16. Who will do this Work?

Have you seen such scenes around you?

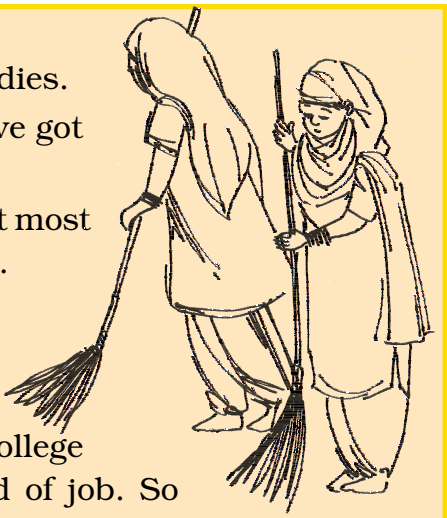


Sudharak Olve

Have you ever thought of people who do this work? What is our responsibility to keep the place clean?

Why do you think people need to do this kind of work?

Our friends spoke to some staff who do cleaning jobs. Here are some of the things they told us.



Q. Since when have you been doing this work?

A. About twenty years. Since I completed my studies.

Q. Why did you not study further? You could have got some other job?

A. You need money for studies. And even after that most of our people continue to do this kind of work.

Q. What do you mean?

A. Since our great grandfathers' times... or even before that, most people of our community have been doing this work. Even after getting a college degree, our people do not get any other kind of job. So they have to do this work.

Q. Why is that so?

A. That is the way it is. In the entire city, all the people who do this kind of work are from our community. It has always been so.

Interview (adapted) from the documentary film 'India Untouched' by Stalin. K.



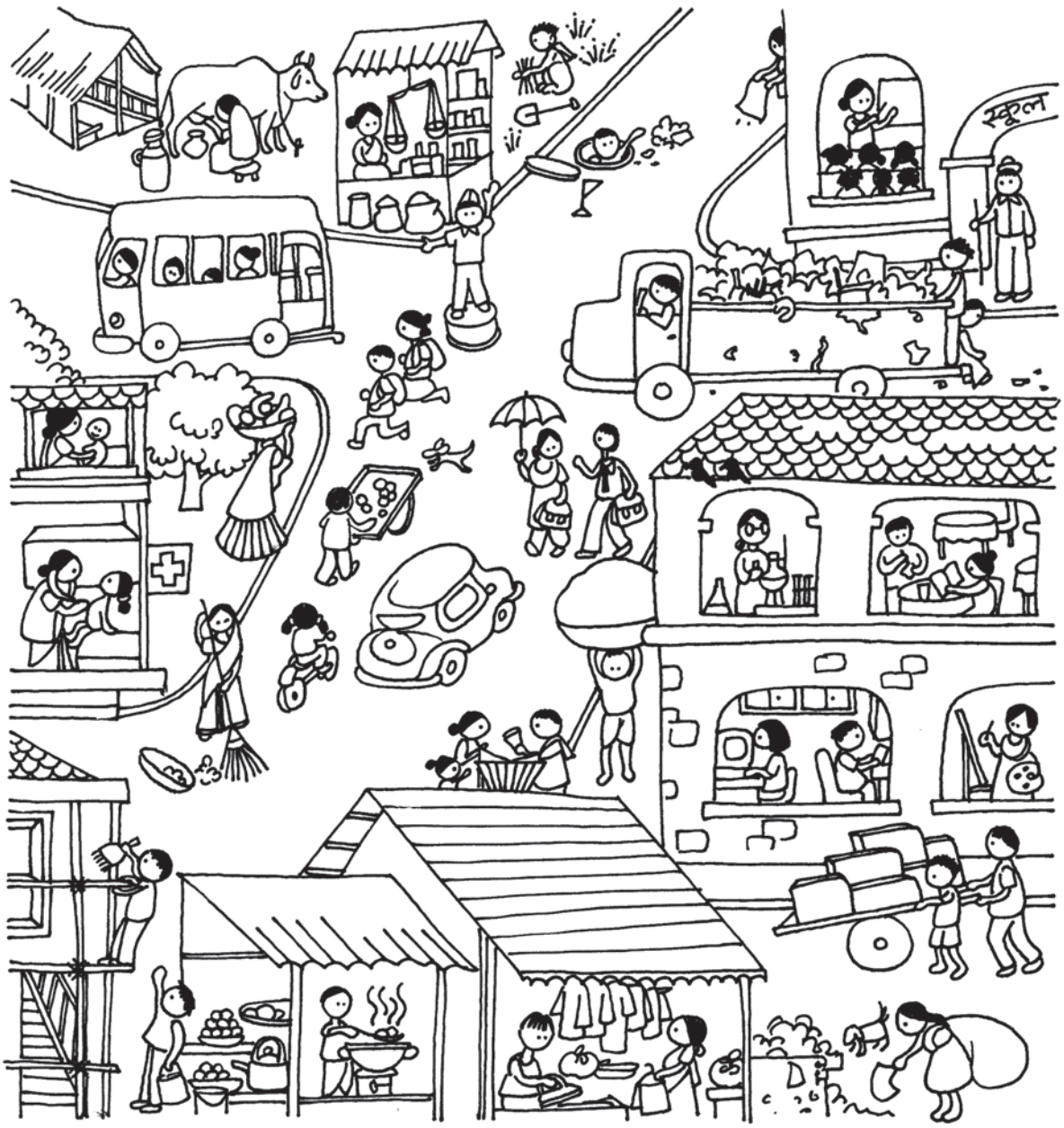
Write

Talk with people who do the cleaning job around your house and school.

- Since when have they been doing this work?
- How much have they studied?
- Have they tried to look for some other work?
- Did the elders in their family also do this work?
- What kind of difficulties do they face in doing this work?

Teacher's Note : Before children talk with the staff which does cleaning , discuss the kinds of questions that could be asked. Sensitise children to be respectful during their interactions.

- What are the different kinds of work being done in this drawing? List any five of these.



- If you were asked to do any five jobs shown in this picture, which would you choose? Why?
- Which five jobs would you not choose? Why?

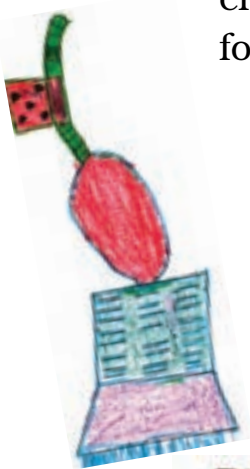
Discuss

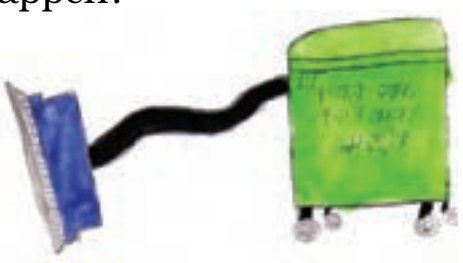
- What kinds of work or jobs do people not want to do? Why?
- So, who does this kind of work? Why do people do this kind of work that others do not want to do?

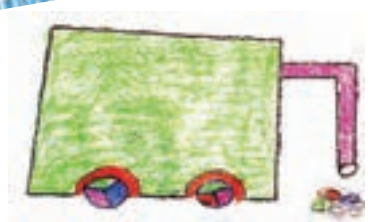
Imagine

- What would happen if nobody did this work? If nobody cleared the garbage lying outside your school or your house for one week, then what would happen?

Think of some ways (machines, or other things) so that people would not have to do the work they don't like to do. Draw a picture of what you thought.











(*These pictures are also made by children*)

Do you think that anyone has ever tried to change this situation? Yes, many people have tried. People are trying even today. But it is not easy to change this. One such person was Mahatma Gandhi. Gandhiji had a friend Mahadevbhai Desai. Mahadevbhai's son Narayan also stayed with Gandhiji when he was young. This incident is from Narayan's book.

Teacher's Note : Discussion can be organised with the people who are involved in bringing such changes in the community. News items on issues related to 'untouchability' can be used in the class to develop sensitivity.

Remembering those days

When Narayan (Babla) was about 11 years old, he was staying in Gandhiji's Sabarmati Ashram. Like everyone else in the Ashram, he had to do various kinds of work. One of his jobs was to teach the guests how to clean the toilets. In those days, the toilets were not what we know today. There used to be holes under which baskets were kept. People sat on the holes. Later the baskets had to be lifted by hand, to be emptied.

It was the usual practice that people from a particular community would do this work. But in Gandhiji's Ashram, every person had to carry the basket to the compost pit and empty it there. No one was excused from this task - not even the guests. Narayanbhai remembers how some people used to try and avoid this work. Some even left the Ashram because of this.

Some years later Gandhiji went to stay at a village, near Wardha in Maharashtra. Gandhiji, Mahadevbhai and others started to clean the toilets in the village. They did this for some months. One morning a man coming from the toilet, saw Mahadevbhai. He pointed to him and said "There is a lot of dirt over there. Go and clean that!" When Babla saw this, he was very angry. He thought, the villagers felt that this was not their work. This was for Gandhiji and his team to do. He asked Gandhiji why this was so. Gandhiji replied, "Untouchability is a serious matter. Lot of hardwork will be required to change this."

Narayan knew that the people who usually did this work were thought to be untouchable. He asked "What is the use if the village people do not change their thinking? They have become used to someone else doing this work for them."

Gandhiji replied, "Why"? Don't you think the people who clean also benefit from it. They also learn a lesson. To learn something is like learning a new skill. Even if it is a cleaning job."

Little Narayan was not convinced. He again argued, "Those who make a place dirty but do not clean it should also learn lessons." Gandhiji and Narayan continued to argue about this. But when he grew up Narayan always followed the path shown by Gandhiji.

From the book in Gujarati by Narayanbhai Desai – Sant-Charan-Raj, Sevita, Sahaj



Tell

- Why did Gandhiji and his team start doing the job of cleaning. What do you think about this?
- Do you know any such people in your area who try to help others in solving their problems? Find out and discuss in the class.
- Guests at Gandhiji's Ashram had to learn this work also. If you were one of these guests, what would you do?

- What are the toilet arrangements in your house? Where is the toilet? Inside the house, or outside? Who cleans the toilet?
- How did the man who was returning from the toilet behave with Mahadevbhai? Why did he behave like this?
- How do people generally behave with those people who clean toilets and drains? Write.

Narayan and Gandhiji discussed all this many years ago. Have things changed now?

A childhood story

This story is almost a hundred years old. Seven-year old Bhim went to Goregaon in Maharashtra with his father to spend his holidays. He saw a barber cutting the long hair of a rich farmer's buffallo. He thought of his own long hair. He went to the barber and asked for a hair cut. The barber replied, "If I cut your hair both my razor and I will get dirty." Oh, so to cut human hair can be dirtier than cutting an animal's hair, wondered little Bhim.

Later this little Bhim was known as Bhim Rao Baba Saheb Ambedkar. He became very famous across the world. Baba Saheb fought for justice for people like him. After India's freedom the Constitution was prepared under the leadership of Baba Saheb.

A conversation in school - the reality today



Hetal : I am Hetal, and this is Meena. We both study in Class III.
Q: What all do you do in school?
Meena: We clean the ground.
Q: Do all children clean?
Hetal : No, not all.
Meena : We also have to clean the toilets. We do it on different days. I clean on Monday, she does on Tuesday, and she on Wednesday ... All the children from our community do this.
Hetal : We have to carry twenty buckets of water for this. We have to sweep and wash.
Q : Why only you? Why not all the children?
Hetal : Only we have to. If we don't we get beaten.

Interview (adapted) from the documentary film 'India Untouched' by Stalin. K.



Tell

- Who does the cleaning in your school? What all has to be cleaned?
- Do all children like you help in this? If yes, how?
- If all do not help, why not?
- Do all children do all kinds of work?
- Do they sometimes have to miss classes to do this work?
- Do the girls and boys do the same kinds of work?
- What all work do you do at home?
- Is the work done by boys and girls, men and women the same?
- Would you like to bring some change? What kind?



Discuss

- Do people look at different kinds of work in the same way? If not, why is this so? Why is it important to bring change?
- Gandhiji's favourite song (*bhajan*) is given here. This *bhajan* is in Gujarati. Try to understand the meaning of these lines with the help of your elders. Think about these lines.

वैष्णव जन तो तेणे कहिए जे पीड़ पराई जाणे रे,
पर दु:खे अपमान सहे जे मन अभिमान ना आणे रे



What we have learnt

- Gandhiji used to say that every person should do every kind of work. What do you feel about this? If everyone followed this, what are the things that would change? What are some changes that will happen in your own house?