Hygiene and sanitation system in Murang society

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The aim of this paper is to document behavioural, social, ecological and spiritual patterns of hygiene and sanitation practices as a system of Murang society of Chittagong hill tracts (CHT) in Bangladesh. Murangs are one of the renowned ethnic groups, which live in Bandarban district and one of the sub groups (lineage) of the Tripura clan [Hossain, 1993]. Hygiene and sanitation system of this society is different from the majority Bengali population like other components of the culture. This deference seems to society is different from the majority Bengali population and one of the sub groups (lineage) of the Tripura clan renown ethnic groups, which live in Bandarban district tracts (CHT) in Bangladesh. Murangs are one of the ecological and spiritual patterns of hygiene and sanitation components of their all ritual functions. Murang people observe various types of rituals. By any means most of these rituals are related with water, sanitation and hygiene. Some of these rituals can be briefed in this context. Oreng puja is one of the major rituals. It is held in the rainy season at the bank of á-u (river) due to the need of water. In this ritual they drink wine and pray for protecting and curing diseases. Wine is their main drink, which is widely used in every ritual. Chongrâng is a ritual related with cremation, which is held at the bank of á-u (river). They cremate corpse (due to cholera) in the deep woods for purifying germs. In the kuângplái (New Year festival) they clean their kim (house) and cloths [Hanafi, 1993]. In the marriage functions they use water along with rice as symbol of holiness and good luck. We identified some other rituals in which water, purification practices are also included.

Methodology
Theoretically our aim is to express the ethnographic focus on actual practices and indigenous discourse regarding hygiene and sanitation in Murang society. Base data concerning water, sanitation, hygiene related practices, activities and rituals were collected through using ethnographic tools and techniques like participant observation, intensive interviews, key informant technique, emic approach and holistic approach. Data were collected from Porapara under Sualok union of Bandarban district during the period of 3 months October – December, 1999.

Worldview about water, sanitation and hygiene
The worldview of Murang people is developed on the beliefs of turâi (super natural power) who creates and controls every things of the Universe. From this view there are four types of totems in their culture, which are - dengoà, prâmsâng, konglài, gnaro-gnonor [Sattar, 1966]. These totems represent the turai. From this view they perceive all things of their world including water, sanitation and hygiene (WSH). They believe that tui (water) is sacred gift from turai, it should be used carefully and with holiness. Turai creates woods for them that can be used as the place for defecation and other activities. To protect the attack of germs they depend on help of turâi and they follow totems.

Water, sanitation and hygiene in murang rituals
Murang people view that purification is closely related with spiritual aspects. So purification is one of the important parts of their all ritual functions. Murang people observe various types of rituals. By any means most of these rituals are related with water, sanitation and hygiene. Some of these rituals can be briefed in this context. Oreng puja is one of the major rituals. It is held in the rainy season at the bank of á-u (river) due to the need of water. In this ritual they drink wine and pray for protecting and curing diseases. Wine is their main drink, which is widely used in every ritual. Chongrâng is a ritual related with cremation, which is held at the bank of á-u (river). They cremate corpse (due to cholera) in the deep woods for purifying germs. In the kuângplái (New Year festival) they clean their kim (house) and cloths [Hanafi, 1993]. In the marriage functions they use water along with rice as symbol of holiness and good luck. We identified some other rituals in which water, purification practices are also included.

Practices related to defecation
Murang people domesticate pok (pig) for their subsistence. Pok is one of the main sources of their nutrition. It plays vital role in hygiene and sanitation system of Murang society. There is no concept of ‘latrine’ in the discourse and practices of their culture. They defecate in the woods. Faeces are licked by pok because these are the main food of pok. Basically pok simultaneously acts as an agent of cleansing. Due to the individual habit two or more persons do not defecate in the same place. One person uses one place for one time. So there is no major risk for transmitting faeces borne germs from one person to another. There is no practice of water with defecation. Because water is scarce and sacred thing. For anal cleansing after defecation they use small pieces of bamboo twigs, so they do not have to wash hand after defecation.

Sources, collection, preservation and usage of water
The habitation of Murang people is situated in the pung (hill tops). Installing tube well in this place is not possible. Wâng (rain) and chong (fountain) are the only sources of tui (water). Women collected tui from chong and preserve it in tui á-u (pot for water made by hollow gourd) for a certain period (two days). Every day they go to chong for collecting water, washing plates and other materials and bathing. Water is scarce and valuable resource to them. They use water for food making, drinking, rituals, homestead gardening, bathing, etc.
Social and ecological settings regarding hygiene and sanitation

Murang culture is mainly patrilineal. But there is no fixed labour division by sex in their society. Men and women both are responsible for maintaining hygiene and sanitation. They own individual language. All hygiene, sanitation and water related communications are maintained through this language. Some times rites and rituals act as language. Language relates the individual with hygiene and sanitation system. The settlement pattern of Murang habitation is characterized by agglomerated [Baquee, 1991]. Their kim (house) does not include the source of water and place of defecation.

Conclusion

From this paper some learning are gotten-

- Murangs use water carefully and they never misuse it;
- They use locally available materials for sanitation;
- They view water with sacred feelings and it is a part of their rites and rituals;
- Hygiene is a synonym of purifying soul;
- One goal of purification and rituals of Murang society is protecting germs.

Whole system of their hygiene and sanitation is no threatened to environment. In fact the hygiene and sanitation system is their coping strategy with environment. As a diversity of culture the hygiene and sanitation system of Murang society should be studied which could be inputs in the plans for the millenium.

References


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