

## Reworking Sanitation Management in Backdrop of Covid-19

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It took a virus to make 130 crore Indians understand the necessity of sanitation. The father of the nation, Mahatma Gandhi once said, “Cleanliness is next to Godliness” and it feels strange that the country where majority of people are religious, then how come people lacked behind in maintaining sanitation and cleanliness. Six years have passed since launch of Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, still a question remains how much has been achieved. The Government and administration tried their best in incorporating sanitation among the countrymen. Toilets are constructed, however how many are using them? Similarly, in urban areas our Swachta remains limited to social media posts and photos. Even today one doesn't fear from littering the roads, spitting on walls or even urinating on them. I feel ashamed on action of such people who are citizens of a country that has one of the seven wonders of world and receives millions of tourists every year. What impression are we leaving about ourselves in their minds? Similarly, when it comes to our eating habits, how many of us do really wash their hands before having food? Shockingly there are also people who don't wash hands after eating, they just dust their hands in air and that's

it. When people are behaving like this, then expecting them to use hanky while coughing, using sanitiser or washing hands after that is meaningless. People would have continued their lives like this only if there had not been this virus.

Now just think that this single minute sized virus who suddenly appeared at our doorstep, made people practising sanitisation like they are mugging up notes before exam; imagine there are multiple viruses like this which might be even deadlier. We are lucky that the nCoV 2019 has low mortality rate. Even though it has been spreading fast, still the death rates are low. Looking over the rates, the way it spread worldwide, India is lucky in that matter that things here not as worse as US or Italy. But in the end a single life lost is also grave. And it would have been better if we had been more alert and prepared for tackling this in first place.

Now even question arises that sanitation is a privilege. In a country like India, where in some places people stand in long queue to collect a bucket of water, handwash and sanitizers are out of their reach. So, if you are thinking that sanitation is a privilege and you are privileged then

you need to be more responsible. Because in majority cases just like this nCoV, the virus in the country was initially reported among the people who flew from outside and then it went for community transition. Therefore, it becomes our primary responsibility in ensuring that we remain healthy and if infected we should not be mode for transmission for others. Unless educated people like us start contemplating and acting, things would continue to be worse for everyone.

Combating a virus needs complete sanitation in place. The disease outbreak demonstrates why water and sanitation — being an effective barrier against the virus — must be available, accessible and affordable to all. A lack of these can be a significant vector / pathway in the transmission of the virus, if proper hygiene is not followed. However, sanitation without clean running water is next to impossible. Even though currently nothing much can be done regarding this with the whole country under lockdown but in future once things are normal, it is necessary to rework water and sanitation management systems instead of focusing solely on infrastructure solutions for water and sanitation challenges.

Similarly, considering last year's Nipah virus outbreak in Kerala, it should also be noted that our country also can be an outbreak place.

We can't prevent completely something like this big however we can restrict its spread and effect given we act beforehand.

One more step in this direction can be having some sort of permanent mechanism at International airports that stores the basic health data of incoming passengers at time of their arrival in the country, to avoid having a panic situation in such a scenario and reducing the difficulties in tracking the person from the affected place.

Rest we come back to square one, personal hygiene and sanitation. Keeping ourselves clean and at the same time keeping our surrounding clean. And most importantly, we should utilise our time now by strategizing our action and plans for future. Because nobody wants to sit at home when the next pandemic arrives. It thus, becomes imperative to become proactive now to stop the next outbreak.

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