

HEALTH AND HYGIENE IN RURAL AREAS

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Good health and sanitation holds great significance for an individual as well as for a nation. Proper sanitation promotes proper disposal of human and animal waste, proper use of toilets and avoiding open space defecation. Men and women have distinctiveness in anatomy and so they demand different health care, but social plight directly or indirectly restrains the adaptability of women to utilize such benefits. India is a country where women still have so little voice in decision-making. This is why they are also unable to influence their menfolk and ensure that their own needs are met. The Government of India has extended ample rights to women and looked into the matter of health and hygiene with greater concern and has taken strong steps against issues like female foeticide, infanticide, dowry and domestic violence. But the scenario hasn't changed much in the rural areas.

Women in the rural areas are the worst sufferers when it comes to hygiene problems. People who can barely make ends meet treat hygiene issues with the least priority. In rural India, menstruation is still considered to be a disgraceful thing to talk about and so most often women try to hide all the problems

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faced by them during their periods. It is also noted that children who are exposed to open defecation are prone to intestinal infections of various kinds. It has to be taken into consideration that 'open defecation' is the archetypal 'public evil' which also adversely affects households which do not practice it.

Ignorance, social smudge and cultural bondage are some of the reasons behind this issue. One of the biggest concerns is menstrual hygiene and its management. This issue has always been a challenge difficult to combat. Administrators should take serious measures as women use different absorbents during the menstrual period and the use of dirty rags, ash, straw, and sand is still prevalent amongst rural women. Unhygienic practices like these have serious medical implications. Chances of reproductive tract infections and cervical cancer

increase manifold with such practices. Rural India is still lagging behind when it comes to attaining sanitation goals and every day we are losing more children due to illness, neglecting more women and wasting productive lives. To stop these kinds of activities, along with government aids, awareness programmes through local social activists are essential for the betterment of the health care facilities. Many NGOs are working towards this, but both the government and non-government organizations should actively participate in this, as it is firmly believed that cooperation among the entire community, along with proper implementation of government strategies, can together build a healthy and prosperous nation.

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