The Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) is witnessing high technological innovations with respect to toilets like leech pits in place of Septic tanks or use of fly-ash bricks or like in the case of Dwarapudi Gram Panchayat (GP) installing “bio toilets”.

Adopted by Hon’ble Minister for Civil Aviation Mr. Ashok Gajapathi Raju, Dwarapudi GP has had the attention of the District and Mandal level officials to achieve open defecation free status.

As an experiment that could be replicated in other GP if successful, part of six community bio-toilets have been constructed to provide sanitation access to citizens belonging to lower castes in the GP.

Bio-Toilets have numerous advantages of which one major advantage is that the effluent is odourless, tolerable and colourless as compared to the end products of other kinds of toilets. This is because bio-toilets have treatment chambers as a part of the system which treats human waste before they waste comes out, thereby making it colourless, odourless and slightly cleaner than waste in both septic tank and leech pit systems.
Issue with this bio-toilet

In Dwarapudi GP, bio-toilets have been built right next to the settlements of the lower caste communities. However, the issue in the GP as narrated by one of the citizens is “we were told that these toilets will not have bad smell, but believe it or not the bad smell near the outlet is unbearable”. “The outlet of this toilet is right in front of our hut. We are not able to live in our house and most of the times cook and eat it one of the neighbours house”.

Complete area around these toilets seems to face this issue except the intensity of bad smell varies depending on the proximity to the toilets. For some it is very high and unbearable and for others it is slightly less nevertheless it affects the daily living of a part of the GP’s citizens.

Every technology comes with its own loopholes, it is for us to probe into them and rectify them for efficient and effective utilization. Similarly, the issue of unbearable odour from these bio-toilets could probably be because of issues in treatment mechanisms of the toilet or simple misplacement of the outlet both which can be rectified easily if noticed at the right time.

Dwarapudi’s story tells us that sanitation cannot be achieved just by 100% construction of toilets or introducing newer techniques of toilet construction. Post construction monitoring to get a feedback from citizens and addressing their issues timely is an important aspect to behaviour change that is key to achieving sanitation in India.