

Topic 1: Toilet targets: On ending open defecation

The campaign to end open defecation can succeed only if it takes communities with it

India's declaration on the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi that its rural areas are now open defecation-free will be acknowledged around the world as a milestone in its developmental journey. Cleanliness and sanitation were central to Gandhi's concerns for his vast number of impoverished countrymen, and should ideally have been pursued zealously by governments in free India, along with good housing and access to clean water. In 2014, the NDA government made total sanitation a high priority, with the avowed goal of bridging decades of neglect through a policy focused on toilet construction. That 110 million toilets were built under this programme since then counts as an achievement in itself, even though many of these structures have been bootstrapped to ramshackle dwellings; many do not meet construction standards. Forward-looking as it is, the campaign for universal sanitation and an end to open defecation cannot go far if toilet access is the sole metric of success. One independent survey shows toilets are not used by up to half the population in some places, underscoring the challenge ahead. It is welcome, therefore, that an ODF-Plus programme has been adopted by the Ministry of Jal Shakti to encourage toilet use and create the infrastructure to manage solid and liquid waste in every village. This is a long road, and the Central government can hope to achieve sustainable outcomes only if it prioritises citizen rights and community participation. The campaign has erred in its approach in many instances, opting for coercive methods that produce dreadful consequences.

Development literature makes it clear that bringing one set of freedoms to people, including material benefits, cannot compensate for the loss of others, notably freedom from oppression. This bears mention in the context of Swachh Bharat Abhiyan and its efforts to end open defecation, since officials and campaigners have resorted to violence, public shaming and the threat of deprivation of welfare benefits to bring about compliance. Such methods must be ended immediately and voluntary participation encouraged. Of concern too is a possible resort to illegal manual scavenging, since many toilets built under the Swachh mission are not of the prescribed twin-pit design, and will need periodic evacuation. Despite widely reported cases, the Centre does not appear to be eager to eliminate manual waste removal through a war-like effort, under which all States will install sewage and sludge treatment plants. Neither are States keen to strictly enforce the law that makes the practice punishable. In the years ahead, making sanitation universal and sustainable will depend not just on toilets, but on providing decent urban and rural housing, and strengthening another key determinant of development — the right to a good education.

WORD		MEANING	SYNONYMS
DEFECATION	NOUN	The discharge of faeces from the body.	Excretion, Discharging Faeces, Excreting Faeces, Passing Faeces
IMPOVERISH	VERB	Make (a person or area) poor.	Poor, Poverty-stricken, Penniless, Penurious
ZEALOUSLY	ADVERB	Ardently, passionately	
AVOWED	ADJECTIVE	That has been asserted,	

		admitted, or stated publicly	
BOOTSTRAP	VERB	Get (oneself or something) into or out of a situation using existing resources.	
DREADFUL	ADJECTIVE	Causing or involving great suffering, fear, or unhappiness; extremely bad or serious.	Terrible, Frightful, Horrible, Grim, Awful, Dire
OPPRESSION	NOUN	Prolonged cruel or unjust treatment or exercise of authority.	Persecution, Abuse, Maltreatment, Ill-Treatment, Tyranny
DEPRIVATION	NOUN	The lack or denial of something considered to be a necessity	Dispossession, Withholding, Withdrawal, Removal, Taking Away, Stripping
SLUDGE	NOUN	Thick, soft, wet mud or a similar viscous mixture of liquid and solid components, especially the product of an industrial or refining process	Mud, Muck, Mire, Ooze, Silt, Alluvium, Dirt,

Topic 2: Aimless in Haryana: On a Congress in crisis

All that is wrong with the Congress comes to the fore ahead of the elections

The Congress party is in dire straits. Steamrolled by a ruthless adversary, the BJP, hollowed out ideologically, and its leaders systematically targeted by the government apparatus, this calamity should have brought everyone in the party together. But the opposite appears to be happening, as was evident in Wednesday's protest outside party president Sonia Gandhi's residence by supporters of Ashok Tanwar, the ousted chief of its Haryana State unit. The crisis in the party unit in Haryana, which is going to polls later this month, is largely self-inflicted. Mr. Tanwar, a Dalit leader with a doctorate, was hand-picked by former Congress president Rahul Gandhi to lead the Haryana unit. In the five years that he was president, there were no district and block-level committees as the AICC did not allow their formation, caving in to pressure from Bhupinder Hooda, a two-term Chief Minister between 2004 and 2014. On the eve of the Assembly poll, Mr. Tanwar was replaced with Kumari Selja, also a Dalit leader and close to Mr. Hooda. That a PCC chief who put in five years of efforts could be dismissed and his tormentors who brought the party to a standstill could be rewarded sent a dispiriting message to workers. Left out in the cold in seat selection, those who remained active in the last five years hit the streets in protest.

Mr. Hooda's triumphant return at the helm of Congress affairs in the State is also indicative of a lingering inability of the party to free itself from the clutches of an old guard and an old method of doing politics. The patronage network in Haryana that flourished during Congress rule enriched individuals but pauperised the party. Mr. Gandhi tried to shake up the party but his successes were limited partly due to his inadequacies and largely because of the old guard's tight grip. Unable to tackle the task, Mr. Gandhi threw in the towel after the 2019 election, and in disarray, the party returned to Ms. Gandhi. The old Congress way — taking the path of least resistance in governance, networking vested interests as organisation and

remaining ambiguous on ideological questions — can no longer be a viable model for the party. It requires infusion of fresh ideas and fresh blood at all levels and that must be the focus of Ms. Gandhi's second innings. She must use her moral authority to persuade her close colleagues for the last two decades to voluntarily step aside. They have done their bit, but they cannot pull the party up from the current abyss. They should allow a younger crop to emerge, immature and inexperienced as they are, and mentor them with the larger interests of the party in mind. That is not a sufficient condition for a revival of Congress but is certainly an essential one. Ms. Gandhi must be the catalyst of that process, but not much more.

WORD		MEANING	SYNONYMS
DIRE	ADJECTIVE	Extremely serious or urgent	Terrible, Dreadful, Appalling, Frightful, Awful, Horrible,
STRAIT	NOUN	A situation characterized by a specified degree of trouble or difficulty.	A Bad Situation, A Difficult Situation, A Sorry Condition,
STEAMROLLER	VERB	Force (someone) into doing or accepting something.	Compel, Coerce, Make, Constrain, Oblige, Impel
ADVERSARY	NOUN	One's opponent in a contest, conflict, or dispute.	Opponent, Rival, Enemy, Foe, Nemesis
APPARATUS	NOUN	The complex structure of a particular organization or system.	Structure, System, Framework, Organization, Set-up, Network
CALAMITY	NOUN	An event causing great and often sudden damage or distress; a disaster.	Disaster, Catastrophe, Tragedy, Cataclysm
OUST	VERB	Drive out or expel (someone) from a position or place.	Drive Out, Expel, Force Out, Throw Out, Remove, Remove From Office
TORMENTOR	NOUN	A person who inflicts severe mental or physical suffering on someone.	
DISPIRIT	VERB	Cause (someone) to lose enthusiasm or hope.	Dishearten, Discourage, Demoralize, Cast Down,
TRIUMPHANT	ADJECTIVE	Having won a battle or contest; victorious.	Victorious, Successful, Winning, Prize-winning, Conquering
LINGERING	ADJECTIVE	Lasting for a long time or slow to end.	Remaining, Surviving, Persisting, Abiding, Nagging,
PATRONAGE	NOUN	The support is given by a patron.	Sponsorship, Backing, Funding, Financing, Philanthropy

PAUPERIZE	VERB	Make very poor; impoverish.	
DISARRAY	NOUN	A state of disorganization or untidiness.	Disorder, Confusion, Chaos
AMBIGUOUS	ADJECTIVE	Open to more than one interpretation; not having one obvious meaning.	Equivocal, Ambivalent, Open To Debate, Open To Argument, Arguable, Debatable
ABYSS	NOUN	A catastrophic situation is seen as likely to occur	

