

The role of citizens in reducing the level of pollution

[Environment](#), [Pollution](#)



ABSTRACT

This analysis also tries to discuss the role of citizens and how it can help in reducing the pollution levels in the Capital and also the required coordination and cooperation between the citizens and the government and even among the governments i. e. the Centre and the State government. It also analyses that what are the major contributors to the increasing pollution levels in Delhi according to the various newspapers. This editorial analysis aims at bringing out different opinions, perspectives and stances taken by different newspapers on this indiscernible menace predominant in the Capital.

INTRODUCTION

Delhi is a union territory which is jointly administered by the central government and by the state government and it has an enormous population of 16.78 million with an area of 1483 km². This city has a lot of historical, political and economic significance. But this historical city from the past few years is facing a substantial problem, the problem of air pollution in the city which has put a question mark on the city's as well as the citizens' future.

So what is air pollution?

“ Air pollution is the introduction of chemicals, particulate matter, or biological materials that cause harm or discomfort to humans or other living organisms, or cause damage to the natural environment or built environment, into the atmosphere”. This air pollution is caused by various factors like vehicular emissions, irrational waste management system (burning of waste by Municipal Corporation of Delhi), industrial emissions, road dust, construction activities, stubble burning and so on.

This paper will study different opinions from various newspapers in reference to the air pollution crisis in Delhi. It would like to analyse them from a sociological perspective. The paper focuses on bringing different stances of the publications on the much-criticised stubble burning. Also, it brings the prevalent class distinction in Delhi which has a major role in Delhi.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This project is about the air pollution menace and subsequently deteriorating health conditions in Delhi. The topic “ Airpocalypse: The Choking Capital” was researched by doing the analysis of this crisis which has been a national concern from the past few years. The topic was critically researched and analysed by studying the editorials of various newspapers and the guidance of the professor was taken into consideration. The editorials analysed in the paper are from national and international newspapers like The Hindu, The Indian Express and The New York Times. The newspapers have expressed their differing opinions which have been analysed and also the various solutions they have come up with which can help in curbing this problem are also discussed in detail. The researcher has tried to do the analysis with the objective of recognising the focus and the distinct notions of different publications on the topic.

ANALYSIS

The Hindu: Delhi’s smog is Delhi’s doing

The editorial titled “ Delhi’s smog is Delhi’s doing” of the newspaper begins with the note that the resource-poor farmers are the ones who become scapegoats whenever the country is in crisis whether it is the overutilization

of groundwater or the pollution hazard pervasive in the capital, Delhi. It argues that Delhi is facing the “ worst spell of persistent smog” in the past two decades and for it the farmers are made solely liable for. The newspaper opposes the prevalent common notion of crop residue burning in states of Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh being the biggest reason behind air pollution in Delhi.

The government, both State and Centre, from half a decade has been blaming the stubble burning by the farmers for the pollution not keeping in mind other major factors that are killing the metropolis from inside. The factors that the gazette has come up with are wide-ranging- Diwali fireworks, vehicular emissions, industries, power plants, waste burning and construction activities are the major factors contributing to the extreme pollution levels. The tabloid supports its argument why cities like Amritsar, Lucknow, and Chandigarh don't have alarmingly high pollution rates keeping in mind the fact that these cities are the one which pretty much lies in these states.

A pertinent question which arises is regarding the reason why the states which are allegedly responsible for pollution in the capital don't have high pollution levels in their own states. It argues that the pollution continues to persist and even reach higher levels even after the burning stops. It comes up with the fact that Delhi has the highest per capita registration of high emission vehicles in the country which has trebled since 2017. It continues to say that there are many residential quarters located near the industrial zones which don't let the pollution to escape and it acts as a barrier and a

trap, so it's the flawed inner structure of the capital itself that is causing the pollution for which the farmers have to face criticism.

It supports the act of farmers of burning the crop residual as it advocates that it is a practice being performed for centuries. It is the most economical method in terms of money and in terms of time as well. Economical because the farmers just can't afford to remove the crop mechanically and its management with growing input costs and the time aspect is also essential because the farmers have just three weeks between the kharif harvest and rabi sowing to clear the field. Toward the end, the article suggests various methods and solutions which can be implemented to handle the pollution problem rationally.

According to the analysis, it is quite evident that the editorial is advocating the stand of the depressed farmers of the northern states. It criticizes the government for shifting the burden and blame of pollution from itself to these gullible farmers. The daily has researched widely and provides data and various studies in the article to conclude that the top contributor to the pollution in Delhi has been vehicular pollution (2014), garbage management (2015) and road dust (2016) but stubble burning has never topped the list and has remained below in ranking. The evaluation brings out that the newspaper is of the view that it is the problem in the internal structure of the metropolis because of which this menace is just growing and there seems to be no end to it. By internal structure the researcher comprehends that it means the overpopulated vehicles, the waste burning, road dust and also the major one is that of the no realisation on the part of the people of Delhi as

their role as individuals, as members of the society and as a means through which a change in this widespread problem can happen.

The newspaper, unlike others, justified the act of stubble burning by the farmers as economical and time-saving action. The analysis brings out that journal talks about the much-needed innovation and research and development, sponsored by the state, to manage the crop residue even though the share of it in causing pollution in the capital is quite less which could reduce the pollution to some extent. It also wants the government to provide financial aids and incentives that the crop residue can be used in biomass plants and generate green power. The daily suggests both the State and Central government to come together and to draw consensus and come up with ideas that could reschedule the current model of urban development. The editorial ends up with a positive note and with a ray of hope that the government would look at its suggestions and it would help in addressing and curbing the problem of pollution in Delhi and making Delhi liveable again.

The Indian Express: My right to clean air

As the editorial, titled “ My right to clean air” begins, it generates a sense of fear and concern in the mind of the reader. The author of the editorial feels nervous about what health issues he and his family may have to face by inhaling the polluted air of the capital. The article is of the view that very little is being done to reduce the pollution in “ the citadel of democracy” and is becoming choking in nature day by day. The article is critical of the actions taken by the legislative and administrative framework which hasn’t been

able to bring the required change and impact. Because of the legislative and administrative framework failing the judiciary and the executive have to come in the picture and has to perform the functions that the former is supposed to do. The latter at various instances has “ undertaken ad hoc emergency measures whenever the situation reaches a boiling point”. This leads to unplanned measures like odd-even policy, banning firecrackers etc. which just can't bring the change as compared to the comprehensive policy plan.

The source is of the view that pollution is doing more harm as compared to violence, war, hunger and disease combined. The bureaucrats, the ministers and all other people who are a part of the democratic system must come together, rise and give the public a statutory mechanism through which the people can get some relief. It suggests that a statutory high-level committee needs to be formed up comprising of the concerned states' chief ministers and the prime minister as this matter has so much gravity in it and it puts a big question mark on the future of the people. The statutory committee will have to screen its policy execution in influenced states and to give satisfactory budgetary distributions for its implementation as for both short-term and long-term measures. It also suggests building up of a platform which is accessible to the people and through which the people can express their views of the policy and also suggest solutions to the problem. This would widen the horizon of the policy and the government's initiatives.

According to the author's analysis, the newspaper is a bit biased and is criticizing the government to an extent. The reason behind it could be that

the author of the editorial is a Congress MP and it has, therefore, criticized both the AAP government in Delhi and the BJP government at the central for not coming up with solutions. It alleges that all the government does is blame game as the Delhi government blames the Punjab and Haryana government, the Central government blames the Delhi government and so on and by doing this they just forget the motive of doing away with the pollution in the capital.

It is highly critical that the legislative and the administrative framework isn't performing as required and because of which the judiciary has to do what it isn't made for i. e. proper administration of the capital. It argues even the policies that the government comes up with aren't planned, lack proper direction and execution. It doesn't pay heed to the benefit that certain policies of the government like odd even policy, ban on firecrackers etc. has brought to the citizens and to the society as a whole and it just criticizes it. It doesn't think on the aspect that if the burning of firecrackers hadn't been banned in the capital it would have worsened the conditions during the wintertime accompanied with the stubble burning from the neighbouring states. Also, it doesn't look at the positive aspect of the odd-even policy that how it decongested the roads and travelling time got reduced to a great extent because of which, consequently, vehicular emissions reduced a lot and there was a decrease in the pollution level although how meagre it would have been.

The presentation of facts in the newspaper is such that it arises a feeling of helplessness and distress. But the gazette feels that a change can be made

and there's no scope of being pessimistic. It states examples of various cities like Mexico City, London and Beijing which faced the similar issue but overcame it and the pollution level in these cities now is pretty much low. This could be achieved by the mutual cooperation between the concerned state governments and also between the Delhi state government and central government. The analysis also brings out to notice that the newspaper is of the view that people of Delhi should also recognize their roles as citizens. They need to support the initiatives taken by the government and try their best to reform the policies and be a part of the movement of providing lungs to the capital.

The New York Times: Choking on Air in New Delhi

The editorial titled “ Choking on Air in New Delhi” initiates with a very negative note and with the description of pathetic conditions Delhi had to face during the early winters of 2017. It tells about the temporary shutdown of schools, flight delays, visibility reaching its worst levels, car pileups and so on. It states the condition of the capital as “ public health emergency” backed up by the statement of the Indian Medical Association. The editorial argues that the main culprit that turns Delhi into a “ gas chamber” are the farmers of the neighbouring states of Delhi i. e. Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh. The farmers are often seen as the main culprit because of the practice of crop residue burning which is usually done in the months of October and November and it is the most cost and time efficient method for clearing the land for the farmers.

The newspaper places the stubble burning as the top reason behind the unlivable conditions in Delhi. Although the Supreme Court has banned the burning of crackers and the government has reintroduced odd-even policy, it won't bring much relief because the crop burning remains unchecked. The condition in New Delhi has reached such a pathetic situation that the schools had to be shut down as many students were seen vomiting after the pollution levels in the metropolis reached its peak. The publication advocates that Prime Minister Narendra Modi needs to fulfil the general demand of the people and come up with a solution to tackle it for once and all.