

The Illusion of a Clean India

What is the issue?

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- The “Swachh Bharat campaign” - SBM is to make India clean but the people who actually clean have been kept out.

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- The mission has thus far failed to even diagnose what is wrong.

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Why is the campaign illogical?

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- Cleaning India is not a spiritual experience and merely preaching that ‘cleanliness is godliness’ cannot achieve substantial.

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- Coming out with brooms and cleaning for a day with literally no responsibility for the rest of the days is at best a photo opportunity.

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- Castist overtones associated with cleaning jobs is a major hindrance for wider participation in the cause.

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- Thus far, the campaign has been nothing more than a mere promotion of an illusion.

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What are the issues with the Toilet for All campaign?

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- People are not using toilets because they neither have access nor the capacity to use one.

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- Organising campaigns to shame them into using toilets by appointing

whistle-blowers isn't the solution.

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- Also, the mode of financing for the project has pushed those living on the margins into debt traps as costs are reimbursed after the construction.

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- Hence, the campaign on toilets has shown complete insensitivity and this needs to be tuned to address the issues at the grassroots.

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What does the mission lack?

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- To clean the country, understanding the problems of those who have spent a lifetime cleaning the country is necessary.

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- Despite the Constitution declaring the abolition of untouchability, it is still practised by perpetuating occupations such as scavenging.

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- Only certain communities have been involved in the cleaning jobs for the last 4,000 years.

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- Often, there is news about people dying in manholes after being ordered to clean them.

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- There seems to be no concern for people who have given up their lives in keeping Bharat clean.

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- Without breaking this vicious chain, those who actually make Bharat swachh will never truly be a part of the campaign.

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- A mission without the ones who have championed the cause on board is bound to fail.

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What is the way ahead?

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- The solution therefore lies in abolishing manual scavenging, modernising the sewer lines and septic tanks.

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- Investing money and energy on smart techniques of sanitation also needs to be taken up for a sustained solution.

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Source: The Hindu

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