

Engaged!!



The suburbs have undergone a drastic change over the past few years. Here's Kranti Khandekar tries to find out what is lacking in Suburbs

Over the years the suburbs have been renowned for many things. Its rich and diverse culture, its way of life, the spirit and zest of its people and it is definitely no coincidence that it is considered by many as the ideal place to call home. But for the past some years, the face of suburbs has undergone the most drastic change that it has witnessed. There is construction activities visible all around, be it in the west or the east side of the life our beloved stations.

The population of suburbs have only been increasing at a greater pace than ever, be it casual visitors or permanent settlers. It has taken a toll on the public amenities meant to ensure hygiene and sanitation for its people. What this has done is made us ignorant to the falling standard of cleanliness in Suburbs.

As many of us might have experienced already, it's a really difficult task in itself to find a public loo when nature comes calling. You have to be lucky enough to be in a mall, if not in a really descent hotel to find some relief. In the end, you end up forcing yourself into any one of the two as a last resort. Even though this is what many of you might have done, but then there are those who, either intentionally or under compulsion are forced to go in public. The perpetrators in this case have no idea about the toll that their act could have on the people and also the health of its surroundings.

It's very easy to blame the people for their primitive and uncivilised behaviour, but it should be helpful if we try to weed out the problem and its causes rather than the just squabbling over the superficial symptoms and their side effects.

The issue of public toilets sounds a bit unsophisticated but in actuality has experience its importance although not confessed openly. Some of the areas which urgently require public toilets are band stand, carter road, and the area surrounding Joggers Park. "When I visit band stand, carter road with my family to have an enjoyable evening, have always struggle to find the public toilets for us to use, which leads to our visits being cut short," expressed a dismayed Prachi Lahankar, residents of Santacruz.

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Looking at the density of Suburbs, the number of public toilets is grossly inept. This has increased the cases of defecation in public, and no matter how much we tried to avoid it, we have been subjected to this grotesque sight some time or the other. Apart from its many ills, the impact it has on the sensibilities of the



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"By 2012, India will be free of defecation in the open and will meet international commitments in this regard," a statement quoted Rural Development Minister Raghuvansh Prasad as saying at the World Toilet summit.

public has often been overlooked.

"While travelling through Nargis Dutt Nagar and even around Bandra station, one is always witnessed to sight of people squatting no matter their age. It really pollutes my fresh mind in the morning and ruins my day," said Shaileja Kini, resident Bandra reclamation.

Some residents of reclamation are blaming the hutments in Nargis Nagar for all the mess, but the residents of Nargis Nagar justify their action by blaming the pathetic condition of single public toilet they have access to.

Also, many of the complaints for likeminded Samaritans, NGOs and community organisations have only fallen on deaf ears.

Many years of neglect, public and administrative apathy and utter callousness towards their duty have contributed to a deteriorating condition of hygiene and sanitation in and around Bandra and many other places of suburbs. As this discrepancy increases, more and more, or at least the majority will be forced into find relief in the open.

It is primarily the BMC which is responsible for the construction and maintenance of these toilets. It was only a couple of years ago that the government had promised to rectify the imbalance and vowed to set up more public toilets. Today, it is more than obvious that many of those plans have failed to materialize and

remains unimplemented. May be the growing real-estate prices made the authorities think otherwise.

The existing toilets are in a dilapidated state. Pooja Malhotra, a Jogeshwary residents said, "There is only one toilet nearest Jogeshwary Sabji Mandi. But the toilet is in very bad condition, we cannot go even in emergency. Also there is little and no water supply sometimes. Cleanliness and maintenance is non existence and upgradation of the toilets by the authorities has not been forthcoming."

If immediate steps are not taken in earnest there is a risk that things might get out of hand and all we'll be left with is an irreparable damage done to the reputation of Suburbs, and will begin the perennial blame game and excuses meant to hide our inadequacies.

Yet another issue that this throws up is the issue of making those in charge accountable, and introduction a system of audit based on fair check and balances.

Does development only mean how many malls, theatres and buildings once can construct with the most profit, or does the satisfaction and general happiness of the public be the major yardstick? It is therefore said that development without proper vision and planning could only lead to chaos. It is upon us as a responsible citizen, as a youth, and as the major stakeholder in the future of Suburbs to either sit back and rest on our laurels or adopt a more proactive approach in shaping our future. This could only happen if we all can take control of our present and take steps which can guarantee a better tomorrow.

As we ushered in 61st Independence Day, let this be our excuse to change things for the better. It could be any issue or even subject of your choice, all it requires is your desire to make a difference and a conviction that anything possible. It has on the sensibilities of the public has often been overlooked.

As one wise man has very right said, "India can only call itself a truly developed country when all of its citizen will have access to clean and proper toilets", let's all start with their region!!!!



Courtesy: Google Images

Note: There is a fine of Rs.100 for defecating in public.

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