



People's Education Society's, Mumbai

## DR. AMBEDKAR COLLEGE OF ARTS & COMMERCE

Jai-Jawan Nagar, Yerwada, Pune - 411006.

Affiliated To Savitribai Phule Pune University

PU/PN/AC/067 (1985)

H.S.C. Code No. J. 11-11-034

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During the year 2019-20, the best practices conducted by the college are the Nirmalya Collection and its proper utilisation with the involvement of the students.

**The Title of the Practice:** 'Nirmalya Sankalan'

(Collection of floral and other organic waste generated during Ganesh Festival.)

**The Objectives:**

To collect floral and other organic waste generated during the Ganesh Festival before it is dumped into the City Rivers. This helps the rivers to remain clean and pollution-free during the ten-day-long festival.

To prevent water pollution and clean water before it goes from Pune city to Solapur district Ujani-dam.

To enlighten devotees about river pollution caused by the immersion of plaster of pairs idols of lord Ganesh into rivers, also flowing the Nirmalya into waterways.

To give the festival an Eco-friendly colour to prevent the impact of pollution damage. Thus making Bhart more 'Swatch.'

**The Context –**

During the 6th month of the Marathi calendar every year. In Bhadrapad month, a ten-day-long lord Ganesh festival is celebrated in Maharashtra with great fanfare. The festival has religious as well as historical significance. During the freedom struggle against British rule, Lokmanya Tilak celebrated this religious festival on public platforms. The programmes during the festival were used to make the public aware of foreign law. Hence, Public Ganesh Mandals were established in all localities of the city. Today, thousands of Ganesh mandals are celebrating the festival in the town. With these public celebrations, the Ganesh festival is also celebrated individually in many lakhs of city houses.

During the festival, Ganesh idols are placed for worship on 1st day, i.e., Ganesh Chaturthi. These idols are worshipped on every morning and evening. Flowers, tree leaves, Garlands of various flowers, Coconuts and prasad are used for the worship. Before every pooja, the material used in the previous one is removed as 'Nirmalya'. All this organic 'Nirmalya' is collected and stored during the ten-day festival. Few families celebrate the Ganesh festival for five days, and a few more for seven days. Most households in public Ganesh Mandals celebrate the festival for ten days. On the last day of celebration, i.e., either 5th, 7th or 10th day. The Ganesh Idols and the 'Nirmalya', i.e. the organic waste collected, are taken to river banks after religious pooja. The idols and Nirmalya are immersed in the flowing water of

rivers. Also, along with the Ganesh festival, the 'Gauri Poojan festival' is celebrated for three days, wherein Gauri Idols are worshipped with the same materials. This 'Nirmalya' is also collected with the idols of Goddess Gauri. It is also immersed in the river-flowing water on the 7th day of the Ganesh festival.

As a result of this immersion, hundreds of tonnes of water-insoluble plaster of Paris (from idols) and tonnes of organic waste are flown to City Rivers, causing large-scale pollution of water, rivers, and air.

Full-scale efforts are being made to avoid this pollution using eco-friendly methods and enlighten people about the effects of immersing 'Nirmalya' plaster of Paris idols in rivers.

Our college also contributes to this effort through our best practice of 'Nirmalya Sankalan.'

### **The Practice:**

During the Ganesh festivals, on the auspicious 5th, 7th and 10th day of celebration, around 30 students and a few teachers of our college are present on the river bank, i.e., at Visarjan Ghats at Yerwada. Along the visarjan ghats, large water tanks for the immersion of idols and large containers for Nirmala Sankaran (collections) are provided by PMC.

Our students and teachers meet the devotees coming for immersion to persuade them to make 'visarjan' of idols in the artificial tanks instead of flowing water of rivers. They also persuade devotees to put their 'Nirmalya' in the container provided by PMC. This organic 'Nirmalya' is further treated and converted to high-quality organic fertiliser in the plant of PMC.

The devotees are made aware of the water and air pollution and its looming threat to people's health without harming their religious feelings.

Our college has carried out the practice for the last eight years. Our sustained efforts in this direction are bearing fruits now evident yearly.

### **Evidence of Success:**

Our colleges' sustained efforts in this direction by various social groups are testing success now.

A Few years back, most devotees ignored our request to immerse the idols in the water tanks. But now the percentage of people using tanks is increasing every year significantly. The devotees are also bringing their 'Nirmalya' duly classified as wet-dry form and helping in our efforts. Earlier, our volunteers and PMC workers used to watch as devotees dumped their Nirmalya in the river. Still, as devotees are making a beeline for tanks and 'Nirmalya' containers, these workers are becoming very busy.

Demand for new immersion tanks in various localities is increasing every year. Many societies are also coming forward to carry immersion on their premises.

There used to be occasionally ugly incidences when we tried to persuade devotees. But now, such occurrences have come to nearly nil.

Our sustained requests to devotees to shift to clay idols instead of plaster of Paris idols are also getting better responses. People are increasingly using clay idols, which dissolve quickly in the water.

It is also observed that devotees we requested about the eco-friendly methods are now persuading other devotees about this practice.

All this evidence of success makes us more determined to follow our best practices with more vigour and make Bharat more 'Swatch' during the festival.

### **Problems Encountered -**

We face various problems while implementing our best practices. The main problem faced is a strong belief of people. For generations, people have seen that Ganesh idols and the Nirmalya are immersed in the flowing water of the river at the end of the festival. So, they are reluctant to listen to our students. But students try to convince them by highlighting environmental issues such as pollution, rising temperatures, reducing rain, etc. Now, people, especially of new generations, are understanding these issues. They are currently responding to us positively.

Less or no help from other sections of society and lesser participation of other people in such drives is also a constraint.



  
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