



MAKING SWACHH BHARAT SELF-SUSTAINING

By K P Shashidharan

While walking along the Queen's Necklace in the financial capital of the country, Mumbai, on New Year's Eve, where the legendary road comes binding from Nariman Point and curves to climb on Malabar Hill, I see at the corner of Girgaom Chowpatty a two-year child celebrating the New Year sitting naked all alone before an awesome bonfire lit by him, putting waste

papers in glee! A little distance away from him, at the tiny corner of the sea coast, life throbs in full swing. A mini India representing people migrated from different parts of the country, irrespective of religion, caste, creed, region, language, and ethnicity, sit before a black and white small TV, watches the popular film *PK*, amazing how the naked alien in the film lands in Rajasthan.

Then in the midst of maddening traffic discounting the cacophony of honking from the jammed automobiles, a malnourished tiny woman in tattered attire crosses the road carrying a vessel of potable water, fetched from the other side of the beach road, while talking into the mobile, delicately balancing an infant on her waist and the vessel. The people living on

the seabed, cooking, eating, enjoying and sleeping at every night have many similarities with the naked alien in *PK*. These characters are from real life - the urban poor enacting the daily drama of living in the cities of India in their continuous struggle for a better livelihood. Like the alien in the film, these unfortunate urban poor living on the streets, beneath the flyovers and living on the seacoast, have no proper clothes and no hope of returning to the home in the village they had abandoned due to abject poverty. The common denominator joining them together as a community is the collective struggle and the ray of hope of a distant tomorrow when some of the most difficult riddles of existence - finding food, shelter, clothing, job, medicine for survival—would be addressed.



H BHARAT ABHIYAN

HELLISH EXPERIENCE IN CP

During this walk, I could not only observe two of the best run street toilets of India Inc. but also experienced the joy of using a modern three-star, if not a five-star like clean, toilet facility at a dead cheap rate of Rs 1 at Marine Drive. These toilets are being operated by young men and women engaged continuously sweeping, wiping, cleaning and safeguarding the facility for a living. When I give a Rs 10 note the guy refuses to take it and returns Rs 9. But in Connaught Place, the heart of the National Capital, if any time anyone wants to answer the call of nature it is a hellish experience.

Swachh Bharat is a must. To have *Swachh Bharat*, we need to have an adequate number of waste bins, properly maintained toilets in public places and crowded streets, and a robustly run waste management system in cities, towns and villages. It is important to inculcate the habit of cleanliness, proper civic etiquette and behaviour to maintain civic amenities. It is the task of municipalities, corporations and urban local bodies to find ways and means to train and gainfully engage the floating population in cities, loitering in search of jobs. Many of these illiterate migrants can be effectively used to manage urban civic amenities as self-employed toilet cleaners, guardians and managers, collecting usage fees for the amenities from the public.

Urban waste management, proper toilet maintenance and cleaning up streets can be integrated if adequate attention is paid to identification, segregation, reduction, re-using and



recycling the principles of waste management systematically as is done in modern cities like London. In Indian cities household wastes are not segregated into recyclable and reusable like papers, cartons, plastic, e-wastes, toxic chemicals or hazardous wastes; instead everything is dumped without any identification or segregation at the household level. People Public Private Partnership (PPPP), models of urban waste management supported by the Government and corporates under Corporate Social Responsibility funding, education and training by civic communities, social activists and NGOs can go a long way to make such experiments a great success. The general public must be made aware how to use civic amenities and keep streets, public places and cities clean. Those who live on pavements are to be engaged in the *Swachh Bharat* project, making them learn and adhere to proper urban waste management

techniques. Those who engage in sweeping roads, maintaining toilets and civic amenities and ensuring effective waste management must get adequate remuneration for a living.

CLEAN TOILETS

To make India having a clean face, it is essential to construct many clean toilets at public places in cities, towns and rural areas and tourist and pilgrimage centres. Many eateries and *dhabas* offer delicacies in an unhygienic environment where cooks or employees have no basic toilet facilities. It is important for the licensing authorities to ensure provisioning of minimum civic amenities before permitting eateries to make and sell food stuff. People Public Private Partnership (PPPP) should be made a viable model for creating a *Swachh Bharat* by leasing out places and facilities for keeping them clean and hygienic. Parking places in cities can be leased out to unemployed entrepreneurs. ■

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The writer is a visiting Professor of NIFM, LBSNAA, IIMs, IMT and other premier institutions and a former DG in the CAG office. He has authored two volumes of poetry, Whispering Mind, and Painting Symphony and a business book, BIG, Business India Guru. The views expressed are personal.