

Swachta Abhiyan: A national movement that is transforming the face of India

Cleanliness is the most important behaviour for a healthy environment, physical well-being and ultimately for a strong nation. World Trade Center Jaipur, in association with National Skill Training Institute (W) Jaipur, organized a webinar on 'Swachta Abhiyan: Celebrating a National Movement of Health and Happiness'. The objective of this webinar was to motivate the Indian youth and create awareness on the Gandhian philosophy of cleanliness.

Welcoming the participants, Dr. Yogesh Agarwal, Dy. Director, Training, NSTI (W), Jaipur, explained that the Swachh Bharat Mission is a nation-wide cleanliness campaign introduced by the Indian Government as a massive movement which aims to initiate the idea of a nation where cleanliness is maintained at all times. Since its launch on October 2, 2015 (145th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi), the government has been making efforts to attain 'swachhta' (cleanliness) in India. This one-of-a-kind 62,000 crores 'Swachh Bharat Abhiyan' has created footprints across the country and has charged up each Indian to make efforts towards a 'Clean India'. Mr. Agarwal further informed that this campaign has seen an enormous surge in popularity with several well-known campaigners accepting and supporting the idea.

Prof. (Dr.) Sudhir Soni, ICCR-Chair Abroad, State Nodal Officer & SVECP Consultant, Election Department, Secretariat Jaipur, opined that Swachh Bharat Abhiyaan is not just about cleaning surroundings but also seeking the participation of people in planting trees, creating a trash-free environment, providing sanitation facilities and paving the way for a Swachh Bharat (Clean India) eventually.

Dr. Soni also shared that Rajasthan has truly achieved a sense of change among its people who for decades had lived in conditions where toilets remained a luxury. Dungarpur District stands out, and is now a striking example where women from numerous villages, contravening class and status barriers came together to end their decades old woes of open defecation. Dr. Soni further mentioned that photos of polluted India often become a matter of embarrassment for Indians, and this campaign will help boost our image as a nation sincerely working towards cleanliness and promote it as an ideal destination for tourists leading to economic growth. It will also motivate the citizens in adopting good habits of cleanliness, which in turn will lead to improve the community health at large.

Ms. Subrata Parashar, Noted TV Actor, Model and Voice over artist, expressed that celebrities, through their positive approach, have an inherent capability to draw larger support for any such movement. Various ways to create such awareness is through operationalizing such state level activities on mass media, maintaining active Facebook and Twitter pages around Swachh Bharat Mission, regular felicitation of local champions at the state level, using local celebrities to spread the message of this campaign and explore media such as radio, television etc. for connecting directly with local communities.

Ms. Rinku Soni, Training officer, NSTI (W) remarked, "Swachhta mission is the programme which includes elimination of open defecation, conversion of unsanitary toilets to pour flush toilets, abolition of manual scavenging, municipal solid waste management and bringing about a behavioral change in people regarding healthy sanitation practices." Emphasizing on various issues pertaining to plastics, Ms. Soni said, "Plastic bags are popular with consumers and retailers as they are a functional, lightweight, strong, cheap, and a hygienic way to transport food and other products. Most of these go to landfill and garbage heaps after they are used, and some are recycled. Once littered, plastic bags can find their way on to our streets, parks and into our waterways. Although plastic bags

make up only a small percentage of all litter, the impact of these bags is nonetheless significant. It has been found that the average plastic carry bag is used for five minutes, but takes 500 years to decompose, hence requires a lot of judicious thinking process before putting plastics to use.” She further recommended cleaning of office equipment, computers and peripherals on daily basis, cleanliness of water coolers/RO systems on weekly basis and cleaning of office premises as other important measures.

Ms. Omwati Udaigiria, Assistant Director, Training, NSTI (W), sharing her views on the subject, recommended renovation and upgradation of office spaces, pest control, maintenance of cut flowers and potted plants, and disposal of general waste on a quarterly basis. Ms Omwati further recommended weeding out obsolete files and replacement of dustbins as a routine exercise.

Ms. Mahima Totla, Training Officer, NSTI-W, Jaipur, offered some very promising suggestions, “firstly, hygiene mark sheet: like we have mark sheets for students, in the same way we can have hygiene marksheet for each and every household of the city. In this system, we can give ratings for how clean is a house and its surroundings. Like we have class monitors, we can assign cleanliness monitors in each locality. Secondly, awareness of wet waste and dry waste: the local Municipal bodies try hard to segregate and separate wet waste from dry waste, but most people are still unaware of this and they mix wet waste and dry waste. This leads to non-re-cycling of waste which is very un-economic. Hence, a major objective is to teach citizens to dispose of waste mindfully. Third, basic health education: we all know that youth is the backbone of the country and our education system lays their foundation, keeping this in mind we should have health related subjects like Ayurveda, yoga, home remedies etc. included in their education to improve their skill and awareness for a healthier life. Most important - if all the citizens could come together and participate in this drive, hygiene conditions will improve, creating a happy and clean environment.”

Ms. Harshali Arora, CSA Trade NSTI (W) pointed out that increasing our reliance on solar power, investing more on recycling, attention on supply chains and infrastructure, innovation in concrete (building materials), creating mobile apps to report polluted areas, using special type of road building materials that can help in reducing NOx emissions, and adopting the solid waste management technologies can be possible measures for *Swacchta*.”

Ms. Anita Dixit, CSA Trade, said that this is a state-of-the-art campaign launched by the Government of India. She stressed on the fact that cleanliness should start from our home first, and this requires simple changes like reducing the use of polythene in our house and replacing it with cloth, etc. She also recommended that more awareness about this campaign should be spread through the Internet and citizens must be encouraged to use electronic vehicles which can help in slowly but effectively reducing our dependence on diesel/petrol vehicles, which create air pollution. She also advocated plantation of more and more trees.

Ms. Kamal and Ms Aayushi Srivastava, from the office management program, Ms. Anjali Dube and Ms. Sonu from CSA Trade, Ms. Chanchal Abhyapuriya from Dress Making, Ms. Minu Rajawat and Ms. Ankita Bairwa from COPA, Ms. Navjeet Kaur from Cosmetology Trade, and participants from NSTI (W) Jaipur also shared their views during the webinar.

Mr. Navneet Agarwal, Asst. Director, World Trade Center Jaipur proposed vote of thanks.

The webinar was held on May 3, 2021.

