

A Study on Environmental Sanitation, Sanitary Habits and Personal Hygiene among the Baigas of Samnapur Block of Dindori District, Madhya Pradesh

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ABSTRACT The present paper is a study of environmental sanitation, sanitary habits and personal hygiene among the Baigas of Samnapur block of dindori District, Madhya Pradesh. A total of 100 households comprising of 494 persons have been studied for this purpose on a random sampling basis, by using pre tested, structured schedules, through semi-participant method. The result of study indicates that environmental sanitation through inhabitants is of an average degree, but not very much satisfactory from the hygiene point of view.

INTRODUCTION

The world Health organization (1946) defines environmental sanitation as “the control of all those factors in man’s physical environment, which exercise or may exercise a deleterious effect on his physical development, health and survival.”

In general, sanitation covers arrangements for drainage of rain water and effluents, collection and disposal of garbage, and removal of human excreta. Proper sanitation is a necessary prerequisite for improvement in general health standards, productivity of labour force and good quality of life.

The practices with regard to body cleanliness vary according to seasons. India is still lagging far behind many countries in the field of environmental sanitation. The basic problem of safe water supply and sanitary disposal of human excreta are yet to be solved. Most of the problems in the country are due to defective environment, which in turn rob people of their health, destroy their livelihoods, and undermine their overall development potential.

A number of studies have been made on environmental sanitation, sanitary habits and personal hygiene of different tribal populations, by various authors (Elvin, 1939; Saxon, 1957; Bose, 1971; Sharma, 2000; Yadav, 2000; Yadav and Sharma, 2000; Yadav et al., 2001; Sharma et al., 2002; Dwivedi, 2003; Sharma and Jain, 2004). The present paper deals with some aspects of environmental sanitation, sanitary habits and personal hygiene among the Baigas, and includes

information regarding source of drinking water, exit of smoke, disposal of garbage, place of defecation, cleaning habits of animal disposes, cleaning habits of home, frequency and material used for taking bath, cleaning habits of teeth, cleaning habits of clothes, hairs etc.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The present study is conducted among the Baigas of Samnapur block of Dindori district, Madhya Pradesh, India. The newly formed Dindori district is surrounded by Kachar and Satpura mountain ranges of Narmada river, which is very rich in terms of natural beauty and wild resources, but very poor from the economical point of view. It is basically a tribal area. It is surrounded by Jabalpur in its northeast, Shahdol in northwest, Bilaspur in southwest, Rajnandgaon and Balaghat in south & Mandla in west. It also touches the boundary of Chattisgarh state.

The Simardha and Tikariya Villages come under block Samnapur of Dindori tehsil, Dindori district. It lies between, 22°17' to 23°22' North and 80°35' to 80°58' East. The Block covers an area of 806 km². Out of the two villages, which are covered during study, Simardha is a forest village, situated at a distance of 8 km from block head quarter, on a small hill top, whereas Tikariya is a road side village.

Baiga is one of the most primitive tribal groups of central India. Baiga can easily be described as a tribe, which has been least affected by the modern civilization. The earliest account of the Baiga that has come down to us is as recent

as 1867, when captain Thomson, in his Seoni settlement report, briefly described them as “the wildest of the tribes, inhabiting the most inaccessible hills and the remotest forests; living on what they can secure with their bows and arrows, in the use of which they are very skilful, and on the forest produce, and the small crops which they raise on the hill sides.”

The Baigas appear to be a branch of the great Bhuiya tribe, which still numbers half a million in Bengal and Bihar and is to be found chiefly in Jashpur and Serguja in the present neighbourhood of the Baiga. The Bhuiya, who are also called as the Bhumia, are, as their name implies ‘lords of the soil’. This title is also claimed by the Baiga who call themselves Bhumiaraja or Bhumijan, and Bhumia is the name given to the most important sub-section of their tribe.

A total of 100 households comprising of 494 individuals were randomly selected during the study. For this purpose, the two villages named Simardha and Tikariya were randomly selected from the total number of villages and then different households were selected out of these two villages on a random sampling basis. Thus the present investigation has been conducted by random sampling using pre tested, structured interview schedule. Simultaneously, group discussion and informal interview methods have been used. Observation has been conducted through semi-participant method.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The results of study are presented in table 1. It was observed that a maximum number of Baigas (61 percent) utilize well water for drinking purpose. None of the houses have any provision of window, ventilator or chimney etc for the exit of smoke, which makes harmful impact on their health, as the smoke get accumulated in their houses thus effecting their breathing system. The surroundings of almost half of the households (56 percent) were observed to be clean, which is a satisfactory sign up to a certain extent. The maximum number of households dispose their garbage nearby the house (47 percent) or behind the house (42 percent), which is not proper from sanitation point of view. Most of the Baigas go to open fields for defecation purpose (68 percent). This practice also leads to frequent prevalence of certain diseases, especially in the rainy season. About 94 percent households clean animal

Table 1: Information regarding environmental sanitation, sanitary habits and personal hygiene among the Baigas of Samnapur Block of Dindori District, Madhya Pradesh

S.No.	Characteristics	Percent
1	<i>Drinking Water</i>	
	(a) Well	61%
	(b) Nallah	07%
	(c) Hand pump	15%
	(d) River	17%
2.	<i>Provision for Exit of Smoke</i>	
	(a) Yes	0%
	(b) No	100%
3.	<i>Sanitation around Residence</i>	
	(a) Clean	56%
	(b) Dirty	44%
4.	<i>Disposal of Garbage</i>	
	(a) Backside of house	42%
	(b) Nearby	47%
	(c) Away from house	11%
5.	<i>Place for Defecation</i>	
	(a) Open field	68%
	(b) Forest	32%
6.	<i>Cleaning Habits of Cow dung/Animal Dispose</i>	
	(a) Once a day	94%
	(b) Don't have animal	06%
7.	<i>Cleaning Habits of Home</i>	
	(a) Daily once	03%
	(b) Twice a day	75%
	(c) 3 times or more	22%
8.	<i>Season wise Habits of Taking Bath</i>	
	(a) <i>Summer Season</i>	
	(i) Once in a day	85%
	(ii) Alternatively	14%
	(iii) Weekly	01%
	(b) <i>Winter Season</i>	
	(i) Once in a day	16%
	(ii) Alternatively	31%
	(iii) Weekly	53%
	(c) <i>Rainy Season</i>	
	(i) Once in a day	52%
	(ii) Alternatively	41%
	(iii) Weekly	07%
9.	<i>Materials Used for Taking Bath</i>	
	(a) Soap	18%
	(b) Stone	34%
	(c) Leaves	01%
	(d) Soil, water, ash	47%
10.	<i>Cleaning Habits of Teeth</i>	
	(a) By datun	82%
	(b) By any available material	17%
	(c) By water alone	01%
11.	<i>Habits of Cleaning Hands after Defecation</i>	
	(a) Wash the hands with soil and water	25%
	(b) Rub them on stone	21%
	(c) Clean the hands with leaves	02%
	(d) Rub the hands on soil	37%
	(e) Rub the hands on leaves	07%
	(f) Wash them with water alone	08%
12.	<i>Cleaning Habits of Cloths</i>	
	(a) With soap	18%
	(b) Boil with ash	51%
	(c) Strike on stone	02%
	(d) Use all- soap, ash soda	24%
	(e) Water	04%
	(f) Soil	01%
13.	<i>Cleaning Habits of Hairs/Use of Oil</i>	
	(a) Apply daily	19%
	(b) Apply occasionally	80%
	(c) Don't use at all	01%

dispose or dung once daily. Maximum number of Baigas clean their house twice in a day (75 percent). Thus the cleaning habits of animal dispose and their respective houses may be stated as to be satisfactory. Maximum number of Baigas take bath daily during summer season (85percent), whereas in winter season most of them take bath weekly/in 3-4 days (53 percent) and in rainy season, again maximum number of them take bath once in a day (52 percent). Thus their bathing habits are satisfactory, except for winter season, when they do take bath alternatively or weekly. Maximum number of individuals make use of soil, water and ash for taking bath (47 percent). The Baigas (82 percent) clean their teeth by datun of wood or mukhari, i.e., twigs of Sarai or other forest trees, which is satisfactory.

The most unhygienic thing about Baigas, which has been observed during investigation is that, they do not wash their hands after defecation, which can not be stated as even satisfactory as far as personal hygiene is concerned. Even many of them do not take water with them while going for defecation. It is a general belief among the Baigas, that washing their hands after latrine will bring to them harm. However, some of them have also reported about washing of their hands, after defecation (25 percent). It is observed that most of the Baigas rub their hands on soil after latrine (37 percent) or rub their hands on stone (21 percent). Most of the Baigas clean their clothes by boiling them with ash (51 percent). Most of the Baigas (80 percent) apply oil occasionally in their hairs.

In all, it could be concluded that environmental sanitation through inhabitants is of an average degree, but not very much satisfactory from the hygiene point of view. The reason for this is unawareness regarding the hygienic conditions and also some of the traditional beliefs and values, or superstitions. The natural environment is quite good, but practices related to sanitation, sanitary habits and personal hygiene need awareness, through various schemes by the government and non-government organizations. Thus, the present study elucidates an immediate need to make them aware about the environmental sanitation and personal hygiene through some integrated tribal-rural sanitation programme dealing with their personal hygiene, waste water disposal, solid waste management and domestic sanitation. As there is not found any provision

for exit of smoke in any of their houses, it is necessary that they should be made aware of harmful impact of smoke accumulation on health of an individual, and therefore should be persuaded for making such provision in their houses, there by bringing awareness in this regard. As it is observed during the study that most of them go to the open fields for the defecation purpose, after which they generally do not wash their hands, the concerted efforts in this direction, such as the development of simple low cost designs of water sealed latrines in such areas, are needs of this hour. In order to facilitate this, pilot projects should be undertaken to asses the acceptability of the various low cost designs of latrines to the local tribal population, and their view of the nature of sanitation facilities. Thus the bottom line of the present study comprises of the suggestion that the health education must be imparted to them regarding personal hygiene and cleaning habits, viz. washing hands after defecation, regular or alternate (rather than occasional) application of oil in their hairs, regular habit of taking bath, etc., so that they can understand about benefits of cleanliness, environmental sanitation and personal hygiene, and thus improve their overall health status. Their economic upliftment is also a must in this regard because poverty and low living standard also, many times leads to unhygienic and unhealthy living conditions, owing to lack of resources.

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