HOW SAFE AND PURE IS YOUR FILTERED WATER?

Two decades ago consumers never questioned the quality and purity of drinking water supplied by water boards. Safety and hygiene was taken for granted. But not so anymore. With more than 80 per cent of the diseases are waterborne and water board doing little to improve the quality, consumers have started to protect themselves. Consequently, water filters and purifiers adore every kitchen or drawing rooms.

While water filters and purifiers are sold briskly in the market, manufacturers seldom provide full and accurate information about their products. Consumers in their anxiousness to protect themselves and their family from water borne diseases, very rarely enquire about the technology used and its suitability while buying water filters and purifiers. In the absence of adequate product information, consumers have to depend on exaggerated claims made by the manufactures and sellers.

To bridge the information gap, the Voluntary Organisation in the Interest of Consumers Education (VOICE), a New Delhi based consumer organization has tested 13 leading brands of water filters and purifiers for 20 parameters.

The filters of three varieties viz. ceramic candle filters, ion exchange purifiers and filters based on Ultra Violet (UV) technology were tested at the Food Research Analysis Centre and has come out with some surprising facts. In the case of ceramic candle filters, the main function of a candle is to remove suspended matters and to some extent bacteria. Of the six brands of candle filters namely Butterfly, Maruti, Bajaj, Supreme, OK, Rama and Tualsi, only the first two removed suspended matters completely. Others were not effective.

Resin (Ion Exchange) technology based filters like Usha, Zero-B, Singer, Aquaries-II were tested and found that Zero-B (puriline) did not remove taste and colour of the water. Similarly it did not remove the residual chlorine completely. Even Usha failed in this test. Ion Exchange is supposed to remove or at least reduce alkalinity. All brands except Puriline were able to reduce alkalinity to a satisfactory limit.

As for the removal of suspended matters, Singer-Aquarius tops the list with 100 per cent followed by Usha (94%) Zero-B (87%) with a overall rating of 43 per cent. Zero-B is said to be very poor. Water filters and purifiers based on UV technology are supposed to be the most modern and are effective for removal of off-taste, colour and gases like chlorine. It also kills harmful bacteria. That is theory.

Of the brands tested under this category, Kenstar was found to be effective in the removal of all the three undesirable elements. Aquaguard could remove colour, odour and taste effectively, but was not so in removing residual chlorine.

Microbiological analysis is one of the most important criterion to judge the suitability of water for drinking purposes since it represents the hygienic conditions

under which water is purified as well as to know the presence of some of the spore forming bacteria like Clostridium, Vibrio Chlorea. Fortunately the entire range of filters tested were found effective in the removal of harmful bacteria.

Consumers normally believe that only products that are costly and highly advertised are good and effective. But report after reports have proved this belief wrong. On the other hand this belief wrong. On the other hand, it is cheaply priced, local made products that have come out successful. The test on water filters has once again revealed that all conventional types of filters using ceramic candles are 100% active in removal of total bacterial count.

One fails to understand why manufacturers do not provide full and accurate information about their products, while they spend huge money on advertisements. Some provided wrong information. For instance Kenstar claimed that it consumes only 25 watts of power, but actually it consumed 39.95 watts.