In the most developing countries the open defecation is the ‘way of life’. The habit of open defecation is in-
separably integrated in the day to day life of the people especially in the rural areas and urban slums of India. The practice is considered as most serious health and environmental hazard. (WHO Fact Sheet, 2014). It is harder to bend the iron mind of people with regard to open defecation, which they feel that they practice over many generations. This paper is an attempt to bring out the awareness level and practices of 1800 randomly selected households from 60 panchayaths of Namakkal, Perambalur and Pudukkottai Districts of Tamil Nadu on open defecation. The study revealed that open defecation and its attendant medical problems were rampant in the community with nobody even bothering to do anything to overcome it. While open defecation was in practice, many women specially mothers (98%) did not know how to dispose of their children’s faeces safely.

INTRODUCTION

Human excreta always contain large numbers of germs, some of which may cause diarrhea. When people defecate in the open, flies will feed on the excreta and can carry small amounts of the excreta away on their bodies and feet. When they touch food, the excreta and the germs in the excreta are passed onto the food, which may later be eaten by another person. Some germs can grow on food and in a few hours their numbers can increase very quickly. Where there are germs there is always a risk of dis-
sease. During the rainy season, excreta may be washed away by rain-water and can run into wells and streams. The germs in the excreta will then contaminate the water which may be used for drinking. Many common diseases that can give diarrhoea can spread from one person to another when people defecate in the open air. Disposing of excreta safely, isolating excreta from flies and other insects, and preventing faecal contamination of water supplies would greatly reduce the spread of diseases. In many cultures it is believed that children’s faeces are harmless and do not cause disease. This is not true. A child’s faeces contain as many germs as an adult’s, and it is very important to collect and dispose of children’s faeces quickly and safely. The disposal of excreta alone is, however, not enough to control the spread of cholera and other diarrhoea1 diseases. Personal hygiene is very important, particularly washing hands after defecation and before eating and cooking (WHO Fact Sheet, 2014).

According to World Health Organisation, open defecation is the “riskiest sanitation practice of all.” Almost 2.5 billion people don’t have the access to clean toilet globally. In the year 2013, the United Nation General Assembly designated 19th November as World Toilet Day, urging changes in both behaviour and policy on issues ranging from enhancing water management to ending open-air defecation (Afshan S. Khan, 2013).

By far the great majority of people practicing open defecation live in rural areas, but this number is declining. However, partly because of rapid increases in the urban population, a growing number of people in urban areas defecate in the open. The proportion of the world population that practices open defecation declined by almost one third from 25% in 1990 to 17% in 2008. A decline in open defecation records was recorded in all regions. In Sub-Saharan Africa, open defecation rates fell by 25 per cent. In absolute numbers, the population practicing open defecation increased, however, from 188 million in 1990 to 224 million in 2008. In Southern Asia, home to 64% of the world popula-
tion that defecate in the open, the practice decreased the most from 66% in 1990 to 44% in 2008 (WHO/UNICEF JMP for Water Supply and Sanitation, 2010).

In Madagascar 53% of 20.7 million people defecate openly every day while another 33% use dilapidated, unsafe toilets. The under-5 mortality rate of is one of the highest in world, at 72 deaths per 1000 children. One-fifths of these deaths are caused by diarrhea, causing great personal anguish for families and straining health care system. The open air defecation leads to a loss of an estimated 65 million US dollars per year (Water sup-

The sixty per cent of the “global total”, who do not have access to toilets live in India, and hence are forced to defecate in the open. In actual numbers, sixty per cent translates to 626 mil-
lion. This makes India the number one country in the world where open defecation is practised. Indonesia with 63 million is a far second. At 949 million in 2010 worldwide, vast majority of people practising open defecation live in rural areas. Though the number of rural people practising open defecation has re-
duced by 234 million in 2010 than in 1990, “those that continue to do so tend to be concentrated in a few countries, including India,” notes the 2012 update report of UNICEF and the World Health Organisation. For instance, of the 2.4 lakh gram panchay-
ats in the country, only a mere 24,000 are completely free of open defecation. More than half of the 2.5 billion people with-
out improved sanitation live in India or China. The high figure prevails even as four out of 10 people who have gained access to improved sanitation since 1990 live in these two countries. Awareness of the link between open defecation and diseases like diarrhoea will in one way change the way people defecate. After all, almost 10 per cent of all communicable diseases are linked to unsafe water and poor sanitation (Prasad, 2012).

As per Joint Monitoring Programme (JMP), carried out by WHO and UNICEF as of 2010, India contributes to 58 per cent of the world’s population defecating in the open. Ananta Prasad (2013) asserts that more than 2.5 billion people lack adequate sanitation worldwide especially in developing countries like Ind-
ia. Of these, 1 billion people defecate in open. In the least develop-
ed countries one in four people defecate in the open, largely as a result of poverty and inability to build separate toilets and the issues of space and land as well.

The scenario of availability of latrine facilities in India has im-
proved in the 10 years between 2001 and 2011; but more than half of the nation’s households still lack toilet facilities. From as high as 78 per cent of the households without toilet facilities in Jharkhand and Odisha to 2 per cent in Lakshadweep, a large number of people defecate in the open because they cannot af-
ford to build a toilet from their own resources. The main reasons for large number of population in India still defecating in open are large sections of the Indian population are not convinced of the need to stop open defecation, because of lack of proper awareness about the problems associated with open defecation. (Ananta Prasad, 2013).

The proportion of the global population that resort to open
Deaf and dumb students lack important skills such as handwriting and language comprehension. A comprehensive educational program that emphasizes the integration of these students into mainstream society is essential. It is crucial to provide them with the necessary tools and support to enable them to succeed academically and personally.
REFERENCE


