

JAN SPIT

LIBERATION OF SCAVENGERS THROUGH LOW COST SANITATION

With best compliment from
SULABH SHAUCHALAYA
SANSTHAN



Campaign launched by
the Ministries of Home Affairs, Works & Housing,
the Planning Commission, the HUDCO. the State
Governments and Voluntary Organisations.



By courtesy of
SULABH INTERNATIONAL,
(a voluntary social organisation),
Patna, (Bihar), India.

The Ministry of Works & Housing, Govt. of India, had launched a massive programme in India for the eradication of the evil practice of carrying night-soil on head by a separate caste, Bhangi (scavenger), in the year 1967 on the eve of the birth centenary celebrations of Rashtrapita Mahatma Gandhi. It was the cherished desire of the Rashtrapita that this demeaning system of scavenging should be done away with as early as possible. To achieve this goal he suggested to his fellow workers to do cleaning work themselves. On several occasions he himself cleaned the night-soil. Mahatma Gandhi went to the extent of saying :

“I may not be born again and if it happens, I will like to be born in a family of scavengers so that I may relieve them of inhuman, unhealthy and hateful practice of carrying headloads of night-soil.”

In the year 1968, the Ministry of Works & Housing, Govt. of India, directed all States to eliminate the practice of scavenging by converting all the existing dry latrines into flush latrines and to connect them to sewers, wherever available, or to leaching pits if sewers were not available. The Ministry suggested that this would be the best tribute to Rashtrapita Mahatma Gandhi if this sub-human system was done away with during the Gandhi centenary period.



Liberated Scavengers

Although the set targets could not be achieved, yet really this was a beginning to achieve the end. This worked like a candle in darkness.

Bihar was one of the few States in India which took up this programme in the year 1967 and it started giving loans and grants to the needy house owners who wanted to get their dry latrines converted into flush latrines. Although funds were available and municipalities were there to implement the programme, yet it could not make headway due to the absence of a voluntary social organisation which could work as a catalytic agency to help the bureaucratic set-up and persuade the house owners to adopt this new technology named Sulabh Shauchalaya (hand-flush waterseal sanitary compost toilet or pour flush toilet).

Sulabh Shauchalaya is cheap to construct. The cost of construction of one unit of Sulabh Shauchalaya in Bihar is Rs. 860/-, Orissa Rs. 1,000/-, Uttar Pradesh Rs. 930/- and Tripura Rs. 1,700/-.

It requires only two litres of water to flush the excreta from the pan to the tank.

It is totally odourless.

It does not require the services of scavengers to clean it. House owners themselves or labourers can do it.

In Sulabh Shauchalaya the night-soil gets converted into manure which is very useful for raising farm production.

The place where Sulabh Shauchalaya is constructed can be utilised for many other purposes.

This can be constructed in the smallest available space, even in a bed-room.

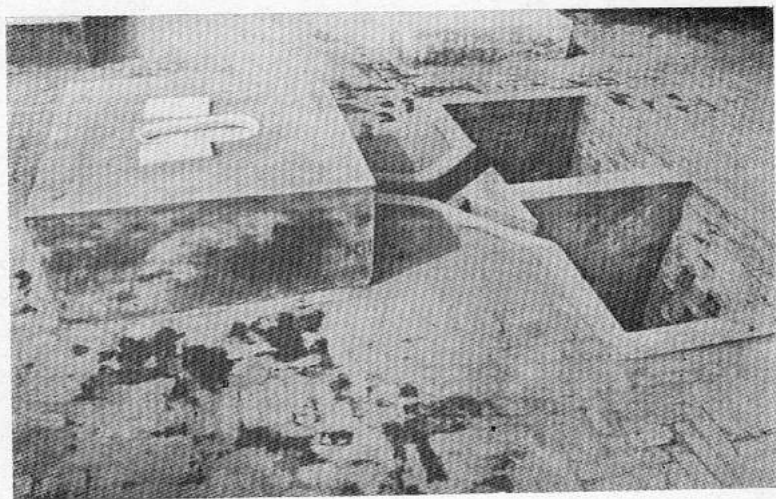
In the year 1974, when the Sulabh International (formerly known as Sulabh Shauchalaya Sansthan) emerged on the scene, the programme of conversion of dry latrines into Sulabh Shauchalayas could make headway.

Motivation, persuasion, construction, follow-up action, publicity and researches etc. all are done by the Sulabh International with the close co-operation of the Govt. of Bihar and the local bodies.

Now, the Sulabh International has extended its activities to other States like Jammu & Kashmir, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Tripura, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal. This organisation is also helping the Sulabh

East Consultant, Nepal, in the implementation of this programme.

The Ministry of Home Affairs, Govt. of India, has taken up this programme under the Protection of Civil Rights Act, 1955. The Home Ministry had given financial assistance to the Govt. of Bihar for converting all the existing dry latrines into Sulabh Shauchalayas in two towns, namely, Biharsharif and Purnia. 125 scavengers of Biharsharif and 83 of Purnia have been freed from the demeaning practice of carrying night-soil and they have been provided alternative employments like cleaning of roads and drains etc. Attempts are being made to train them in other occupations like typing, nursing, driving, dairy farming, carpentry etc.

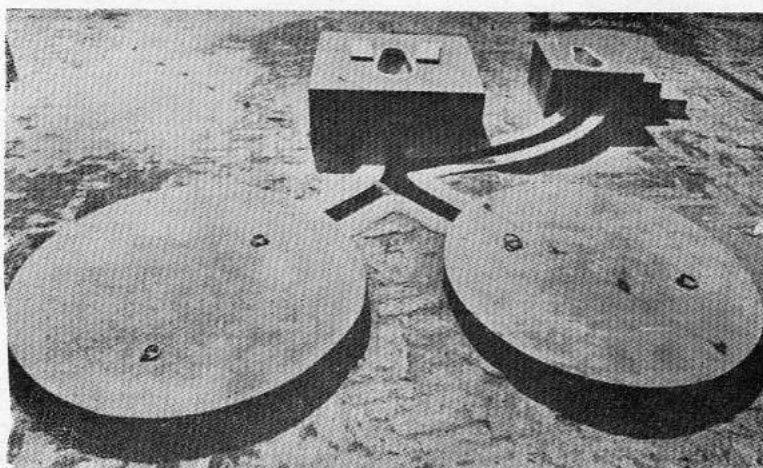


Sulabh Shauchalaya with rectangular tank (pit)

Three more towns of Bihar, namely Chaibasa, Daltonganj and Madhubani, are also going to be declared free (Bhangi Mukta) by the end of November, 1982, with the financial assistance of the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India. Being encouraged by the success achieved in Bihar, the Ministry has taken up similar programmes in other States of this country also.

The Govt. of Bihar, with its own funds, has freed three more towns, namely, Ranchi, Deoghar and Saharsa and 12 more will be declared Bhangi-Mukta by the end of this financial year. The crusade is on to eradicate this evil practice of carrying night-soil on head by the end of the Seventh Five-Year Plan period.

In Bihar about 75,000 dry latrines have been converted and about 1,000 scavengers have been freed from this sub-human system of carrying night-soil.



Sulabh Shauchalaya with circular tank

In West Bengal, under the jurisdiction of the C.M.D.A., about 5,000 service latrines have been converted. In Tripura 1,000 and in Lucknow 100 service latrines have so far been converted into Sulabh Shauchalayas.

The UNICEF has been playing a vital role in disseminating knowledge of this innovation from State to State and from country to country.

With the financial assistance of the UNICEF, authorities from different parts of the country as also from other countries have been able to visit Patna and have seen the working of the Sulabh Shauchalaya system. Literature on the Sulabh Shauchalaya technology has been widely circulated in and out of the country

by the UNICEF. The UNICEF is also going to finance some of the projects in different States of India.

PRAD (Planning Research & Action Development) Institute, Lucknow had developed the design of a latrine called P.R.A.I. latrine. This is a very good organisation which is doing research work in different fields, including sanitation. P.R.A.I. had developed the design of a one-pit system which has been installed on a mass scale in Gujarat and Uttar Pradesh.

In Gujarat (India), the Safai Vidyalaya, Ahmedabad, has also been doing an excellent work in propagating the idea of low cost sanitation. This organisation has been able to motivate about 1.5 lakh people to have low cost pour-flush toilets in their houses. This organisation is also imparting training to different levels of workers.



A Woman Cooking food on Sulabh Shauchalaya latrine pit cover.

The All India Institute of Health & Hygiene is a pioneer in this programme which had started its evaluation in 1940. The Rockefeller Foundation, which had also paved the way for the adoption of this technology by making experiments on ground water, deserves all praise. The study was conducted for 10 years and the results obtained from the experiments are still working as a torch-light in the matter of safety from pollution.

The Poonamali Institute of Madras and the Environmental Sanitation Project, Trivandrum, have also done a commendable job in this direction. The names of the Najafgarh Institute and the Maharashtra State Gandhi Smarak Nidhi are also worth mentioning.

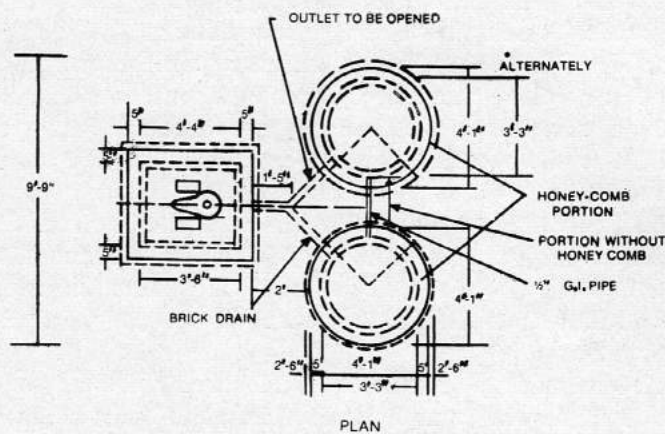
It is heartening to note that HUDCO has now decided to provide funds for the sanitation programmes to the local bodies. This will be helpful in achieving the goal of liberation of scavengers through low cost sanitation campaign.

Sanitation was always kept in the lowest priority sector from the very beginning of the first five-year plan. Even in the sixth plan period it could not get a berth in the high priority sector. But, now the Planning Commission has suggested to the State Governments to put this sector of sanitation in the higher priority sector. This decision of the Planning Commission will encourage the State Govts. to provide more funds for the sanitation programme.

The U.N. decade of Water Supply & Sanitation is also playing a vital role in rousing the enthusiasm of the planners, administrators, engineers and social scientists to achieve the target within the decade.

The most important part being played by the UNICEF is that its authorities are carrying on a regular campaign for the implementation of the sanitation project in rural and urban areas of India. This attitude of theirs helps us in the implementation of this programme.

The W.H.O., together with the Ministry of Works & Housing, Govt. of India and the UNICFF organised a seminar in Patna in the year 1978. This was really a landmark in the history of sanitation. This was the first seminar in which the participants recommended the adoption of a two-pit system from the very beginning seeing its success in Patna. This seminar also discussed the pollution aspect and came to the conclusion that there was no risk of



HONEY-COMB IS NOT TO BE PROVIDED IN COARSE AND MOORUM SOIL

pollution if the latrine was constructed with necessary precautions at a safe distance from the water source. The most important contribution of this seminar was the diffusion of knowledge in urban sanitation. Before this nobody knew what was happening and where. In this seminar the progress of different States in the sanitation programme was discussed and the participants were able to know about one another. The W.H.O. has now decided to put up some information about sanitation in its kit-bag which will be very helpful in spreading knowledge about the proper place for defecation and its impact on health.

The U.N.D.P. has played a great role in dissemination of the low-cost pour-flush toilet system. After thoroughly examining the scheme it gave its acceptance that led to its diffusion throughout the world. It not only helped in its acceptance among the people, but it also, through its studies of the soil and water pollution convinced the otherwise hesitant technocrats about its being highly scientific.

The U.N.D.P. has been able to conduct survey of 110 towns in India and survey of 100 more towns is under way. After evaluation they are considering of funding the project by international agencies like the World Bank, etc.