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Water, Waste, and Wellness: The Role of Sanitation in India's Growth

Priyanka Sharma, Rahul Sharma and R. K. Sharma
RIMT University, Mandi Chandigarh
Jammu University Jammu
College of Temperate Sericulture, SKUAST-K, Mirgund

ABSTRACT
As a developing country, India confronts serious issues with sanitation and hygiene that have a big influence on people's everyday lives, especially for women and tourists. Inadequate waste disposal systems, poorly kept public restrooms, and a lack of understanding all contribute to unhygienic circumstances, which raise serious public health issues. Sanitation infrastructure development is still lacking despite economic progress, and the issue is made worse by differences between rural and urban areas. This essay emphasizes how urgently clean public bathrooms, better sanitation facilities, and organized waste management procedures are needed. It highlights the need to expand such programs to rural regions while examining how organizations like Sulabh International have advanced urban cleanliness. The improvement of environmental circumstances through afforestation, sustainable water management, and rainwater collection is also covered. In support of a methodical approach to urban planning in India, the paper also makes parallels with effective models in other nations, such as South Africa's water conservation initiatives and city administration frameworks. To change India's sanitation and hygiene situation, calls for government action, legislative changes, and citizen engagement are essential. India can achieve sustainable growth and a cleaner, healthier environment by implementing international best practices, maintaining strict law enforcement, and raising public awareness.
Key words: Sanitation, Hygiene, Public Toilets, Waste Management, Water Conservation and Rainwater Harvesting

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INTRODUCTION

India is a developing country where any women as to the twice to travel long distance by road or by train, because poor sanitation facilities. In India due to lack of amenities for such long years, attitude of the people too could not develop enough to have respect towards the immediate environment. Lack of awareness is a problem here. It is also true Indian infrastructure support does not match with any such awareness even if it is there. In India, it is the water that creates all the mess in the toilet, which are flooded with water mixed with human excreta on which one has to step if it is an emergency and the toilet pans may be flooded. That is the public toilet in India. That is huge wastage of water. Instead of cleaning it is creating greater mesh in our toilet. Many of the tourist's reportedly take medicines to hold this natural call when they decide to travel by road in our country.

Money-wise, are we not a rich nation? Now, MPs have been given a 200% hike in salary, yet they still complain that it is not enough. India, as it stands now with regard to hygiene and sanitation, is at a critical point. It is high time that the Government of India pays attention to its sanitation issues. Sulabh International, a civil society organization known for its revolutionary sanitation mission in the country, is unfortunately confined to urban cities only. Meanwhile, a major portion of this country lacks proper sanitation facilities or has poor facilities throughout the rural areas.

Can we not build good food stalls with palatable food items for foreign tourists, with special emphasis on clean and well-maintained toilets? Can we create suitable toilets, like those in airports, on highways? Can we provide proper drinking water at no extra cost for budget-conscious travellers? Can we arrange for quality and hygiene checks of cooking areas and the food items sold at these outlets? Can we grow green belts along the roads to provide fresh air while traveling? Can we raise awareness about the advantages of hygiene and cleanliness and sustain it by providing the necessary infrastructure support?

"This, in effect, will help raise greater awareness among people, encouraging positive behavioral changes that will prevent littering, such as discarding nutshells and orange peels in public places, including buses and trains. Can we stop people from spitting and using public spaces as urinals? Can we expect effective

policing to enforce stringent laws to curb this menace? Can we make our citizens more responsible and civilized in these respects?"

"In the name of development, we have ruined our green cover. It is a fact that for a nation to breathe, at least 33% of its area should be covered by forests, but India has only around 21% forest cover. In this respect, India is lagging behind. China, for example, increased its forest coverage from 12% to 18% in the last 20 years. Compared to other countries, our cities are run by MPs and MLAs who show little interest in urban development. As a result, people often have no idea whom to contact when they need improvements in basic infrastructure and amenities.

Today, 70% of India's irrigation water and 80% of its domestic water supply come from groundwater. There are approximately 20 million individual wells in India, and groundwater is increasingly being pumped from deeper and deeper levels. Groundwater is drawn from aquifers whose rate of recharge is much lower than the rate of withdrawal. What differentiates India from European countries is that India receives 75% of its rainfall during the four months of the summer monsoon season.

In ancient times, Indians built elaborate and locally adapted water-harvesting structures that collected and stored monsoon precipitation. Today, those water-harvesting structures have disappeared, and due to poor storage and water management, only 18% of monsoon precipitation can be utilized. Rainwater harvesting has been a way of life for Indians since time immemorial. Indian civilization would not have thrived for 5,000 years without its expertise in water harvesting. Collecting rainwater recharges the water table, allowing easier access to water resources throughout the year.

In the 1970s, the World Bank provided huge loans to support groundwater extraction for crops like sugarcane and rice, while discouraging drought-resistant varieties during India's Green Revolution. With no effort to store the millions of Liters of water that bless the country during the monsoon, India, for the first time in its 5,000 years of civilization, is becoming increasingly dependent on its fast-depleting groundwater reserves.

In South Africa, the water crisis has spurred water conservation efforts, and community participation and consensus have promoted exemplary rainwater harvesting practices, known as 'green water.' Household use of groundwater, or 'blue water,' has been largely replaced by green water. Middle-income group members have volunteered to forgo the opportunity cost, establishing a near-perfect sustainable model for water conservation."

In many other countries including south Africa cities are run by city managers who take care of a city's needs like a company and the people know who the city' guardian is? Can this system can change to uncover the hidden beauty of this nation, which as it stands no wise full of pot holes and craters on the roads, dirty water bodies, scattering public transport system, filthy roads, poor sanitation for the poor, lack of proper garbage, disposal system, notoriously occupied payments, filthy beaches? In our country the system needs to learn a lot of basic lesions from the west on hygiene and sanitation while moving towards the greatest journey of development.

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