The Nirmal Gram Puraskar (NGP)-awarded Seetharampuram Gram Panchayat (GP) in Hanumanthuni Padu Mandal of Prakasam district fell back from its estimable stage, mainly because of attitude of people and water scarcity. The efforts put in by Ravi Venkat Narayana Reddy, the former President of the village in achieving the NGP, need to be replicated now.

The village was awarded the ‘Shubhram’ award for the year 2007-08 under NGP. Chintala Cheruvu. Venkatanarayana Reddy, the then president of the village received the award on 1-11-2008 from the then Chief Minister, Late Dr. YS. Raja Sekhar Reddy for achieving clean sanitation in the village.

**Attitudes Matter.....**

Every household in the village has a toilet. They were put in use for some time by all the members in the house. This was certainly because of constant efforts done in the form of awareness, meetings and discussions regarding sanitation by the then President Narayana Reddy. Years have passed by since the attainment of NGP Puraskar for achieving the clean sanitation. People in the village have again started open defecation. What could be the reason for the act of open defecation even though every household has a toilet? Is it because of absence of constant sensitization? Or the habit of people?
The village elders, village functionaries precisely said that attitude is the first cause of open defecation. Of course, there is a water problem which adds fuel to the fire of open defecation in the village.

Kandula. Venkata Subba Reddy, native of the village, a Janmabhoomi Committee member and also serving as Mandal Farmer, president says, “When Narayana Reddy was sarpanch, he constructed about 210 toilets during 2007-2008. Massive awareness about sanitation was created through street plays, meetings and various Information, Education and Communication tools. Toilets for all houses were built with low cost by making bricks and cement rings in the village and procuring some material required for the construction of the nearby town. In the beginning, every household used toilet. But after some years people started going for open defecation. The chief reason is the attitudes of people”. Open land is available for defecation and people just forgot about the importance of sanitation, he added.

**Acute Water Problem…**

The second important reason which supports the people going out to defecate in the open is an acute water problem. The village has been facing severe water problem since January, 2015.

To overcome the water problem, Panchayat has tried to dig 11 bore wells at the depth of 250 feet but the efforts were in vain. No water was found. Thanks to watershed program. The 24 bore wells situated around 4 Check Dams, which were constructed to the south of the village, are now the source of the drinking water for the village. All the bore wells are full of water owing to water conserved by these check dams. Every day, 5 tankers of water is being supplied from these bore wells by the Panchayat. Also, there is a second source of water from the bore wells which are located in the ayacut of lakes situated in the north of the village. The quantity of water being supplied is only for drinking and other house consumption. The households described during the discussion that, “As the water being supplied is not adequate, we are going out for open defecation”.

The water problem can be solved through Valigonda project, which is under construction. The village would be the first one to get benefit under the project.

**Way Forward…**

A massive awareness, sensitisation and certain mutually agreed social norms are to be laid down to regain the status of NGP. The completion of Valigonda project can solve the water problem of the village in the near future. What really need to be dealt with is the attitudes of people.

**Solution…**

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Seetharampuram GP was once an open defecation free village which slipped back to insanitary practices because of lack of planning to approach future issues. In addition to acute water scarcity, no constant monitoring and proper awareness on ills of insanitary practices has led the GP back to open defecation.

This case highlights the importance of the need for proper motivation, constant monitoring and plan for future changes to ensure sustain in the GPs that become Open Defecation Free (ODF) under Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM).