



CLEANLINESS AWARENESS AND PERFORMANCE OF NGOPA, MIZORAM: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY

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Abstract: The biggest sanitation initiative the Indian government has ever launched, the "Swachh Bharat Abhiyan" (SBA) was introduced on October 2, 2014, by the current prime minister of the country. The campaign's objective is to increase sanitation, hygiene, and cleanliness nationwide, with an emphasis on rural and urban slums. Among the main objectives of the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan are the elimination of open defecation, improved solid waste management, promotion of safe and sustainable sanitation practices, and increased public awareness of the importance of hygiene and cleanliness. Ngopa town was adjudged as the 'best performer' under the Urban Towns category in the Mizoram Cleanliness Competition-2022 conducted by the Urban Development and Poverty Alleviation Department, Government of Mizoram. This exploratory study examines cleanliness awareness and performance in Ngopa, Mizoram. Utilizing a mixed-method approach, the research aims to evaluate the impact of local cleanliness initiatives, community participation, and government policies on the overall sanitation standards. Data was collected through surveys, interviews, and field observations, highlighting the community's engagement and challenges faced in maintaining hygiene. The findings reveal a moderate level of awareness and participation among residents, emphasizing the need for enhanced educational campaigns and infrastructural support to achieve sustainable cleanliness and hygiene in the region.

Key Words: Cleanliness, Government, Community, Awareness, Participation

I. Introduction

Seventy per cent of the 1,210 million people living in India's multicultural nation reside in 641,867 villages. It offers a distinct example of a development conundrum. The sheer number of the population, the geographic and cultural variety, and the multitude of languages and dialects present challenges to any development plan. Low literacy, low awareness, and inadequate communication infrastructure characterize the majority of rural, tribal, and isolated communities, making it challenging to access and complete any development initiative in a single session. The implementation of the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan (SBA) is not without its challenges. Since population growth, health, and hygiene are all interrelated and cannot be addressed separately, it is important to view SBA issues in their entirety. It needs to be viewed in the broad context of sanitation and health, which has drawn attention from both domestic and foreign sources. When creating the Millennium Development Goals, the integrated health challenges were appropriately acknowledged (MDGs). The improvement of public health is the primary focus of three of the eight MDGs, namely Goals 4, 5, and 6. (Sinha, Sarwataya, p.19).

Genesis of the Clean India Campaign

Mahatma Gandhi began a drive to change people's perceptions about cleaning their toilets, and this movement to maintain clean restrooms and surrounds is reminiscent of him. He disseminated the word even though it meant hurting his wife, who thought it was too humiliating a chore for her to do (Iyengar, 2014, p. 15). Since then, efforts to promote cleanliness have gained traction under various names: the Total Sanitation Campaign (TSC) in 1999; the Central Rural Sanitation Programme introduced in 1986; the Formal Sanitation Programme

introduced in 1954 as part of the Government of India's First Five-year Plan; and the Nirmal Bharat Abhiyan (NBA) launched in 2012 to fulfil the program's goal of finishing by 2022.

Though, as the country has recently witnessed, it did not receive the appropriate level of attention, the concern for a clean, hygienic India has existed for a fair amount of time. The severity of the issue was highlighted by the 2011 Census of India, which found that 69% of rural Indian households lacked a proper toilet. Although the Total Sanitation Campaign claimed to have built 8.71 crore toilets in the last ten years, it is reported that only 5.16 crore homes in the nation had access to toilets. Another account suggests that health costs lost productivity, and decreased tourism earnings cost India 64% of its GDP. (Sandeep, K., et al., 2016, p. 44)

In April 1999, the Government of India restructured the Comprehensive Rural Sanitation Programme, relaunching it as the Total Sanitation Campaign (TSC). Later, they introduced the Nirmal Gram Puraskar incentive scheme to reward agencies that achieve total sanitation coverage, maintain a clean environment, and ensure open defecation-free village panchayats, blocks, and districts. In 2012, the scheme was transformed into the Nirmal Bharat Abhiyan. By October 2014, it gained national significance and was rebranded as the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan (SBA), becoming a national mission. The SBA operates with the guiding principles of being 'beyond politics' and 'inspired by patriotism.'

The government has been increasingly concerned about rural sanitation and the drinking water supply (DWS) for many years. The budget includes Rs 77,390 crore for the Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation (DoDWS), a minor increase of 0.4% from 2023–2024. Of this, Rs 69,926 crore goes towards the Jal Jeevan Mission, which seeks to supply all rural Indian homes with sufficient and clean drinking water by 2024. The Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation (DoDWS) has allotted Rs 7,192 crore for the Swachh Bharat Mission (Gramin), which was introduced in 2014. It also received the same funding in 2023–2024. Open Defecation Free (ODF) status has been attained for rural regions under this mission, and it is currently being implemented to guarantee the ODF status's durability and cover every village with solid and liquid waste management procedures ('The Economic Times', 2024).

The biggest sanitation initiative the Indian government has ever launched, the "Swachh Bharat Abhiyan" (SBA) was introduced on October 2, 2014, by the current prime minister of the country (Kaul 2014, p.1). By building individual, cluster and communal toilets and using Gramme Panchayats to manage solid and liquid waste, SBA hopes to achieve Open Defecation Free (ODF) status for India. All settlements must have water pipelines installed so that residents can connect to the tap whenever they want.⁴ 'Swachh Bharat' is the desired state to be attained by 2019. (SBA Guidelines 2014). The campaign's objective is to increase sanitation, hygiene, and cleanliness nationwide, with an emphasis on rural and urban slums. Among the main objectives of the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan are the elimination of open defecation, improved solid waste management, promotion of safe and sustainable sanitation practices, and increased public awareness of the importance of hygiene and cleanliness.

Therefore, residents are essential to the Swachh Bharat Mission's success in both attaining its goals and maintaining its results. Since the neighbourhood is made up of a collection of centres focused on the needs of its residents, they must help to keep both the neighbourhood and their areas clean. When it comes to their neighbourhoods, residents should feel as though they own them, and they should also take responsibility for keeping them clean, just as they do for their own homes (Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, 2018).

II. Literature Review

Swachh Bharat: Modi's Clean India Mission (2019), L.C. De, includes a broad overview of the actions related to Clean India (Swachh Bharat), including an introduction, open defecation, the reasons for sanitation and sanitation coverage, The Swachh Bharat Mission's history, SWOT analysis, objectives, goals, and Clean India as a route to Green India offer an overview of Modi's Clean India Mission, stressing its successes, drawbacks, and possible effects on the environment, public health, and society.

Swachh Bharat (A Clean India) edited by Mirudula Sinha and Dr. R.K. Sinha (2016) brings together articles about the Clean India campaign's implementation and possible obstacles through the Swachh Bharat Mission. It discussed the significance of the social environment, religions, infrastructure proficiency, awareness of cleanliness, and the effects of climate and location on rural sanitation.

The Swachh Bharat Revolution: The Pillars of India's Behavioural Transformation edited by Parameswaran Iyer gives information on how the Swachh Bharat Mission's widespread outreach campaign inspired over 60 crore people to alter their habits, leading to the declaration of October 2, 2019, as an Open Defecation Free India. With a broad view of the programme, it demonstrated how India accomplished the seemingly impossible and commemorated a significant national milestone.

Waste of a Nation's Growth: Garbage and India's Growth (2018) According to Assa Doron and Robin Jeffrey, the practices of recycling and collecting waste are also severely damaging people's livelihoods in India. Because they deal with sewage, dangerous chemicals, and decaying rubbish, those who work with waste are

the wounded and stigmatised people at the bottom of the pyramid. Innovative technologies combined with more efficient local administration may yield limited benefits because a big portion of India's population lives in a marginalised society. But the intersections of tradition and innovation, practice and policy, science and spirituality, will yield waste management solutions.

Where India Goes: Abandoned Toilets, Stunted Development, and the Costs of Caste (2017) by Diane Coffey and Dean Spears shows that rather than being a result of poverty, open defecation in India is a direct result of the caste system, untouchability, and ritual purity. Characters in Coffey and Spears' filthy stories range from rural mothers and their infants to prominent government politicians, international development experts, and implementers of local government. The book calls for a major change in policy approaches in addition to the outright abolition of caste and the prejudices associated with it to bring about a critical and long overdue reform.

III. Significance of the Study

Ngopa town was adjudged as the 'best performer' under the Urban Towns category in the Mizoram Cleanliness Competition-2022 conducted by the Urban Development and Poverty Alleviation Department, Government of Mizoram. Researchers can discover the specific habits, methods, and interventions that have led to Ngopa's success by researching its high degree of cleanliness. This expertise may be disseminated to other cities and villages in Mizoram and beyond, acting as a great model for establishing successful cleanliness projects. The study also intends to give evidence-based insights and recommendations that might help shape policies and decision-making processes related to cleanliness and trash management at various levels, including local, regional, and state governments. This can aid in developing targeted and successful plans to promote cleanliness in other towns and cities throughout Mizoram.

IV. Objectives and Methodology

This articles specifically conduct a comprehensive survey to understand the current state of cleanliness in Ngopa town, Mizoram. This includes evaluating the cleanliness of public spaces, such as streets, parks, and markets, as well as private spaces, such as households and schools. Thus, it conducts qualitative research, such as interviews and focus groups, to explore the perceptions, attitudes, and knowledge of the community members regarding cleanliness to identify the underlying factors that shape their behaviour towards cleanliness practices. It also evaluates the impact and effectiveness of the cleanliness awareness campaigns organized by the Central/State Government and local NGOs and interventions implemented in Ngopa. This involves monitoring changes in cleanliness behaviours, waste management practices, and overall community engagement towards maintaining a clean environment.

The research is based on both primary and secondary sources of information. First, an intensive assessment of the literature was conducted to become acquainted with the many components of the Swachh Bharat mission philosophy and management, to define the research topic, to develop an acceptable methodology, and to develop a conceptual framework for the study. In addition to observation, the study employed planned schedules and direct interviews to elicit primary information from local authorities, heads of NGOs, State Government officials, and local citizens.

V. Findings and Discussions

The survey of present cleanliness conditions, performance, and the activities of Ngopa town was conducted using 6 parameters through semi-structured interviews, questionnaires, and visual observations. The following were the major findings and discussions from each of the parameters:

Segregated Door to Door Waste Collection

Segregated door-to-door waste collection refers to a waste management system in which waste is collected directly from individual households or businesses at their doorstep, and the waste is segregated into different categories or types before collection (Laurieri, Lucchese, Marino, Digiesi, 2020). Door-to-door collection of segregated waste is mandatory as per Solid Waste Management Rules, 2016. Collection of segregated waste (wet waste, dry recyclables, and domestic hazardous waste), sanitary, horticulture, construction & demolition wastes from residential, commercial, and institutional areas is to be planned by ULBs. Frequency of waste collection is dependent on the type and quantum of waste generated. While undertaking the research through interviews, it was observed that the residents or businesses in the Ngopa Village Council area were responsible for separating their waste into different categories based on the specific waste management guidelines provided by the Village Council. Common categories for segregation include recyclables (such as paper, plastic, glass, and metal), organic waste (such as food scraps and yard waste), and non-recyclable/non-biodegradable waste (such as certain plastics or hazardous materials).

A waste collection team, employed by the Village Council visits each household or business to collect the segregated waste. This was done on a scheduled basis, such as two times a week based on a pre-determined route. After collection, the segregated waste is transported to appropriate waste management facilities.

Meanwhile, it was also observed that sufficient public dustbin was placed in all the business and public areas. Though the residents are not aware of the waste disposal system after segregated waste was collected from their homes, the Village Council members have claimed that the different categories of waste remain separate after it was collected and they have used separate compartments in their collection vehicles or different collection bags to maintain the segregation during transportation.

Cleanliness of Roads

The assessment of the cleanliness of roads in the Ngopa Village Council area was conducted through visual inspection surveys on three indicators such as the presence of public dustbin and their maintenance, the presence of litter and solid waste on the road surface, sidewalks, and roadside areas, and evaluate the extent of vegetation growth along the roadside, including grass, weeds, bushes, or tree branches obstructing the road or sidewalks. A sufficient number of public dustbins were placed in the roadsides and a separate dustbin for organic waste and non-biodegradable waste was found in many public places. Only a small amount of accumulation of debris, such as leaves, branches, dirt, and dust, on the road surface and curbsides were found during the visual survey and no litter were found on the road surface or roadside areas.

The clean roads of the Ngopa town area contribute to the overall aesthetics and visual appeal of the community. The study also found that well-maintained and litter-free roads create a positive impression, enhance the attractiveness of the surroundings, and promote a sense of pride among residents and visitors. A regular cleaning and proper waste management on roads help prevent the accumulation of waste and reduce health risks associated with unhygienic conditions in Ngopa areas. Furthermore, clean roads also have a positive impact on the environment by reducing the amount of waste that ends up in landfills or pollutes natural habitats.

Cleanliness of Public Toilets

The assessment of the cleanliness of public toilets in the Ngopa town area was also conducted through visual inspection surveys to evaluate the overall cleanliness of the toilet facilities, including the toilet bowls, urinals, sinks, floors, walls, mirrors, and other surfaces, assess the water supply and drainage systems in the toilets, and the accessibilities of the public toilets. The study observed that all the public toilet has separate men and women toilets, and these toilet facilities were well-maintained and free of unpleasant odours. However, waste bins for paper towels, sanitary products, and other waste were not available. An adequate supply of clean water for flushing, handwashing, and cleaning purposes was provided on all the toilets and no signs of leaks, blockages, or malfunctioning fixtures were present during the time of survey. The study also observed that all the public toilets were accessible from morning to night (6 a.m. to 10 p.m.).

The study found that clean public toilets in the Ngopa town area contribute to user comfort and satisfaction and it also contributed to the overall image and reputation of the residents in Ngopa town areas. It has promoted good hygiene practices and help prevent the spread of diseases in Ngopa areas as a proper cleaning and maintenance of toilets reduce the risk of contamination and transmission of pathogens, thereby ensuring a safe and healthy environment for users.

Cleanliness of Market Areas

Marketplaces and locations around street vending facilities are some of the most garbage-vulnerable points in cities, towns and neighbourhoods (Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, 2018, p17). The research assessment on cleanliness of market areas were conducted using visual inspections and interviews to the shopkeepers and residents of Ngopa town. Visual assessment of the presence of litter, debris, and waste in the market areas was made and the market areas were fairly clean. Daily market area sweepers were hired by the local authorities, and they are responsible for collecting and removing litter and waste from the market areas. Regularly sweeping the market and open spaces in the town area minimizes the risk of hygiene-related issues, such as the spread of diseases, foul odours, and pest infestations.

In the case of Ngopa market areas, the study found that street vendors and hawkers have kept suitable containers for storage of waste generated during her/his activity such as food waste, disposable plates, cups, cans, wrappers, coconut shells, leftover food, vegetables, fruits, etc., and have deposited such waste at waste storage depot or container or vehicle as notified by the local body. This clean market activities promotes better health and hygiene for both customers and vendors and have a positive impact on the environment. Proper waste management and disposal systems help reduce pollution and prevent littering for a sustainable and eco-friendly environment.

Cleanliness of Residential Areas

One of the primary goals of the Swatchh Bharat Mission was to create litter-free living areas and their environs. To analyses the cleanliness activities in the residential parts of Ngopa town, two criteria were proposed: the availability of dustbins in the residential areas and frequent cleaning activities such as sweeping and waste collection. Thus, the study observed that the level of cleanliness activities was fairly adequate given

that a separate dustbin of organic waste and non-biodegradable waste was found in most of the households, and it was also observed that residents performed daily sweeping and cleaning of residential areas. This has aided in the preservation of a clean and sanitary living environment in Ngopa town. The study also found that a clean and well-maintained living space in Ngopa creates a welcoming and pleasant ambience for residents and visitors alike. It also boosts pride in one's home and contribute to an overall sense of satisfaction and contentment.

Cleanliness of Drains

Maintaining clean drains is essential for efficient drainage, as well as preventing blockages, flooding, and related health hazards. In every Indian rural village, a house's drain must be used to dispose of water from adjacent bathroom and kitchen sinks. To remove dirty water from household kitchens and bathrooms, a group of families often maintains decentralised networks of drains that run through neighbourhoods. The collective effort of the people determines how clean a neighbourhood drain is, and this might vary within a village, impacting the health and well-being of the residents. (Dayal, Murugesan, Rahman, 2022).

Thus, the present study focuses on two parameters to assessed the level of cleanliness of drains and the activities towards cleaning of the drains such as visual inspections of the presence of debris and solid waste in the drains and the number of drains which have a proper cover. Drains were free from debris, leaves, trash, and any solid waste that may obstruct the flow of water. Community works organized by Village Councils and NGO's have provided regular removal of waste from drains to ensure ensures smooth water drainage and also prevent the accumulation of stagnant water, minimizing the risk of mosquito-borne diseases and pest infestations.

Citizen Awareness and Participation Survey Feedback

The art of cleaning entails keeping your mind, body, home, and surroundings spotless. It is critical for social health that the community and surroundings are clean, and it is everyone's responsibility to live hygienically. Thus, the current research study included collected citizen survey feedback to have a better understanding of the awareness and activities linked to the cleanliness campaign in their local areas in Ngopa town.

The respondents were asked a series of twelve questions aimed at assessing the process of the cleaning campaign in their region, how it was administered, and what actions the Village Council, NGOs, and the State government had taken to carry out the cleanliness activities. All respondents reported that the cleanliness awareness project was distributed to all residents through the community mobilisation initiative and the village crier.

Additionally, the town was replete with murals, posters, and banners advocating cleanliness, among them the Swatch Bharat flag. The cost for door-to-door collection of separated garbage ranged from ₹50 to ₹100 for each family, based on the location in which they resided. Nonetheless, the study also revealed that one of their primary concerns regarding the effective execution of Swatch Bharat's goals is the imposition of a ban on single-use plastic. The respondents claim that although the public has been informed about the ban on single-use plastics by local governments and government personnel, plastic bags are still frequently used in the marketplace due to the lack of viable alternatives.

VI. Concluding Observations on Reason for Improvement in Cleanliness Activities

According to the findings of the current study, the following factors significantly influenced the level of cleanliness performance at Ngopa Town:

Effective Leadership: Strong and effective leadership is generally required to achieve good results in cleanliness initiatives. Ngopa's community and local leaders prioritise cleanliness, set clear goals, provide advice, and allocate resources, resulting in a pleasant environment and motivating others to actively engage.

Community Engagement: Active community involvement and engagement are critical to getting effective results in cleanliness operations. The citizens of Ngopa town take ownership of their surroundings, participate in cleanup initiatives, and use responsible waste management procedures, resulting in a communal effort to maintain cleanliness.

Education and Awareness: Educating and creating awareness about the need for hygiene has a huge impact on performance. People in Ngopa communities appreciate the health, environmental, and social benefits of cleanliness, therefore they are more likely to actively participate in cleanliness activities and maintain cleanliness as a daily habit.

Clear Guidelines and Policies: Clear norms, policies, and regulations governing cleanliness give a framework for performance. Concerned State Government officials, Village Council Members, Non-governmental Organisation leaders, and even a community leader have established clear guidelines for waste management, littering, and sanitation practices, making it easier to enforce cleanliness standards and ensure compliance.

Regular Monitoring and Evaluation: The authorities conducted regular monitoring and evaluations of cleanliness initiatives to identify areas for improvement, track progress, and rectify any flaws. This enables prompt interventions, feedback, and modifications to ensure ongoing good performance.

Collaboration and Partnerships: A good and successful partnership among diverse stakeholders, including local governments, community organisations, corporations, and non-governmental organisations, improves cleaning performance. Joint efforts, sharing resources and experience, and leveraging each other's strengths all help to achieve greater results.

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