

Knowledge, Attitudes, and Practices of Hygiene in Hindu Society of Chunikhel, Lalitpur

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Abstract

Every religion and culture has its ideas about purity, cleanliness, and what constitutes good physical, personal, and mental cleanliness. The current Hindu society of today stands the same knowledge and customs, but they view hygiene from a different angle. Personal hygiene and sanitation are taken as significant aspects linked to Hindu society. Purity, faith, ritual, and cleanliness in Hindu society are based on the Hindu scriptures related to sanitation and hygiene patterns and the main objective of cleanliness and regular practice in the current society. The study is based on Hindu men and women above 35 years old. The study considers sanitation and hygiene in numerous aspects, including religion, social prestige, self-satisfaction, health, etc. The study includes toilet use, personal hygiene, safe drinking water, and household hygiene as variables. While sanitation and hygiene are prioritized in Hinduism, the modern Hindu community is evolving to recognize not only religious but also physical, social, and psychological well-being. The respondents had high knowledge, favorable attitudes, and good behavior about sanitation and hygiene. Hindu society has internalized and practiced sanitation and hygienic behavior from both religious and health perspectives. The Hindu community also agrees with the new approach to the relationship between Hindu rituals and hygiene and sanitation.

Keywords: Health, Hindu ritual, Hindu society, Hygiene & Sanitation.

Introduction

Hygiene and sanitation are important parts of society in all ages of human society. Every religion and culture has its ideas about purity, cleanliness, and what constitutes good physical, personal, and mental purity. Hindus, Muslims Christians, and other religions have emphasized the importance of cleanliness and hygiene since ancient times. Hindu holy texts including the *Vedas*, *Manusmriti*, *Purāṇa*, *Rāmāyaṇa*, *Mahābhārata*, *Vedic Dharma*, and, others, are recognized as a pure and spiritual approach to personal and physical hygiene and sanitation. Personal hygiene and cleanliness were primarily pursued in Hindu civilization from a religious, ritualistic, and cultural standpoint. It would be interesting to further study whether the Hindu society today sticks to the same knowledge and customs or whether the

Hindu community views cleanliness from a different perspective (Bista, 2012; MoWSS, 2016).

Rituals, culture, tradition, personality, and social sanction are changing but they are related to religion and belief. Every religion has different sanitation and hygiene practices and beliefs to some extent. It is justified that sanitation and hygiene play a vital role in the Hindu society from the beginning taking it as part of purity, holiness, and culture based on various Hindu texts (Queensland, 2011). In the present context, sanitation and hygiene are defined as follows:

Hygiene is the process of cleaning an environment of all sickness factors which may cause health problems. The hygiene process involves all the precautions that must be taken to reduce microorganisms (GoN, 2017; Erasmus, 2018).

Sanitation is the creation of a clean and hygienic environment and making it sustainable. Hygiene and sanitation processes can't be divided from each other in society. Hygiene is the purification of the environment from microorganisms causing diseases, the other hand sanitation is the measure taken for cleaning and hygiene (Erasmus, 2018 & MoWSS 2016).

The Sanitation and Hygiene Master Plan, (GoN, 2011) selects personal sanitation and hygiene indicators for sanitation and hygiene behavior. Out of the indicators, the four key hygiene and sanitation indicators are the use of toilets, personal Hygiene, Safe drinking water, and Household Sanitation (GoN, 2011; Bista, 2071).

Change is a permanent factor that is changing regularly so Hindu society is shifting attitudes towards cleanliness and hygiene (Seerat,2013; UNDG, 2017). The theory of social change also assists us in planning for and achieving appropriate sanitation and hygiene in Hindu society. The theory of change is an approach to planning, learning, reflection, and documentation of change (Fokus, 2015 & Mosler, 2012). The theory also represents the best idea that we have about how we can support changes. Change is an ongoing process of reflection to explore change and how it happens. The theory also makes us explain our understanding of change ((Javaeed et al., 2018; Mohd & Molik, 2017; ORS, 2004). Applying the theory of change, supports us to know the sanitation and hygiene conditions in the period of Vedic and modern Hindu society.

Hinduism also emphasizes the importance of physical cleanliness. It is an essential aspect of *Vedic Dharma* and the order and regularity of the world. In Hinduism, purity is the path to holiness. Spiritual purity cannot be attained without physical and mental purity. The *Dharma Śāstras* prescribe several rules for observing cleanliness in personal life and impose penalties and observances for transgressions. Ensuring personal hygiene, clean living conditions, and a clean way of life form part of the practice of the *Hindu Dharma* and way of life ("Hindu website.com", 2000-2015). So personal hygiene is essential to achieve purity in Hindu society. *Hindu Dharma/Vedic Dharma* also emphasizes the importance of physical cleanliness, mental purity, and hygienic behavior. According to *Dharma Śāstras*, personal/physical hygiene is connected with purity rather than social prestige and diseases.

It is necessary to discuss the large scope of personal hygiene, sanitation, and others (Bista, 2076; Bista, 2077).

Certain quantifiable indicators are chosen by the GoN to identify the status of sanitation and hygiene behavior, although more indicators are offered for behavior change for total sanitation and the sustainability of free open defecation (WHO, 2019 & Bista, 2016). Personal hygiene and sanitation are taken into consideration as significant aspect in this study that links to Hindu society.

The general objective is to understand the knowledge, attitudes, and practice of sanitation and hygiene behavior in the Hindu Society in Chunikhel, 22 Ward no, Lalitpur Metropolitan City, Lalitpur district, Nepal. The specific objectives are: To explore the pattern of sanitation and hygiene in the Hindu society based on Hindu scriptures related to purity, beliefs, ritual, and cleanliness. To explain the knowledge, attitude, and practice of sanitation and hygiene behavior in Hindu society.

Methods

The research approach is a plan and process that consists of detailed methods of data collection, analysis, and interpretation. It also helps as a proper guide for completing the research. The descriptive and explanatory research designs were applied to the study. The designs helped to present properly meeting the proven objectives. The study was completed by Chunikhel Hindu Society, Lalitpur Metropolitan City, Ward No 22, Lalitpur District for primary information. There are almost Hindus with enough numbers for the study and to meet the study objectives. That's why Chunikhel was selected as the study area. For the Secondary information, Hindu religious scriptures (*Veda*, *Manusmriti*, and *Viṣṇu purāṇa* books and related articles) are the study points where I spent around 240 hours.

The target respondents in the present study include Hindus in the study area. The researcher observed the potential respondents of the study area for 2 months continuously. 150 Hindus more than 35 age of years were purposively selected because the respondents older than 35 years of age can grasp the Hindu religion, regional books, and practices as well as current sanitation and hygiene practices too. However, the selection of males and females was selected using a random sampling method whereas 150 respondents were chosen purposively. The universe was unknown for the study because the study did not give priority to the percentage of the universe. Works of literature reviews were for the secondary data collection and key informant interviews, observation, and interviews with the respondents were tools for primary data collection. Qualitative and quantitative information were collected. Collected information is both primary and secondary.

Definition of the Major Terms

The following definitions have been created for the research after studying numerous pertinent literature. Although the definitions should only be used to construct a study or make one specific, they cannot encompass all aspects.

Hindu Society: In this study, the society that practices the Hindu religion is referred to as the Hindu society.

Hygiene: Hygiene is the practice of keeping yourself and your surroundings clean, especially to prevent the spread of diseases.

Sanitation: Sanitation is the provision of facilities and services for the safe disposal of human excreta, and maintenance of hygienic conditions, through services such as garbage collection and wastewater disposal.

Sanitation and Hygiene in Hindu Society: In general, this study refers to Hindu texts to understand how sanitation and hygiene relate to purity, beliefs, ritual, and cleanliness in the previous Hindu society and limits some areas of sanitation and hygiene, such as the use of toilet and their conditions, drinking water, personal hygiene, and household sanitation, in the current situation of the society.

Change: The assessment of sanitation and hygiene in Hindu literature and the current condition of Hindu society in terms of knowledge, attitudes, and practices is called "change."

Knowledge: Information that the target respondent has about sanitation and personal and household hygiene-related issues.

Attitude: Attitude is the way a person views something or tends to behave towards it. The attitude here refers to what the target respondent feels or believes about sanitation and personal and household hygiene-related issues.

Practice: Refers to the ways to demonstrate their knowledge and attitudes through their actions in the sanitation, personal, and household hygiene-related issues.

Result

Socio-Demographic Characteristics

Sex, religion, age, and education were selected as the variables of socio-demographics of the respondents in this study. 150 respondents who were over 35 years old were chosen. Above 35 years of age can understand the Hindu religion, regional books and practices, and present sanitation and hygiene practices so they were selected as the respondents. They answered a series of questions, to gather knowledge, attitudes, and practices on sanitation and hygiene in Hindu society.

Table No 1: Socio-demographic Status

Description		N-150	%
Sex	Male	87	58
	Female	63	42
Religion	Hindu	150	100
Age	Age 35-45	23	15.33
	Age 45-55	57	38.00
	Age 55-65	53	35.33
	Age 65 above	17	11.33
Education	Illiterate	17	11.33
	Literate	33	22.00
	Upto SLC/SEE	47	31.33
	College	53	35.33

Out of 150 respondents, there were 87 (58%) male and 63 (42%) female. Both male and female thoughts were addressed in the study. They were all Hindus who ranged in age from 35 to over 65 years. To influence someone's attitude, practice, and behavior, education is a crucial factor. So, the respondents' educational backgrounds may influence how society changes. Here, 17 (11.33%) of the respondents lacked literacy, while 53 respondents (35.33%) had advanced degrees. Detailed information is available in Table no 1.

Knowledge, Attitude, and Practice

The study examined the knowledge, attitude, and practices (KAP) of the Hindu society in the area of drinking water, usage of a household toilet, personal hygiene, and household sanitation (Jemima et al., 2012; Yadav et al., 2022; Midgley, 2013; UNHCR, 2020 and Vaidhy et al, 2018). These variables were selected as the parameters of sanitation and hygiene. Each table includes the KAP findings that can be used to know and compare the various KAP statuses.

A. Drinking Water

Drinking water affects hygiene and health. Two activities of drinking water were chosen for the study. The first one is related to treatment and the second is unsafe water for religious activities. 133 (88.67%) knew drinking water treatment while 17 (11.33%) had no information. 102 (68%) of the respondents completely agreed that drinking water can be treated while 9 (6%) disagreed in this regard. 23 (15.33%) of the respondents were drinking water without treatment while the rest of them were boiling or filtering or using chlorine or SoDis etc. as the below table.

Table No 2: Drinking Water

Treatment of Drinking Water	N-150	%
Knowledge		
Yes	133	88.67
No	17	11.33
Attitude		
Completely Agree	102	68
Agree	25	16.67
Impartial	14	9.33
Disagree	9	6
Practice		
Not treated	23	15.33
Boiling	37	24.67
Filtering	85	56.67
Other	5	3.33
Unsafe water is not useful for religious activities		
Knowledge		
Yes	89	59.33

No	61	40.67
Attitude		
Completely Agree	23	15.33
Agree	27	18.00
Impartial	39	26.00
Disagree	61	40.67
Practice		
Only use safe water	43	28.67
Only use clean water	46	30.67
Use water	61	40.67

Unsafe and safe water is the same for religious activities or not that is a query for a sociologist. 89 (59.33%) of the respondents were aware that unsafe water is not useful for religious activities in the Hindu Society but 17 (11.33) did not aware. 61 (40.67%) disagreed, 39 (26%) were impartial and the rest of the number agreed/completely agreed. In the practice, 43 (20.67%) used only safe/treated water, 46 (30.67%) only used clean water, and 61 (40.67%) used any type of water for praying divinity, and worship. Detailed information on drinking water is available in Table no 2. B.

B. Usage of Toilet

Toilet is a quantifiable measure of sanitation which is important for controlling water-borne diseases as well as supporting worship and socio-cultural aspects. the sustainability of open defecation-free (ODF) and total sanitation depends on the availability of household toilets (Bista, 2011). The condition of the toilet is known from a hygiene perspective and how it is used for religious and social implications as well.

Two activities of the toilet were chosen for the study. The first one was related to the condition of toilets with hygiene and the second was open defecation free from a religious standpoint. 122 (81.33%) knew that a safely managed toilet is necessary for preventing disease/improving health while 28 (18.67%) were not clear that a safely managed toilet helps to improve health. 55 (36.67%) of the respondents were completely agreed, 81 (54%) agreed, 9 (6%) impartial and 5 (3.33%) disagreed that a safely managed toilet is necessary to improve health. 78 (52%) of the respondents practiced at well-managed toilets likewise, 67 (44.67%), and 5 (3.33%) used at hygienic and unhygienic toilets respectively. Well-managed and hygienic toilets (96.67%) help to prevent diseases.

Table No 3: Usage of Toilet

Safely managed toilet is necessary for health	N-150	%
<i>Knowledge</i>		
Yes	122	81.33
No	28	18.67
<i>Attitude</i>		
Completely Agree	55	36.67
Agree	81	54
Impartial	9	6
Disagree	5	3.33
<i>Practice</i>		
Well managed	78	52
Hygienic	67	44.67
Unhygienic	5	3.33
Other	0	0.00
Open defecation is a kind of sin		
<i>Knowledge</i>		
Yes	67	44.67
No	83	55.33
<i>Attitude</i>		
Completely Agree	30	20
Agree	37	24.67
Impartial	68	45.33
Disagree	15	10
<i>Practice</i>		
Yes, never open defecation	102	68
Not afraid, no open defecation	28	18.67
Afraid, open defecation at emergency	20	13.33

Open defecation is a crucial issue for sanitation and hygiene. The issue can be taken from religious, social, and health perspectives. Here, 67 (44.67%) of the respondents felt that open defecation is a form of sin while 83 (55.33%) had softly said that is not a religious matter. 30 (20%) of the respondents were completely agreed, 37 (24.67%) agreed, 68 (45.33%) impartial and 15 (10%) disagreed that open defecation is a sin. In practice, 102 (68%) of the respondents were never going to an open place for toileting due to religious reasons while 28 (18.67%) of the respondents also always used the toilet but not afraid of religion. Having been afraid of religion, 20 (13.33%) of the respondents had gone to open places in emergencies only.

C. Personal Hygiene

Hygienic behavior is an important phenomenon in many ways. The effects of sanitation, health, feeling, religion, and self-satisfaction are related to personal hygiene too. Despite many personal hygiene practices, hand washing was selected here for measuring personal hygiene (Bista, 2075 V.S. & Naughton & Mithelcic 2017). Hand washing is presented in two ways like prevention of diseases and a form of devotion in Hindu society.

123 (82%) of the respondents understood that washing hands is a key step in preventing water-borne illnesses, whereas 27 (18%) did not. 100 (66.67%) of the respondents completely agreed, 23 (15.333%) only agreed, 20 (13.33%) were impartial and 7 (4.67%) disagreed that washing hands can control sickness. Practicing regular washing of hands, 105 (70%) of the respondents were able to improve their health while 14 (9.33%) were in the same condition. Some respondents did not assess the benefit of washing their hands with soap while some didn't wash their hands properly or not regularly which are in detail in Table no 4.

Table No 4: Hand Washing

Washing hands prevents diseases	N-150	%
<i>Knowledge</i>		
Yes	123	82
No	27	18
<i>Attitude</i>		
Completely Agree	100	66.67
Agree	23	15.33
Impartial	20	13.33
Disagree	7	4.67
<i>Practice</i>		
Yes, improve	105	70
No, the same condition	14	9.33
Not assess	18	12
Not properly washing hand	13	8.67
A dirty hand is not good for worship		
<i>Knowledge</i>		
Yes	126	84
No	24	16
<i>Attitude</i>		
Completely Agree	35	23.33
Agree	66	44
Impartial	32	21.33
Disagree	17	11.33
<i>Practice</i>		
Yes, always	117	78
Not, always	33	22
Never wash	0	0

In Hindu society, cleanliness is an important component of purity. Hindu culture also holds the view that keeping one's body and clothing clean is a good habit before offering prayers to the gods and goddesses. However, society may be changed or in the same position. 126 (84%) of the respondents knew that dirty hand is not good for offering prayers to the divinity while 24 (16%) of the respondents did not know in this regard. 35 (23.33%) of the respondents completely agreed, 66 (44%) agreed, 32 (21.33%) were impartial and 17 (11.33%) disagreed that dirty hand is not appropriate for worship.

D. Household Sanitation

Household sanitation includes a wide range of tasks like the safe disposal of solid waste and wastewater, kitchen cleaning, smokeless stoves, grounds maintenance, dry racks, and more (Bista & Gautam, 2008; Bista & Paudel, 2075 V.S.). Regular compound cleaning and early morning cleaning were selected as the household sanitation practices for the study.

Regular compound cleanliness for HH sanitation that known by 107 (71.33%) of the respondents while 43 (28.67%) did not accept the for need regular cleanliness. Those respondents said that regular cleanliness may not be needed for household sanitation. Regarding regular cleanliness, 83 (55.33%) of the respondents completely agreed, 24 (16%) agreed only, 33 (22%) were impartial and 10 (6.67%) disagreed on regular compound cleanliness for HH sanitation. 92 (61.33%) of the respondents were regular, 34 (26.67%) were sometimes, 9 (6%) were not sure and 15 (10%) were when feeling dirty for regular compound cleanliness for household sanitation in practice.

Table No 5: Cleanliness of Household Compound

Regular compound cleanliness for HH sanitation	N-150	%
<i>Knowledge</i>		
Yes	107	71.33
No	43	28.67
<i>Attitude</i>		
Completely Agree	83	55.33
Agree	24	16
Impartial	33	22
Disagree	10	6.67
<i>Practice</i>		
one time of a day	92	61.33
Sometimes	34	22.67
Not sure	9	6
When feel dirty	15	10
Early morning cleanliness is a way to the deity's happiness		
<i>Knowledge</i>		
Yes	87	58
No	63	42
<i>Attitude</i>		
Completely Agree	34	22.67
Agree	53	35.33

Impartial	54	36
Disagree	9	6
Practice		
Yes, clean	66	44
No, but clean	22	14.67
Not clean	62	41.33

Several Hindu books and Hindu society's customs indicate the connection between household hygiene and Hinduism. Early morning hygiene is valued in Hindu culture as a way to please the gods. In the study, 87 (58%) of the respondents claimed that the early morning cleanliness of the HH compound made the deity happy, while 63 (42%) said they had no concept. The early morning of the HH is a way to please gods, said 34 (22.67%) of the respondents. In addition, 53 (35.33%) agreed, 54 (35.33%) were impartial, and 9 (6%) disagreed with the statement. In the normal practice of the respondents, 66 (44%) of the respondents responded yes and cleaned the HH compound every early morning however 22 (14.67%) of the respondents cleaned every early morning but they did not do it for deity happiness. 62 (41.33%) of the respondents indicated that they did not believe and did not practice the HH compound cleanliness early morning.

Discussion

The main focus of the study is on how Hindu literature connected cleanliness, belief, culture, and religion to sanitation and hygiene. The study considers sanitation and hygiene in numerous aspects, including religion, social prestige & and self-satisfaction, health, etc. The study selected the use of toilets, personal hygiene, safe drinking water, and household sanitation as variables. The study conducted at the Chunikhel Hindu Society sampled 150 adult persons. Secondary information was collected from Hindu-related works of literature whereas primary was gathered from questionnaires and observation.

After reviewing Hindu scriptures, it was found that cleanliness and hygiene have been highly prioritized in Hindu religious writings primarily for purity, belief, ritual, and divinity. Every ritual's activities like *Navarāna*, *Vratibandha*, *Vivāha*, *Mṛtyu*, *Śrad'dha* kind of worship, etc. concerned cleanliness such as wearing cloth, hand washing, bathing, worship-place, etc. It was also found that the people were very serious regarding sanitation and hygiene during the time of religious and ritual activities.

The respondents were male & female with illiterate to college-level education and their age were from 35 to above 65 years. Nature of sex, education, and age belief they could represent the person of the society. Drinking water is the life of human beings. Just 11.33% of the respondents disagreed that treating drinking water is necessary to improve health, whereas 88.67% of the respondents know treated/safe water. The majority of respondents drink clean water. 40.67% of the respondents disagreed that safe water is solely helpful for religious activities, while 59.33% of the respondents knew that unsafe water is not suitable for religious activities. 40.67% of the respondents did not prioritize using only clean water in their divinity activities. Modern Hindu society allows for flexibility, which is a form of change.

A quantitative indicator of sanitation, the household toilet, is crucial for preventing water-borne diseases as well as for socio-cultural and religious considerations. The majority of the respondents were familiar with the best toilet to use in preventing diarrheal illnesses. Just 3.33% of respondents disagreed that a safe toilet is necessary. Almost all respondents were regularly utilizing a clean and safe toilet. This information demonstrated that safe toilet is important for both health and religion. Open defecation has been discussed in several literary works as both a sin and a health risk. In terms of whether or not open defecation is sinful, only 44.67% of the respondents knew, but 55.33 % knew from a health perspective. Ultimately, all respondents, excluding emergencies, were using the toilet, whether for religious or health reasons. This knowledge informs us that open defecation raises concerns for both health and religion.

Despite many personal hygiene practices, hand washing was selected for measuring personal hygiene. Hand washing is presented in two ways like prevention of diseases and a form of devotion in the Hindu society. The majority of respondents (82%) were aware of the significance of washing hands with soap before eating (82%). The importance of hand washing for improving health was internalized by 95.44% of the respondents. 70% of the respondents cleaned their hands with soap was beneficial. It is required to wash hands before participating in religious activities, as 84% of the respondents were aware of and 78% did. Another aspect of Hinduism is cleanliness, whether it is of the hands or the complete body. But even in Hindu society, washing hands with soap is a significant sign of personal hygiene in the present.

The household sanitation habits for this study were regular compound cleaning and cleaning in the early morning. While the respondents view an unclean household compound as a sign of the filthiness inside the house, the household compound is a way for people to bring God into their homes. 71.33% of the respondents agreed that regular compound cleaning was necessary, 55.33% agreed, and 61.33% did it regularly. But there were good habits in every home. Early morning hygiene is revered in Hindu culture because of the relationship between household sanitation and Hinduism which is indicated by several Hindu scriptures and rituals of Hindu society. Just 44% of those who believed this performed it, while 41.33% did not clean early for the sake of spirituality. 58% said that early morning (before the sun shines) cleanliness makes the deity happy. The majority of the respondents clean their homes frequently, but not always in time for God.

Conclusion

This study concludes that cleanliness and hygiene have been prioritized in Hindu religious writings primarily for purity, belief, ritual, and divinity. Thus, before engaging in any religious activities, personal hygiene and cleanliness were required. Doing any religious activities was viewed as depravity when there was no hygiene. The current Hindu community is evolving to recognize the need for cleanliness and hygiene for not just religious but also physical, social, and psychological well-being. As a result, sanitation and hygiene are gradually becoming a component of numerous sectors.

The respondents have superior knowledge, favorable attitudes, and good behaviors around sanitation and hygiene. Age differences in knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors were primarily influenced by religious factors; sex and education had no bearing on these factors. Few people practice good hygiene than are aware of it. Sanitary practices and hygienic behaviors in practices can be promoted by raising awareness of the benefits of sanitation and hygiene. Hindu society today recognizes the higher value of hygiene and sanitation for enhancing health than purity and worship. Based on the study, Hindu society internalized and practiced sanitation and hygiene behavior from both religious and health perspectives. Lastly, sanitation and hygiene are practices that Hindu society has encompassed from a religious and health perspective.

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