**EMERGING DISCIPLINE OF ‘SOCIOLOGY OF SANITATION’; EXPLORING PERSPECTIVES, OPPORTUNITIES AND PROSPECTS**

 **Y.Ravindranath Rao**

**Abstract:**

*This paper focuses on the emergence of a new discipline of Sociology of Sanitation. As a sub discipline of Medical Sociology and a specialization of Sociology, the paper examines the genesis, scope, subject matter and the significance of the study of this emerging discipline. The study explores the theoretical perspectives, opportunities, and future prospects of the discipline. Development of any society also depends upon progress in sanitation. The paper discusses the linkage between Sociology and Sanitation along with the issues of health and hygiene. The paper also addresses the pioneering work of Sulabh Organisation that has given rise to the widening of the academic discipline of Sociology of Sanitation in post-modern era. The various academic interventions of Sulabh, not only helped in the development of a discipline, but in advancing knowledge and a rich body of literature on sanitation as well. Owing to increasing awareness and realizing the need, today, this discipline is being taught in 25 Indian Universities as a part of their curriculum, besides propagating the idea of teaching the discipline across the world. The review of exegetical literature is the methodology adopted in the present study.*

*The paper is a contribution to contemporary policy debates about the role of developing nation-states in sanitation sector. It is also a contribution to Action Sociology, Medical Sociology, Sociology of Marginalized Groups, Sociology of Gender Studies, Education (New Academic Discipline), and other allied sciences. This study also contributes in determining the direction of future trend in sanitation concerns, sanitation promotion, research and investigation on sanitation.*

[**Key Words:**Emergence of a new discipline, Sociology of Sanitation, Prospects of the discipline, Sulabh Organisation, University curriculum, Future Trend in Sanitation]

Sociology of sanitation is one of the emerging disciplines included in the study of sociology in recent decades. The inclusion of this discipline as a branch of sociology has enlarged the scope of sociology. It would also be useful in solving the problems of society in relation to sanitation, social deprivation, water, public health, hygiene, poverty, gender equality, welfare of children and empowering knowledge for sustainable development. Bindeshwar Pathak, a world leader of sanitation proposed the idea of including this subject in the study of sociology. The sanitation movement launched by him also contributed to the emergence and development of this specialization in Sociology. The development of this area of study gained significance in the discipline of Sociology rapidly. The fact that many universities and institutes have come forward to introduce this paper as compulsory or optional in their post-graduation programmes, also shows that the degree of the level of awareness about sanitation and its studies in India is increasing.

 Though sanitation was a part of human life since the ancient times, it gained importance with the development of human civilization. As human civilisations started to expand with its diversity, sanitation became one of the necessities of human society. The social scientists thought that developing sanitation was a major social aspect of life. Now, sanitation has developed as a major subject of study. Thus, socio­cultural aspects of human life forced the social thinkers to develop sanitation as a subject of study rather than just as a health science. Sanitation is not only the need of an individual, but it is the paramount requirement of all societies.

According to Bindeshwar Pathak (Founder of Sulabh International Social Service Organisation, New Delhi.) in the ancient civilisation, there was no problem of sanitation, because humans were not provided with latrines or particular places, inside or outside the houses, for defecation. The people used open spaces, riverbanks and outskirts of habitats for defecation. With the development of human civilisation, there cropped up the problem of the disposal of human excreta. Further, with the development of latrine system in civilised societies people started facing the problem of disposal of human excreta. With the advancement of human knowledge, they implemented different kinds of technologies as a solution based on different conditions prevailing in their habitats. In this way, different kinds of technologies developed throughout the world in protecting their surroundings to maintain better health hygienic conditions. Thus, sanitation gained an importance in the human society.Sanitation gained public policy importance only recently in India. (2015).

The Seventh Five­Year Plan (1985­1990) launched a rural sanitation programme in India that aimed to provide 25 per cent of rural households with individual household sanitary latrines by 1995. Consequently, households with individual sanitary latrines increased from one per cent in 1981 to nine percent in 1991. In 1999, the Central Rural Sanitation Programme was restructured into a demand­responsive, community­led Total Sanitation Campaign (TSC). The Zila Parishads and other district­level project implementation agencies currently implement TSC as a district­level project model. The United Nations declared 2008 as the International Year of Sanitation. The Ministry of Urban Development launched the National Urban Sanitation Policy in 2008. November 19th is observed as the World Toilet Day to create awareness on the use of toilet, sanitation and clean water.

As a concept**,** Sanitation refers to formulation and application of measures designed to protect public health. It also refers to the safe conditions, which include clean and safe water supply, clean and safe ambient air, efficient and safe animal, human, and industrial waste disposal, and protection of food from biological and chemical contaminants, besides adequate housing in clean and safe surroundings.

In the words of WHO, sanitation generally refers to the provision of facilities and services for the safe disposal of human urine and excreta. Inadequate sanitation is a major cause of disease all over the world. Therefore, improving sanitation has a significant beneficial impact on health both in families and across communities. The word ‘sanitation’ also refers to the maintenance of hygienic conditions, through services such as garbage collection and wastewater disposal.

According to UNICEF, sanitation literally means measures necessary for improving and protecting health and well­being of the people. Sanitation is any system that promotes proper disposal of wastes, human or animal, proper use of toilet and avoiding open defecation.

 Sociology of sanitation is growing as an independent discipline today, because of its importance realized in the present society. Sociology of sanitation and sociology go together to identify and generalize the hypotheses. They also go hand in hand in the study of the human behaviour. Sociology studies general group behaviour, interrelations whereas sociology of sanitation studies behaviour related to sanitation and the interrelations of people involved in the activity of sanitation. We cannot separate sociology of sanitation from sociology. Sociology can survive as an important independent discipline without the help of sociology of sanitation. Nevertheless, sociology of sanitation requires sociology. It has to take the techniques from sociology. The relationship of sociology and sociology of sanitation is inseparable.

Sociology is the study of man and society in general. It studies the behaviour of man with his fellow beings in a social surrounding. It studies the collective behaviour of man and its origin, developments, organization and its institutions. Sociology is a social science, which conducts various investigations, researches to find out the facts from general understanding. Sociology enables to understand the relationship between man and his action in the society. It enhances the knowledge of social action.

The study of sociology of sanitation and sociology are interrelated. Sanitation can be defined as hygienic measures taken to maintain public health, which includes safe disposal of human wastes, waste water and solid wastes, control of vectors of diseases, domestic, personal and food hygiene. The study of sanitation, with the help of sociology and the sociological techniques, enables better understanding of the issue. As sociology is older science, it will be the guide for sociology of sanitation.

In the words of Bindeshwar Pathak “ Sociology of sanitation is a scientific study to sove the problems of society in relation to sanitation, social deprivation, water, public health, hygiene, ecology, environment, poverty, gender equality, welfare of children and empowering people for sustainable development and attainment of philosophical and spiritual knowledge to lead a happy life and to make a difference in the lives of others.” (2015:28:29)

The subject matter of sociology of sanitation can not be separated from the daily life of human beings. The area of study of sociology of sanitation lies within the grounds of sociology itself. Therefore, the necessity of sociology is very important for sociology of sanitation as an emerging subject. Without the reference of sociology, it is hard to understand actually, what sociology of sanitation is.

Sanitation is not to be restricted to one particular act of human civilization. It is the cluster of acts which human being does for the clean and safe healthy environment. Adequate sanitation, together with good hygiene and safe water, are fundamental to good health and to social and economic development. It is very important to remember the words of Mahatma Gandhi who said, “Sanitation is more important than independence”. In other words, sanitation refers to conditions relating to public health, especially the provision of clean drinking water and adequate sewage disposal.

**Fields and Specializations in Sociology:**

Sociology is a comprehensive subject, which deals with different aspects of society. It is a well-developed scientific and intellectual discipline studied all over the world today. It occupies the central place among different social sciences. It studies those aspects and facets which are not studied by other social sciences. It mainly concentrates on social relationships, social interactions their causes, consequences, their statical and dynamic aspects. Sociology focuses on some of the major social institutions like family, caste, religion, education, health, politics, industries etc., which human behaviour encompasses as a part of society.

Sociology has witnessed considerable growth and diversification in modern and post modern periods. It has developed rapidly since World War II, resulting in an increase in the specializations within the general field of sociology. There are different aspects of life that have led to different fields of study and specializations. Its wide area, expansion and complexity of subject matter have also contributed for the growth of specializations. Because of acquisition of greater knowledge and inter disciplinary approaches, the fields of study further increased. These fields, branches, specialized studies or sub-divisions of sociology are also called ‘Particular Sociologies’. These specializations or sociologies are further multiplied for both theoretical and practical reasons. They may be broadly categorized into two viz.

1] Studying only a type of human activity in its relation with the society. e.g. dynamics, movements, family, social psychology, education, gender studies, art etc, and 2] study of certain types of societies such as rural, urban, tribal, industrial, agrarian etc. Accordingly, the branches or specializations have grown in sociology. We may fit Sociology of Sanitation in the first category, as it is one of the types of human activity found in all societies.

The major fields and specializations of sociology that are presented here enable us to understand the specializations of sociology profoundly and adequately. The main branches of sociology are tribal sociology, medical sociology (Sociology of health/illness/sickness), urban sociology, rural sociology, sociology of religion, sociology of education (educational sociology), social criminology, social demography, social pathology (sociology of social problems), sociology of diaspora studies, industrial sociology, sociology of law, political sociology, sociology of religion , economic sociology ( sociology of economic life ), sociology of dynamics, human ecology (social ecology), biosociology ( biological sociology ), sociology of globalization, sociology of profession (sociology of occupation), sociology of movements, sociology of literature, sociology of knowledge, sociology of stratification and mobility, sociology of sport social engineering, sociology of development, sociology of folklores, sociometrics (social statistics), social psychology, sociology of ageing ( social gerontology), social research, sociology of weaker sections, social policy, planning and welfare, historical sociology, sociological theories and thought, applied sociology, sociology of mass communication, social anthropology, sociology of gender studies, social morphology, Marine Sociology and so on.

In recent decades, the importance of sanitation in the human society forced social scientists to improve sociology of sanitation as a specialized study in sociology. Thus, the relationship of man and human society enabled further development in sociology of sanitation. Realizing the importance of this problem of life in the present society, people now find interdependence of sanitation and sociology. The extension of the study of sanitation was a requirement to improve the physical life of human beings in the society.

It is understood that the sanitation process should begin from the individual itself and the work of sanitarian is, therefore, acknowledged to be of greater scope. Further, the sanitary reforms should not be restricted to the physical life of man, but to all the activities that affect human beings. When the physical condition and the moral attitude of human beings are identified, the study of sanitation becomes important. So, a more rational and practical view of sanitation is gaining ground. The social values of an individual depend largely upon his health, while in turn, his health is partly determined by the conditions of society where he lives. The disheartening status of humanity today is undoubtedly the result of the sanitary and social condition of past ages.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  |  |

**Origin of Sociology of Sanitation**

Sociology of sanitation is the necessity of present world. Day after day human population is suffering from the problems of sanitation, which is the result of their own life style. It is very difficult to survive in the modern world without proper sanitation measures. From home to the large social life, everywhere man is facing the problem of sanitation. It has been very difficult to find out a toilet in very developed cities like Delhi, Bengaluru and Chennai. We are developing in almost every domain, but forgetting and neglecting the basic requirement of human life. Lack of sanitation is turning as the enemy of human health and good social life.

As referred by Mohammad Akram, sanitation in public life is the responsibility of an individual, community and the state. It is said that sanitation can be brought by changing the attitude or personal habits of individual or public. When the habits do not change, the people are blamed for their own poor surroundings. It is a waste of constructing public toilets, where we hardly get water. Public policies go as a waste if the state is not interested to maintain it. Technical solutions are often suggested without understanding the habits or the social life of the people. Sometimes they go unnoticed and often they create more problems than they solve. Hence, sanitation needs to be seen as an integral component of the public health programmes, individuals and communities.(2015)

Sanitation is all about Safe collection, storage, treatment and disposal of human excreta (faeces and urine), Management of solid wastes (trash or rubbish), Drainage and disposal of household wastewater (often referred to as sullage or grey water) Drainage of storm water, Treatment and disposal of sewage effluents, Collection and management of industrial waste products and management of hazardous wastes (including hospital wastes, and chemical/radioactive and other dangerous substances).

The first challenge for countries seeking to solve the problem of access to sanitation is to understand what “sanitation” really means. The question of understanding sanitation led a foundation for the study of sanitation. The requirement of sanitation in public life developed the concept sanitation as a subject. The key issue here is that each community, region or country needs to work out what are the most sensible and cost­ effective way of thinking about sanitation in the short and long­term and then act accordingly. Since it is the part of both human and society, we understand that human habits, life style, cultural and social behaviour are the major reasons for the problem of sanitation.

Sociology of Sanitation emerged as a branch of Medical Sociology in the early 1950s. The discipline that investigates the social causes and consequences of health and illness. It was inspired by the health and sanitary reforms that took place in Western society. It was well recognised that the relations between sociology and sanitation are very intimate. The individual is the essential element of the society. His or her social values depends largely upon his or her health and environment, which depends on his or her habits. The disheartening status of humankind today is undoubtedly the result of the sanitary and social conditions of past ages and former generations. We can understand that clean food, adequate clean supply of water, sanitary schools, public baths, adequate housing are sanitary measures which are most effective in both sanitary and social aspects. Hence, sanitation and sociology must go hand in hand in their effort to improve the society.

**Nature of Sociology of Sanitation**

Sanitation is crucial but mostly a hidden aspect of everyday life and consumption. Sociology of sanitation includes human beings and their social life, interaction and behaviour with reference to sanitary conditions. As a social science, it studies society and human social action for sanitation activity. It helps to understand the sanitation conditions in society. It has its own nature like any other branch of knowledge. As a branch of knowledge, it differs from other disciplines In its present growing stage, Sociology of sanitation is not an independent subject. For its growth and development, it has to depend on sociology and other health disciplines. Sociology of sanitation is a social science and not a physical science. Sociology of sanitation is a positive discipline. Sociology of sanitation is a pure and applied science. Sociology of sanitation is abstract in nature. Sociology of sanitation is general and not a particular or special in nature. Sociology of sanitation is both rational and empirical in its studies. Whatever tools and scientific methods adopted in the study of sociology, have been incorporated in sociology of sanitation as well.

**Subject Matter of Sociology of Sanitation**

Sociology of sanitation is the study of human action, which includes the individual, community, and the public policies, for the betterment of sanitary measures in the environment. It studies the present infrastructure of sanitation and the required development of sanitation, from the individual household to community living.

Sociology of sanitation is a field of study that seeks to analyse and explain important matters that affect our everyday sanitation problems in our society, and the world in which we live. At a personal level, sociology of sanitation investigates the causes and consequences of such things as lack of toilets in the houses and in public places, lack of drainage facilities, lack of proper drinking water facilities, gender and sanitation issues, behavioural approach towards sanitation, disposal of waste, and cultural practices of various ethnic groups and management of sanitation.

At societal level, sociology of sanitation examines and explains such matters as existence of night soil carriers, prejudice and discrimination of night soil carriers in the society, toilet as business, sanitation at schools and education, and social movements regarding sanitation. At the global level, sociology of sanitation studies such things as contribution of WHO, UNICEF etc. It studies economic contribution towards sanitation development policies.

One of the most important things that sociology of sanitation can offer to its students is the ability to grasp clearly a connection between broad behavioural pattern of individual and community towards sanitation. This provides personal experience regarding the unknown faces of sanitation problems. This is an extremely important preparation for living effective personal lives in a changing and complex world. It is also equally important for the future development of our society.

Sociology of Sanitation includes; 1] The sanitary measures at household 2] The sanitary conditions at public places 3] Sanitation at work place 4] Relation of sanitation with the caste, gender and sanitation 5] Social conditions and status of manual scavengers 6] Culture of sanitation 7] Sanitation at school or educational sector 8] Disposal of waste 9] Public policies of sanitation and 10 Role of Non­governmental organizations. ( Richard Pis:2015:25)

**Importance of Sociology of Sanitation**

A look at sanitation provides a number of unique benefits and perspectives. Sociology of sanitation provides an understanding of social issues and patterns of sanitation. It helps us to identify the social rules that govern our lives with sanitation or without sanitation. Social scientists study, how these rules are created for human society, maintained, changed, passed between generations, and shared between people living in various parts of the world.

Sociology of sanitation helps us to understand the working of the social systems of sanitary conditions. Social scientist brings sanitation into a social context. This means social scientist looks at not only sanitary equipments or measures, but also behaviours and relationships, and also how the larger world we live in, influences these things. Sociology of sanitation helps us to identify, what we have in common within, and between cultures and societies. Social scientists know that, although people in different parts of the city, country, or world dress differently, speak differently, and have many different beliefs and customs, but the requirement of sanitation is same among all people by considering that we are humans. Social scientists look for what sanitation and hygiene means to various groups. They look at how various groups follow sanitary measures. Sociology of sanitation helps us understand changing pattern of sanitation and helps us to understand why and how these changes takes place in the society.

The specific theoretical perspectives and research methods developed within Sociology of sanitation, allow us to study sanitation scientifically. In the case of sociology of sanitation, theories focus on how social institutions operate sanitation. They provide a way of explaining these institutions. Scientific methods provide ways of generating accurate research results.

Sanitation is so important to the health and well-being of all people on earth. Without good, clean sanitation systems, disease can break out very quickly and be easily spread. Sanitation is an important way of promoting good health and preventing diseases. It is the hygienic means of promoting good health through prevention of contact of hazards such as wastes.

Sociology of sanitation is needed for the depth study of sanitation problems faced by the society. Sanitation lies at the root of many other development challenges, as poor sanitation impacts public health, education, and the environment. Without sanitation, girls are more likely to drop out of school or are vulnerable to attacks while seeking privacy. Globally it has been noted that , poor sanitation leads to about 700,000 premature deaths annually. It is also a fact that, ending open defecation can save children’s lives by reducing disease transmission, stunting, and under­nutrition. They are important for childhood cognitive development and future economic productivity. Lack of sanitation also holds back economic growth.

One who had visited the public places in India would instantly understand the need for clean toilet facilities. The lack of clean sanitation facilities has been a common cause for many diseases in India. Most of the places where large number of people assemble, such as at schools, railway stations, bus stations, hospitals, parks, beaches, markets and places of worship, lack adequate toilet and urinal facilities for public use.

The importance of sociology of sanitation can be summarized under the following heada as; 1] It makes a scientific study of sanitation. 2] It studies role of the institutions in the sanitary conditions.3] It is important for understanding and planning of healthy society. 4] It is of great importance in the solution of social problems.5] Sociology of sanitation has drawn our attention to the effects of lack of sanitation. 6] Sociology of sanitation has changed our outlook with regard to the problems of manual scavengers. And 7] Sociology of sanitation is of great importance in the global understanding of sanitation.

The progress made by physical sciences has brought the nations of the world nearer to each other. Sociology of sanitation gives knowledge about the policies for sanitation at global level. However, in the social field, the world has been left behind by the revolutionary progress of the science. Now, there is an important need for sanitation globally. Every nation has to think better for the future world.

The value of sociology of sanitation lies in the fact that it keeps upgrading sanitation conditions. It contributes to making good environment and finding solutions to the community problems. It adds to the knowledge of sanitation. It helps the individual find his/her relation to sanitation.

 Sociology of sanitation gives knowledge about the history of sanitation in the ancient civil society. It compares the sanitation of different geographical places for better understanding. The study of sociology of sanitation has greater value in the modern complex society. It studies sanitation conditions, the human behaviour and culture regarding sanitation, in the scientific way. It identifies the problem, suggests solutions, and generates new knowledge about sanitation. Sociology of sanitation studies the human society from bottom to the top level that what the human applies for a better sanitised world. It also explores the relationship of the individual and the institution in the field of sanitation. Sociology of sanitation improves the understanding and increases the power of social action for better sanitation. Finally, it plays an important role in the solution of sanitation as a social problem by applying different scientific measures.

**Sociology of Sanitation and Other Social Sciences**

Sociology of sanitation as a branch of sociology deals with the sanitation conditions of human life. Sociology of sanitation cannot be separated from any other discipline. It can be studied in detail in relationship with other disciplines. The comparative study of sociology of sanitation enables better understanding to the persons concerned with sanitation. In this connection, we can understand how other disciplines are important in the study of sanitation. Scientific study of sanitation highlights the importance of other disciplines of social sciences like history, economics, anthropology, political science, psychology, sociology etc. Social scientists are of the view that comparison with other disciplines enhances the knowledge and the area of sociology of sanitation.

**Theoretical Perspectives on Sociology of Sanitation**

Sociologists examine and analyse social phenomena at different levels and from different perspectives, from micro level to the macro level of analysis.

The viewpoints and perspectives of various Sociologists, Philosophers, and Social Scientists gave on to the emergence of varied social theories such as evolutionary, structural, functional, structural-functionalism, conflict, symbolic interactionist, ethno-methodology, phenomenology, subaltern, modern and post-modern theories. These perspectives and theories are applied in understanding the phenomenon of sanitation and its allied issues. In understanding sanitation issues in relation to Indian society and culture, the Indological approaches and perspectives adopted by Indian and western Sociologists like G.S.Ghurye, Louis Dumont are also adopted. The theoretical contributions of Radhkaaml Mukerjee and M.N.Srinivas, Subaltern Historiographer like Ranajit Guha are also applied to comprehend the issues related to sanitation.( Saxena, Ashish: 2015)

**Research Methodology in Sociology of Sanitation**

As the tools and scientific methods adopted in sociology and in any other social sciences, the method followed in the study of sociology of sanitation is also scientific. It is a systematic effort to discover new facts and to verify the old facts. Scientific method consists of systematic observation, classification and interpretation of data. Sociology of Sanitation also uses various methods as observation, interview, questionnaire, historical method and case study method in collecting data. The data so obtained is processed and analysed and the process culminates in the writing of the research report.

**Sanitation and other Social Institutions:** Society consists of people who live in groups, such as family and friendship groups. It is very important for us to understand how the social institutions are contributing to the problem of sanitation. Study of social institutions in relation to sanitation enables the researcher to understand the base of the problem of sanitation. Various institutions as family, caste, religion, education and village community have their own problems of sanitation. In this connection, it is very essential to study the relationship of sanitation with various social institutions.

Now more and more people come to live in towns and cities. Recent migrants face the problem of accommodation. As a result, some of them will end up living in slums. Slums generally face the problem of disposal of waste, problem of toilets and drinking water. Since sanitation is a serious problem in slums, study is taken up to consider the relationship between slums and sanitation. These days the corporate sector is showing a keen interest to improve the sanitation conditions in the society. Therefore, the present study should include the contribution of the corporate sector in sanitation.

**Sociology of Sanitation in Indian Universities and Colleges:**

At present, Sociology of sanitation is being taught in 25 universities of India. Bindeshwar Pathak emphasizes that this course should be designed according to Gandhiji’s Basic Education Model. Students who pass out from this course, become skilled and self –employed.(2023: vii).

The teaching of this course made its beginning in the year 2015, at M K Bhavnagar University, Bhavnagar, (Gujarat) at Samaldas Arts College, (Graduate Department of Sociology) where Mahatma Gandhi studied in 1888. The other universities and colleges are, M K Bhavnagar University, History Department, Bhavnagar, (Gujarat) North Gujarat University (Gujarat) S. P University , (Gujarat), Department of Sociology of Mangalore University, Mangaluru (Karnataka). L.N. Mithila University, Darbhanga (Bihar), HNB Garhwal Central University, Srinagar, Uttarakhand, University of Kashmir, Srinagar (J&K), Shivaji University, Kolhapur, (Maharastra), Dayabagh University, Agra, (Uttar. Pradesh). Gujarat University (Gujarat), Bhakta Kavi Narasinh Mehta University, (Gujarat), Saurashtra University, (Gujarat), M K Bhavnagar University, PG Department of Sociology, Bhavnagar, (Gujarat),Bangalore City University, Bengaluru (Karnataka), Kannada University, Hampi, (Karnataka), Kuvempu Unversity, Shivamogga, (Karnataka), Central University of South Bihar, Gaya, (Bihar),Himalayiya University, Dehradun, (Uttarakhand), Sri Guru Ram Rai University, Dehradun, (Uttarakhand), Uttarakhand open university, (Sociology Dept.) Haldwani. (Uttarakhand), Uttarakhand open university, (Social Work Dept.) Haldwani. (Uttarakhand), and Rajiv Gandhi University, Itanagar, (Arunachal Pradesh).There are many universities in India, which are now planning to introduce this relevant subject in its different programmes.

In general, in the study of Sociology of sanitation, these universities and colleges have incorporated in their curriculum, the contents relating to environment and sanitation, sanitation and social institutions, society and sanitation, Sulabh movement in India, sociology of health and sanitation, organization and health Services, Health and sanitation and so on. These contents of the course will enable the students to comprehend and make aware the serious issues related the sanitation conditions, public health, sustainable development, environmental issues and the role of Sulabh organization and its movement in India. The study will also sensitize the students to understand sanitation related issues scientifically.

**Sulabh Academic Interventions and Knowledge Production of Sanitation;**

It is a fact that the main aim of Sulabh Organisation at the outset was to liberate and rehabilitate scavengers, the manual carriers of human excreta. The restoration of human rights and dignity to this excluded group through the constructive programmes of Mahatma Gandhi was upper most in the minds of Bindeshwar Pathak. These constructive programmes also include ensuring the poverty-alleviation of scavengers, their social integration besides the prevention of environmental pollution and promotion of sanitation, health and hygiene in the larger society. The approach of Sulabh to restore human dignity to scavengers at different stages such as liberation, rehabilitation, vocational training, education of upcoming generation, social elevation was responsible for the promotion of consultancy, research and development in technical and social fields. Bindeshwar Pathak is the strong supporter of the view that education holds the key to major change and development in society. With this noble idea, Sulabh Public High school was set up in Delhi that aims to provide quality education within the reach of boys and girls from the scavenger families and other weaker sections of the society. As large number of students study in Sulabh School, they are also exposed to the concept of ‘Sulabh’ and its various activities going on in Sulabh Gram in New Delhi. The scavengers’ children are uplifted here and the knowledge of Sulabh sanitation is disseminated wherever their mobility occurs. Thus, establishment of Sulabh Public School, as an important educational intervention also enables in creating sanitation awareness along with upliftment of children of scavengers and rehabilitation of scavengers.

Bindeshwar Pathak developed the concept of Action Sociology and became the founder of Action sociology in India. In fact, he played a key role in establishing the Indian Association of Action Sociologists. He has established ‘Sulabh International Centre for Action Sociology (SICAS) in 1993 with an objective to develop a systematic understanding of the social, economic and psychological problems of scavengers. This also aims to evolve and implement a range of innovative, sustainable and replicable activities which would bring scavengers into the mainstream.

The emergence of the concepts Action Sociology, Sociology of Sanitation, and many other concepts like Diffusion of Innovation, Sulabh Shauchalaya System, Sulabh Two-Pit Toilets, Sulabh Swachh Bharat, Sulabh Museum of Toilets, Sulabh Purified Drinking Water, Sulabh Temple of Gratitude etc contributed to the development of etymology and glossary of Sanitation. Sociology of sanitation and Action Sociology, which emerged and developed as two prominent specializations in Sociology are the consequences of academic interventions initiated by Sulabh Organization. The fact that realizing the relevance and significance of these branches of Sociology, several Indian Universities now coming forward to introduce Sociology of Sanitation in Post Graduation and doctoral programmes, has contributed in accelerating the knowledge of sanitation in India and abroad through Indian and foreign students and the faculty.

**National Conferences, Seminars, Webinars and lectures on Sociology of Sanitation**

Another conspicuous academic intervention or scholastic exercise is the organization of conferences, workshops, seminars, special lectures relating to sanitation. The various conferences, seminars, webinars and lectures conducted in different parts of India, enabled to set up the road map for future strategy, and interventions, as well as to add to the corpus of knowledge and research on Sociology of Sanitation. It was in 1986 that the first national seminar on Action Sociology in India was organized by the Department of Sociology of Patna University in collaboration with Sulabh International Organization.

In India, the first two-day National Conference on “Sociology of Sanitation; Environmental Sanitation, Public Health and Social Deprivation” was organized in 2013 in New Delhi by Sulabh International Organisation in collaboration with Sulabh International Centre for Action Sociology (SICAS). The papers presented in the conference by the sanitation experts, Sociologists and Social Scientists were published in 2015 by Kalpaz Publications, New Delhi in a volume titled ‘Sociology of sanitation’, and it was edited by Bindeshwar Pathak, a world leader of sanitation. In 2013, Sulabh Organisation organized a workshop in collaboration with SICAS in New Delhi inviting eminent scholars to prepare the syllabus and to write books on sociology of Sanitation. A special lecture on “ Sanitation in India with focus on toilets and Disposal of Human Excreta” was also organized by Sulabh in 2014. MK Bhavnagar University, Gujarat University and SICAS in New Delhi jointly organized a National Seminar on sociology of Sanitation at Ahmadabad in 2018. The central university of South Bihar, Gaya organized a National webinar on ‘Sociology of Sanitation’ in 2021. SICAS New Delhi organized a National Seminar on ‘Sociology of Sanitation’ in 2022. Sulabh International School of action Sociology and Sociology of sanitation ( A wing of SICAS) has organised a four-day National conference on ‘Sociology of Sanitation’ in April 2023. This conference focused on sanitation beyond toilets, sanitation, social change and development, sanitation, public health and mental health, health of women and children, sanitation and menstrual hygiene, hygiene in rural and urban areas, sanitation and quality of life, good sanitation practices and healthy homes, sanitation and culture, cste , class, gender, and sanitation prospects, education and sanitation, and circular economy in sanitation.

These academic interventions have helped in bringing intellectual elites like Sociologists and other Social Scientists together and advancing knowledge on sanitation, Sulabh movement, research and publications. As Bindeshwar Pathak aptly said, “We have today an effective network of eminent Sociologists, wedded to the ideology of the Sulabh movement.”(1998:7). The intellectual activities, academic and scholarly exchanges have helped in the development of our disciplines and specializations like Sociology of Sanitation and Action sociology. It is a fact that there will be growth and change in society only when we develop creative minds and intellectuals.

Publication of academic works, conference proceedings, edited volumes, research based books, regular national level circulation of weeklies and monthlies like ‘Sulabh Swachh Bharat’, ‘Sulabh India’, availability of Sulabh Encyclopaedia on Sanitation (on Health, Hygiene and sanitation), Sulabh journal, Sulabh International Academy of Environmental Sanitation and Public Health (Projects, Training, Research and Consultancy)(1984) have all helped to gain more knowledge and insights about Sulabh initiatives and sanitation among intellectual elites and the general public. Thus, Sulabh academic interventions of these kinds have certainly contributed and will contribute for the growth and change in society in future too in the realm of sanitation.

**Museum of Toilets (Sanitation Museum)**

In order to educate students and to provide necessary information to the researchers, policy makers, toilet manufacturers and the general public about the historical trends, design, technical know-how of toilets that a unique museum widely known as Sulabh International Museum of Toilets (Sanitation Museum) has been established in New Delhi (2008:113:119). This museum could also be called a laboratory of sanitation for all the academicians and activists. The knowledge and information about sanitation are also disseminated through vocational training undertaken at Sulabh Vocational Training Centre, beautician course or beauty care classes and through Sanitary Napkin Facilitation Centre and Sulabh Ideal Health Centre.

The above analysis explores how different academic interventions contributed in creating awareness and escalating the knowledge of sanitation in India and aboard. They have also contributed to the intellectual development in the domains of social science and technology. This also suggests that the promotion of sanitation is possible through the access to the knowledge of sanitation. Sulabh has used and applied the knowledge of sanitation successfully and has become a knowledge–power. Thus for inducing development of any society or community, the access to knowledge is to be examined. Thus, Sulabh today as a social movement could also be perceived as a site of knowledge production of sanitation and as an object of knowledge of sanitation. This would further help in the development of Sulabh Sanitation University as well. (Rao, Ravindranath Y:2018)

**Sulabh Encyclopaedia on Sanitation**

The Encyclopaedia of Sanitation prepared by Sulabh Organisation gives a new dimension to public health and seeks to highlight the factors in the physical environment. It exercises a deleterious effect on people’s physical, mental or social capabilities. The Encyclopaedia is a unique academic exercise, spread over a decade and compiled by a team of dedicated technical professionals with expertise in all areas of sanitation. It a new reference work, designed to complement the existing literature available on health, hygiene and sanitation. One of the major objectives of this encyclopaedia is to encourage the rapid development of sanitation and hygiene throughout the world and to serve as a guide to public health professionals and administrators. The encyclopaedia aims at the standardization of terminology and research procedures, largely through examples and articles that have been included expressly for this purpose. It will help all those who are working towards creating a pollution-free society.

The encyclopaedia marks the new openings for the academics to prepare teaching modules for students and building the cadre for bringing about a social transformation in society. In the developing nation-states particularly, the major cause of environmental pollution is the absence of awareness of hygienic and safe human waste disposal systems. The encyclopaedia also creates awareness among the intellectuals to shed the conventional notions and develop a commitment to health and hygiene. The encyclopaedia seeks to consolidate such knowledge and make it a ready reference work for professionals and health workers alike.

### ****Sulabh International University of Sanitation-A dream Project of Pathak:****

Sulabh International Social Service Organization, a pioneer in the field of sanitation under the guidance of Bindeshwar Pathak, is taking the initiative by launching a  Sulabh International University of Sanitation (Proposed). The proposed university might help in bringing hygiene and sanitation related awareness among youth and the public at large. Students passing out of the university might work as missionaries of sanitation which would ultimately result in a clean and livable environment.

This dream project of Bindeshwar Pathak, would also help the country to propagate the message of Mahatma Gandhi and the Sulabh. The wave of Swachchatta initiated by Pathak, about four decades ago has become a Tsunami with the involvement of visionary leadership of Honourable Prime Minister, Mr. Narendra Modi. This initiative will be like an oblation into the Yagya of Swachchatta. It will be the first university of its kind in India. It will produce consultants and professionals to work in the field of development and public health, providing an in-depth understanding of how to deliver effective modern water supply, sanitation and other public health interventions in urban and rural areas in low-income and transitional economies.

It will serve as an education and training resource centre for sanitation and environment management experts. With the visionary ideas of Bindeshwar Pathak, the University will concentrate its efforts in the areas of research and development, provide public/private consultancy services as well as tertiary education The University will be dedicated solely to training and increasing the capacity of our human resources. It would also help to analyse, design and implement effectively the solutions that will further help make not only India but the whole planet clean.

It will have a strong focus on the development of practical and policy skills and will address the critical future challenges of climate change, population growth and urbanization. Emphasis will be laid on technical interventions in water supply, sanitation and solid waste management.

The Sulabh International University of Sanitation will provide different courses for youth, consultants and professionals working in international development and public health sectors. These courses will train students in the essential skills and knowledge required to plan and implement along with communities, water supply and sanitation projects and programmes far and wide, particularly in developing countries.

**Concluding Observations**

Thus, in conclusion, the following words of Bindeshwar Pathak will make us realize the significance of the discipline of Sociology of Sanitation in a befitting manner. As Pathak says “ It is my firm belief that the time has now come when “sanitation” should be included as a discipline in Sociology because the core problem areas embodying sanitation like social deprivation, hygiene, ecology, water, public health, poverty, gender equality, welfare of children etc. require sociological intervention also being intertwined with spiritual and philosophical knowledge. Hence, I have termed it as ‘Sociology of Sanitation” (2015:28)

The study of ‘Sociology of Sanitation’ at Postgraduate and undergraduate levels sanitizes students to develop in them deep understanding of the significance of sanitation, health, hygiene, solid waste management, energy and the allied disciplines. It also enables them to find gainful employment and even self-employments.

The findings of the study unveil that institutionalized academic interventions act as the key agents in promoting sanitation with the outcome that the process will enhance societal development by eradicating ill health, environmental pollution, exploitation of weaker sections of society and increasing the level of awareness of hygiene. The author is of the opinion that a longitudinal empirical study is needed to uncover and assess the levels of awareness and changes because of Sulabh academic interventions. Further, these findings will definitely be a contribution to the domains of Sociology of Sanitation, Action Sociology, Medical Sociology, Rural Sociology and Sociology of Social problems.

There is a need to make our country open defecation free. Our government could achieve to some extent with the launch of the ‘Swachh Bharat Abhiyan’ programme. Our policy makers and administrators have to draft innovative schemes for achieving these goals. In addition, the huge sanitation problem of the entire country cannot be solved by an international NGO like Sulabh Organisation alone. There is a need for research facilities for conducting scientific studies on the issues of sanitation in India. Teaching the subject of sanitation and research and investigations on sanitation should go together. Creating awareness about sanitation particularly among villagers and youths needs special attention.

**Notes:** *This article is partly based on the contents of a chapter “Contributions to Sociology of Sanitation”, Chapter 7, PP:189-246, brought out in, Rao, Ravindranath Y., 2021. Bindeshwar Pathak: A Social Reformer. New Delhi: Rupa Publications India Pvt.Ltd.*

**References**

Akram, Mohammad. (2015) *Sociology of Sanitation*. Delhi:Kalpaz Publications.

Pathak, Bindeshwar.( 2015). *Sociology of Sanitation*. New Delhi : Sulabh International Social Service Organization.

------------------------(2015) Environmentral Sanitation and Eradication of scavenging in India Delhi :Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Pvt.Ltd,

-----------------(Ed.) 2015. *Sociology of Sanitation*. Delhi:Kalpaz Publications

---------------------------2008. “ Role and Status Social Science in Developing Societies” in *Social Science Gazetteer.* 3 (1). Jan-June. Mangaluru & Agra.

Pais, Richard. 2015. *Sociology of Sanitation*. Delhi: Kalpaz Publications.

Rao, Ravindranath Y. (2018) “Academic Interventions and Sulabh Sanitation Movement; A Sociological Investigation on sanitation Awareness” in *Sulabh Swachh Bharat*. Weekly, 2(39). Sept.10-16. P:16:17. New Delhi: Sulabh Sanitation Mission Foundation.

----------------------- 2021. *Bindeshwar Pathak: A Social Reformer.* New

 Delhi: Rupa Publications India Pvt.Ltd.

Saxena, Ashish. (2015) *Sociology of Sanitation: Themes and*

 *Perspectives*. Delhi: Kalpaz Publications.

2023., *National Conference on Sociology of Sanitation.* New Delhi: Sulabh International School of Action Sociology and Sociology of Sanitation

**Author biography:** Y.Ravindranath Rao, PhD., is the former Principal, Professor and HOD of Sociology at St. Mary’s Syrian College, Brahmavar-576213, under Mangalore University, Karnataka (India). He has many research related works and guidance to his credit, besides presentations, session chairs in India and abroad.

**Address:** “Kalanjali” #1-444, Opp: RUDSET Institute. Heroor, Brahmavar-576213, Karnataka, (India), dryrrao@rediffmail.com

 \*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  |  |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  |  |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  |  |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  |  |