-foiled wrappers of medicinal tablets

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- Small bits of papers like receipts, bills, used paper
- Cardboard boxes (after flattening) of toothpaste, soaps, sweets, bakery products, etc.

Reuse

Many of daily-use items that we simply throw can be reused. Gift wrapping paper is one such item. One-sided printed paper can be used for rough work. Polythene and other shopping bags of all types can be re-used many times, and so can disposable paper plates. Reusing ball-pen/jotter pens by replacing refills is another area. In fact, reuse of any item in any form reduces that much of garbage.

Reduce

'A unit saved is a unit generated,' was the message of Punjab State Electricity Board a few decades back. How apt. Reduction in consumption of any commodity means two things: less of it has to be produced and it can be used by other needy people. The feeling that 'I can afford it, why should I conserve? Needs to be discarded and dumped out of the mind. Reduction in consumption amounting to savings can be exercised in many ways, the few common and easy ones being:

- Electricity by switching off fans, lights and computers when not needed
- Water by using mugs while shaving/brushing instead of keeping the tap running; having bucket baths instead of showers, using waste water from the filter for flushing or watering plants
- Precious fuel through sharing of vehicles, proper maintenance, better driving habits (avoiding excessive braking and accelerating, switching off at red light and walking
- Use of clutch-pencils (only lead in outer casing) instead of conventional pencils
- Timely repairs, particularly to dripping water taps

Mind-boggling

To get an idea about the extensive wastages that an apparently innocuous leaking tap can cause, consider a case where a tap drips just once in every two seconds. Can you guess how much water is wasted in a week? Before you read the answer, it would be worthwhile doing the following simple arithmetic:

- The tap will shed 302,400 drops in a week (60 seconds in a minute, 60 minutes per hour, 24 hours in a day and 7 days in a week means 604,800 seconds in a week, and hence half the number of drops.)
- 20 drops fill up a table spoon.

90 table spoons constitute a pint and there are 8 pints in a gallon and a gallon has 4.54 litres?. Thus, a litre will have 3,172 drops.

Well, the water wasted would be more than 95 litres? Which means seven medium-sized buckets, which would suffice for you to have a daily bath for a week. This is about the total amount of water that is available to a family of six in Rajasthan for the whole week during summer months.

Public litter is a problem of epic proportions in our country, though everyone wants a clean street. Any street will be clean if people don't litter, or someone cleans it up thereafter. It is as simple as that. Everyone knows that it is not rocket science. That's how homes and officers are kept clean. Yet our streets and roads remain dirty in the absence of dustbin but even when there are dustbins, we are just not used to use them. We find it convenient to throw whatever useless item we have in our hand here, there and everywhere. We Indians do not do so when we are abroad. It could perhaps be due to two reasons: fear of stiff behaviour by the educated people.

Ugly Indian programme

'Clean and swachh bharat' is the need of the hour. Another equally important need of the hour is admission of the fact that many of our problems are because a majority of us are used to accepting and living in filthy conditions, thus we can be labelled as Ugly Indians. It would please the heart of every Indian to know that, led by the youth of the country, the 'Ugly Indians movement' is catching up fast across the length and breadth of the country. The stated philosophy of this group is simple. *Kaam chalu, mooh bandh* (stop talking, start doing).

Starting 1 October 2014 teams of young and not-so-young people have spanned across the streets, bazaars and chowks in various cities and metropolis of the country, not only with brooms to clean the roads but also with lime and paint to do decent-looking graffiti on the earlier *paan*-stained and otherwise dirty walls and boundary walls.

In the present format the programme appears to be workable since it is low cost (ideally free), puts minimum demands on the time and resources of individuals and easy to implement and replicate. Yes, it requires coming up with smart ideas to change people's rooted cultural behaviour and attitudes. And making sure those ideas work.

The accomplishment of the mission may be a long drawn-out affair and difficult but definitely possible. Therefore, let us all join the programme and start moving by first changing our mindset and thinking and then get going through easy and simple steps. Remember what Gandhiji said: It does not require money to be neat, clean and dignified. We

"Everyone tells me that I have changed, but d truth is that I've just stopped living my life in there way"..

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