

# To pee is to be

Saturday 25 November 2006, by [SENGUPTA Amit](#) (Date first published: November 2006).

**That's what we are, Hoo Ha India, superpower nuclear India, floating on public spectacles of yellow swimming pools of male piss, with condemned rivers of chemicalised filth and tonnes of garbage scattered like testimonies of greatness.**

Delhi,

So what was wrong when a Dutch embassy official said that Delhi looks like a garbage dump? Why did our patriotic instincts get so aroused that we almost condemned this frank, free speech? Delhi is a non-biodegradable, backward capitalist, semi-feudal, patriarchal, uncultured garbage dump, why shy away from that? Not only that, Delhi has turned into a vast, sprawling, ever, macho public urinal, a shit hole, a faceless ghetto, an architect's black-hole nemesis, an octopus without a soul or belonging or sensitivity or civic sense. So what is so Mera Bharat Mahan about Delhi being a damned garbage dump? Can't you see it all over the place, from the posh, palatial south zones to the twilight zones of the east and west, with the demolished slums in between? Surely, even tinted windows of swanky cars are transparent, aren't they? So why hide the gaze?

And where do the women go? The mother, the housewife, the working women? On the streets, in marketplaces, public parks, public transport, long distance roadways buses, flyovers, national highways -why are they condemned to hold on while men are all over pissing in stark daylight as if it's a tide on a full-moon night. And where do you walk? The slimy, stagnant, fragrant pavements are full of pissers in full public glory. The roads and highways are full of pissers. Not only the nooks and corners, they are all over the ideal city-state. The entire city has become a virtual reality of a public urinal-the stench floating like a cliché.

Except that the Delhi and central governments, the MPs, the MLAs, the opposition politicians, the ruling party politicians, the police, the mandarins in the municipalities, the Union ministers, the ex-ministers, the bureaucrats and babus, the elite- eyes wide shut, the page 3 party-types with colonial hangovers, the upwardly mobile and the middle mobile, the fourth estate, the real estate-no one is willing to see this masculine display of public patriotism. Mass urinals as a tourist delight-welcome to this machismo capital of the power elite, the special dirty zone of organised filth and muck and gaseous, fungus-ridden waste and dirty waters. When the masses are against hygiene and aesthetics, and when the men have no shame, and when the government wears a sanitised chastity belt of cold-blooded ignorance, who can stop this great pissing nationalism of our nationhood defined, even while we put pictures of gods on walls, stairs, pavements, residential areas to stop people peeing and spitting?

And if you think this is because Delhi is flooded by the unwashed, the slum dweller, the landless poor and urban worker, the low-middle class uncultured vulture, and that it is a demographic paradigm shift that is polluting its geography, think again, and look back with originality, if not anger. That SUV, and not only with a UP or Haryana nameplate, its door half-open, its owner in a safari suit, doing it in the open courtyard of Pragati Maidan. Sometimes wife and daughter wait in the car till the man gives way to the basic looing instinct. This fascinating phenomena, truly, has broken all class barriers-the State has withered away and this philistine public piss joint is the only and ultimate utopia.

That's why they are pissing on the Lodi crematorium walls even as the dead depart for their final journey, inside public parks post-Pranayam, outside schools even as children cross the footpath, on the Yamuna bridge, car and scooter waiting, as a mother walks away quickly with her daughter; outside the gates of the palatial homes of our MPs and ministers in Lutyens' Delhi, outside hospitals like the All India Institute of Medical Sciences, where harried patients and their equally harried

relatives wait for buses on the road under the sun because the state has chosen to build no bus shelters here since the last 20 years, on flyovers, parking lots, pavements and bus stops, talking on cell phones, bang in front of those waiting for a bus, while the bus waits and the pissers zip it up and walk into the 'ladies only' seats, proud and ugly like pea-cocks.

In any case, most clean, new pay-and-use toilets, barring a handful, are loaded in favour of advertisers in prime locations. Good planning, as they say.

In any case, Delhi has no public space culture, no benches where you can write a letter, no open-air modest restaurants where you can read a book and drink a black coffee or beer, no footpaths or stairs where a young couple can hang out and smoke. Delhi hates its women, unlike Mumbai and Kolkata; women here are forever in danger of assault, physical, invisible, objectified, uncensored violence. Delhi is for the obscenely super rich, male and female, in affluent, sanitised, enclosed, air-conditioned, cocooned, protected zones, here they don't smell the stench; Delhi is also for the male masses, lower, middle, upwardly mobile, downwardly mobile, the poor, the migrant, the exiled, the conquerors of the golden city, the pissers of paradise.

A swank car stops at Nizamuddin crossing. The door opens as a window rolls down, a prosperous man puts his chubby face out, and out flows from his mouth a huge chunk of red liquid, a paan's remnants, and runs like a Persian carpet on the road. They are spitting everywhere, from bus windows on bikers, from truck windows on cyclists, from cars on pedestrians. If they could, they would piss from the windows.

They throw beer and coke cans, wafer packets, wrappers, plastic everywhere-the entire city is a bin. The city belongs to no one. No one belongs to the city. If you cheat me, I will cheat someone else. Me, mine, myself, who cares for Bhagidari? So why say, I love Delhi? Because Delhi is a sucked-up lollipop. Delhi is polythene, all over, on trees, dhabas, shops, inside the choked-up intestines of our homeless, holy cows eating polythene with glass, plastic, leather, shoes, tin, aluminium, metal, used

crackers, matchboxes, gutka packs in the garbage dumps. Gai hamari mata hai-the cow is our mother! So who will ask the Hindutva Godse Genius, if this is not cow slaughter, what is?

And where has the river gone? The pristine Yamuna at Yamunotri in the Himalayas, its magical origin, finds a magical metamorphosis at Wazirpur, in West Delhi, and becomes a divine nullah, a stagnant shitpot of millions, poisonous, full of effluents, garbage and chemicals. The river disappears, the dirty nullah resurrects everyday, even as Delhiites stop their cars and throw polythene packets full of ritualistic Hindu flowers into the abyss of this abysmal degradation. As I write this, thousands of Biharis are jumping into the half-white foam of this utterly filthy stagnation and celebrating Chatt in trans-Yamuna. So where did the crores of rupees spent on cleaning the river disappear? And what reflection can a narcissistic, consumerist, unaesthetic society find in the waters when it looks for its self-image? Shit. Our own shit.

Inside the water. Inside the ground water. Inside earth. Inside the food cycle. Inside the drinking water. Inside the intestines. Inside the mind. Shit. Our own shit.

Across Delhi, the new, green garbage containers designed by a genius dot the landscape like memorials. Except that dogs and pigs have found new homes, with the garbage spilling over and people jumping over them, like long jumpers in a nation with one Olympic bronze. So why spend crores on full-page ads asking people to protect themselves against the Aedes mosquito? The Aedes factory is right here, breeding, State-sponsored, all for free.

That's what we are, Hoo Ha India, the superpower, nuclear power capital, floating on yellow swimming pools of male piss, with a condemned river of fossilised shit and chemicalised filth, and thousands of tonnes of garbage scattered everywhere, like grand testimonies of a clean, happy, healthy society. Like philistines becoming reformers. Like reformers becoming philistines. Welcome to the capital city of power and pelf. The ideal State's public urinal

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**P.S.**

\* From Hardnews, November 2006. Circulated by South Asia Citizens Wire | November 25, 2006 | Dispatch No. 2324.