

# Maila Mukti Yatra

March for the Eradication of Manual Scavenging



## Maila Mukti Yatra – 2012-13

*(National People's March for Eradication of Manual Scavenging in 200 districts of 18 States of India)*

30<sup>th</sup> November 2012 to 31<sup>st</sup> January 2013

Madhya Pradesh (Bhopal) to New Delhi



गरिमा अभियान

## RASTRIYA GARIMA ABHIYAN

National Campaign for Dignity and Eradication of Manual Scavenging

Secretariat – Jan Sahas

14, Mill Road, Post- Balghar, Dewas 455001 (M.P.) Ph. +91 07272 408090, +91 98264 23634

E-Mail: [jansahas@gmail.com](mailto:jansahas@gmail.com), [mailamuktivatra@gmail.com](mailto:mailamuktivatra@gmail.com)

Website: [www.mailamukti.org](http://www.mailamukti.org)

# 1. About Rashtriya Garima Abhiyan:

The “Rashtriya Garima Abhiyan” (National Campaign for Dignity and Elimination of Manual Scavenging) launched by Jan Sahas in 2001 has proven to be a very innovative and effective program to end manual scavenging. Abhiyan has liberated 11,000 manual scavengers in Madhya Pradesh. It appealed to the innate sense of dignity and urged manual scavengers to give up this caste-based, unconstitutional practice. The campaign provides on-going support so that liberated manual scavengers may thwart opposition they face and oppose all forms of discrimination. Manual scavengers are organized into *sanghatans* (community-based organizations) so that they are better able to demand their rights. The Abhiyan, in its efforts to attain the social, economic, political and cultural rehabilitation of manual scavengers informs them of their rights and helps liberated manual scavengers to access and realize them.

Due to the success of the campaign, liberated manual scavengers, 90% of whom are women, have been empowered and live lives of dignity. They are able to find forms of work that pay competitive wages instead of earning a very paltry sum of money, and a few *rotis* a day, and old clothes which is what they received in exchange for carrying out odious work. Their children have also faced less discrimination as a result of their mothers having given up this practice. They have ended many forms of discrimination in the communities where they live and are having an increasing say in local political institutions. Liberated and empowered, manual scavengers have taken the lead in working to put an end to this practice. They have taken the campaign to other villages and states.

Campaign has also been a very effective advocate to stop manual scavenging at the local, state and national level. Through its studies it has drawn attention to places where manual scavenging still exists, such as the Indian Railways. It and is working with the Government to amend the current legislation to end manual scavenging. Jan Sahas is also advocating for a more comprehensive Act to address this issue and working for better enforcement of existing laws to end the practice.

The Abhiyan’s rights based, bottom up approach to end manual scavenging has proven to effective and comprehensive model that should be taken to scale.

# 2. Maila Mukti Yatra -2009:

Manual Scavenging legally banned through various legislations and provisions given in the Constitution of India, this inhuman practice exists in degrading forms throughout the country. The Government of India fixed a time limit to end this inhuman practice since it was outlawed. However the deadline has been continuously extended by the Central Government. Here we are trying to work towards total abolition of this practice

as per the provisions of the “Employment of Manual Scavengers and Construction of Dry Latrine (Prohibition and Abolition) Act, 1993”. We have been successful in eradicating this inhuman practice in many district locations of Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh through the medium of campaign and it has resulted in more than 11,000 Dalit women manual scavengers left this inhuman practice. We has organized a 26 days *Maila Mukti Yatra* (March for the Eradication of the Inhuman Practice of Manual Scavenging). Yatra started on 6<sup>th</sup> November 2009 from Mhow, Birth Place of great social revolutionary Dr B. R. Ambedkar and culminated at Bhopal on 1<sup>st</sup> December 2009.

The Yatra covered 34 districts of 4 states (Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra) of India. More than 50 liberated women’s and social Activist has joined full time of this Yatra. The Yatra has established communication with more than 1400 women who were engaged in the practice and around 502 women members decided to leave this inhuman practice.

### **Maila Mukti Yatra 2009: A Struggle for Freedom and Liberation**

‘Maila Mukti’ refers to freedom for those involved in the practice of carrying human excreta of others on their head since generations.

The practice of manual scavenging is continuing in India from Kashmir to Kanyakumari, from backward states to developed states. Even after making a law to abolish it in 1993 and extending the time limit 8 times by government, this practice has been continuing. Various individuals and organization have been making efforts to abolish this practice since more than one century and they have used various methods to do this. One of the tools we identified during our work was that the women engaged in the practices take the decision that **“I will not do this work from today. I condemn it”**. This strategy proved to be successful in our campaign and till now, thousands of women have decided to get free from this practice. Through these freed women, we have been success full in spreading the message to more than 50 districts. A freed woman becomes role model for other women as well.

To spread the campaign through these women in neighboring districts and states as well, a 26 day *Mail Mukti Yatra* was organized in 34 districts of 4 states-Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh. Around 50 women freed from this evil participated for full time in this *Yatra*. They went to colonies and houses of women engaged in this evil and motivated them to get free from this practice instantly. They explained that though they may be deprived of few stale *chapattis*, few old clothes, some money, though they may be pressurized or boycotted but they should not continue do this work. “We won’t do this and will live with dignity” was the motto. We won’t take human excreta on our head and will live a life of dignity.

After such discussion, most of the women would decide to leave this practice. At some places, if their family members won’t agree, than they were convinced through songs and bhajans. Once decided, the pots were burnt at a public place in village and it was

announced that manual scavenging has been abolished in the village from that day and if someone pressurizes liberated women to do this work, action would be taken against them. *Kacche* Toilets were broken at some places whereas at some places the untouchability was finished during the Yatra itself. Admission for community members was ensured at water sources, tea shop, barber shop etc. At some places, there was opposition as well from non dalit communities. In villages where dalits were not allowed to wear chappels in non dalit colonies and weren't allowed to take marriage processions, rallies were organized with drum beats and these were headed by women who used to practice manual scavenging till date. After the whole process, the freed women were felicitated at a village public place with sweets and a memento.

The Yatra was started on 6<sup>th</sup> November 2009 from Mhow, Birth Place of great social revolutionary fighter against caste system, Dr B R Ambedkar and culminated at Bhopal on 1<sup>st</sup> December 2009. Communication was established with more than 1400 women during the Yatra who were engaged in the practice and 502 women members decided to leave this work.

When at the last day of Yatra, people related with Yatra shared their experience, Lali Bai from Dhariyakhedi village of Mandasaur had this to say *"I was freed from this practice 5 years ago. During the Yatra, I came to know about the sudden demise of my Grandson due illness to but neither I went back to home, nor I informed anybody here about this. I thought that Yatra was more important for me to participate rather than going home and today, I am proud that we freed 502 women from this inhuman practice"*



## 3. About the issue:

### 3.1 Situation of Manual Scavenger in India:

Even after 64 years of independence which saw rampant developments and success in the field of science, industries and various other arenas that enabled the country to establish itself firmly, globally, India still struggles in the clutches of caste system which derogates the very existence of human life and dignity.

The religious word for caste is 'Varna'. Each Varna has certain duties and rights. Each Varna members have to work in certain occupation, which only those Varna members are allowed. The first three castes had social and economical rights, which the Shudra

and the untouchables did not have. Each Varna and also the untouchables are divided into many communities. These communities are called 'Jat' or 'Jati' (The caste is also used instead of Jat). The Shudra is the largest Varna and it has the largest number of communities. Each Jat is limited to professions worthy of their Varna. Each Jat members are allowed to marry only with their Jat members. People are born into their Jat and it cannot be changed.

According to the social historical theory, the caste system began with the arrival of the Aryans in India. The Aryans arrived in India around 1500 BC. The Aryans organized among themselves in three groups. The first group was of the warriors and they were called Kshatriya. The second group was of the priests and they were called Brahmins. The third group was of the farmers and craftsmen and they were called Vaishya. The Aryans who conquered and took control over parts of north India subdued the locals and made them their servants. In this process the Vaishyas who were the farmers and the craftsmen became the landlords and the businessmen of the society and the locals became the peasants and the craftsmen of the society. Most of the communities that were in India before the arrival of the Aryans were integrated in the Shudra Varna or were made outcast depending on the professions of these communities. Communities who professed non-polluting jobs were integrated in Shudra Varna. And communities who professed polluting professions were made outcasts, the untouchables. The untouchables had almost no rights in the society.

The Caste system went through various modifications, reforms, adjustments and challenges from within and from other religious-cultural as well as political influences. The advent of new religion like Buddhism, Jainism and the rise of Islam and spread of Christianity made dents into this Varna system to some extent. Many people came out of the all-pervasive fold of the Varna System, sometimes referred as Sanatan Dharma. But largely the system continued and has existed so far with minor reforms in its fold. The caste system, which was born out of racial and occupational discrimination, has three important characteristics, Mutual Repulsion, Hierarchical unequal socio economic organization and Heredity (descent based discrimination).

The caste system for centuries came to acquire the following principles –

- Placement of a person in the scheme of hierarchy based on birth,
- Prohibition of marriage outside one's own caste,
- The principle of purity and pollution and hereditary occupation.

The Caste system not only propagates division of labour and laborers but also opposes any attempt to change in the nature of labour other than the allotted. Caste system in India embodied in itself an organization of economic production and a mechanism of distribution giving monopoly of all privileges in the hands of the non-dalits and all sufferings to the lowermost caste – the Untouchables. Literally speaking, practicing untouchability means avoidance of physical contact with persons and things because of beliefs that physical touch by the untouchable (in this context, a dalit person) leads to 'pollution' of a higher-caste person. In day-day life this practice leads to exploitation, harassment, social, political and cultural subjugation of the dalits. Hence, there are two

major aspects affecting the lives of the Dalits Discrimination and Exclusion and Powerlessness.

Forced discrimination and exclusion are the major weapons of the non-dalits in restricting them from; having an identity, leading a life of dignity and have ownership to resources & opportunities. This forces the dalits to serve than to be masters and therefore is remains powerless. This state of dependency and powerlessness that continues from ages has shattered their identity, dignity and livelihood. Thus, the allocation of labour on the basis of caste continues to be a fundamental tenet of the Hindu caste system and still moves on with the practice of untouchability. A nation wide study on Untouchability brought the reality of the continuing practice in the country even after initiatives taken by the government in forms of laws (SC/ST Atrocity Law) and reservations. As per the mentioned Untouchability report findings there are over 60 different forms practiced in the country though some States have recorded over 100 forms. It is this study that brought another shameful fact – the continuing practice of Manual Scavenging in a country. The perception of dalits as polluted persons by reason of their birth causes them to be separated from the rest of caste society and excluded from social, religious and economic life. Such discrimination has been declared by the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination to fall within the scope of the *International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, 1965*.

### **3.2 Situation of Manual Scavenger in Indian Railways:**

Institutions like the Indian Railway, the municipalities, corporations and panchayats employ manual scavengers. The Indian Railway is the largest employer of manual scavengers, and manages some of the longest rows of open latrines in the world. The open-hole lavatories in every railway compartment that is in service in the country turns the largest rail network of the world into one big lavatory that drops raw human excreta and other waste onto the rails, and over people and vehicles - where the rail line runs above roads. It is a common scene in every railway station in the country, railway employees cleaning with a broom, railway sleepers covered with human excreta. Indian Railways runs one of the most complex rail networks in the world. It manages a network of over 63000 route km with over 13 lakh employees. Approximately 13000 train runs daily out of which 9000 are Passenger trains and 13 million passengers traveling every day. As per Nanda report the railways have cited several reasons for the delay, including prohibitive costs, with one estimate pegging the amount required for bio-toilets at Rs.1,600 crore. With the Indian Railways running a total of 50,000 coaches on date, of which 43,000 coaches are engaged in the passengers service, this means that there are a total of 1,72,000 toilets which are functioning today using technology which is completely unacceptable, in that it requires the use of manual scavengers to clean the human excreta which is directly discharged on to the railway tracks.

### **3.4 Protective Legislation vis-à-vis failure in implementation:**

The constitution of India has been formed taking into consideration basic human rights assuring it's citizen justice, equality, liberty and faternity. The "Fundamental rights" and the set of 'Directive principles' fall in accordance and support to United Nations Human Rights declaration. The constitution also states that "the state shall not discriminate

against any citizen on grounds only of religion, race, caste, place and birth or any form". Further, the directive principles state very clearly that "the state shall promote with special care the educational and economic interest of the scheduled castes/tribes and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation". These constitutional provisions enabled several initiatives by the government in favour of the interest of the Scheduled castes and the Scheduled tribes, which were both protective and developmental. These can be listed as follows -

- ***The Employment of Manual Scavengers and Construction of Dry Latrines (Prohibition) Act, 1993*** which punishes the employment of scavengers or the construction of dry (non-flush) latrines with imprisonment for up to one year and/or a fine as high as Rs.2,000/-.
- ***The civil rights protection act 1955***: In this act under section 7A, person would be punished who will force to do humiliating work such as illegal compulsory labor or manual scavenging, cleaning or disposal of animal carcasses. Thus the stated activities come under punishable crimes.
- Offenders are also liable to prosecution under ***the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989***. The main aim of this act is effective action and prevention against the atrocities on these Castes / Tribes. The punishment for the accused is very much specified and clarified under the act.
- Existence of any kind of untouchability or to exercise untouchability is a serious crime under ***the article 17 of Indian constitution***.
- Bonded Labour is also prohibited under ***the Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act, 1976***.
- ***UN Human Rights*** forum has made a declaration with the agreement of most of the countries of the world about the equality amongst human beings. India has also signed this declaration, on the contrary, the humiliating practice of manual scavenging still continues in India.

In 1992, the Government created a special National Commission for Safai Karmacharis and released 464 Crores to launch a national scheme to identify, train and rehabilitate manual scavengers throughout the country. However, in 1997 the National Human Rights Commission reported that progress "*has not been altogether satisfactory*", and had benefited only "*a handful of safai karamcharis and their dependents. One of the reasons for unsatisfactory progress of the Scheme appears to be inadequate attention paid to it by the State Governments and concerned agencies.*"

Thus, unfortunately, despite these legislations and various government schemes, manual scavenging continues to be practiced in our country, Lakhs of people, majority of them being women and children who continue in this stigmatized practice.

### 3.5 Situation Analysis:

**Practice of Manual Scavenging:** Manual Scavenging in literal terms means the manual removal of human and animal excreta with the help of brooms, tin plates and baskets. These dry latrines/toilets are no more than a small room in which a hole in the ground opens onto a receptacle in a compartment below. Manual scavengers use a broom and a tin plate and have actually to crawl into the compartment and empty out the receptacle. The excrement is piled into baskets, which are carried on the head or on the waist to a location that is far away from the latrine. At all times, and especially during the rainy season, the contents of the basket drip onto a scavenger's hair, face, clothes and other body parts. A person engaged in this inhuman and disgraceful occupation to earn a livelihood is called a 'Manual Scavenger' – the victim of this particular form of flagrant violation of human rights. They belong to the lower most rung of the society, unfortunately they are considered to be in the lowest most rung even amongst the Dalits and therefore land up in the worst situations of vulnerability, marginalisation, deprivation and oppression. They face social and cultural constraints to lead a life like normal individuals. They are also deprived of basic amenities, health, education and opportunities to grow as person with dignity.

**Manual Scavenging in India:** The greatest scourge of untouchability is felt by manual scavengers whose job it is to clear feces from public and private latrines and dispose of dead animals. Deemed to be polluting and filthy an occupation, this job is assigned exclusively to Dalits, and that too, to a sub-caste of Dalits who are considered even by other Dalit sub-castes to be wretched and 'untouchable.'

This practice has long been outlawed. The passage in 'Employment of Manual Scavengers and Construction of Dry Latrines (Prohibition) Act, 1993 which prohibited employment of scavengers and the construction of dry (non-flush) latrines. The SC/ST (POA) Act also made the act of employing manual scavengers a punishable offense.

Despite these national laws:

- Private manual scavengers typically earn just Rs.5 to Rs.10 per month for each house, cleaning 10 to 15 per day.
- The Manual Scavengers Prohibition Act has not been adopted in 12 states.
- In 1992, the Government created a special National Commission for Safai Karmacharis and released 464 Crores to launch a national scheme to identify, train and rehabilitate manual scavengers throughout the country. However, in 1997 the National Human Rights Commission reported that progress "*has not been altogether satisfactory*", and had benefited only "*a handful of safai karmacharis and their dependents. One of the reasons for unsatisfactory progress of the Scheme appears to be inadequate attention paid to it by the State Governments and concerned agencies.*" Thus, unfortunately, despite these



legislations and various government schemes, manual scavenging continues to be practiced in our country, with an estimated 8 Lakh persons, majority of them being women and children who continue in this stigmatized occupation.

- The implementation of the National Scheme for Liberation and Rehabilitation of Scavengers, is 'dismal', except in a few states, reported the National Human Rights Commission in 1998, six years after the launching of the rehabilitation scheme.
- When confronted with the existence of manual scavenging and dry latrines within their jurisdiction, state government often deny their existence altogether or claim that a lack of water supply prevents states from constructing flush latrines.
- "There is no indication of expenditure by many states. One can only draw two conclusions: No money has been spent, or no report has been sent about utilization of the funds," stated R.V. Pillai, current CERD member and former Secretary-General of the National Human Rights Commission.
- The number of manual scavengers in the country is uncertain. Reliable baseline data is not available. However, according to the estimate of a task force constituted by the Planning Commission in July 1989, there were over four lakh manual scavengers in the country as on March 1991. Of these, 83% were in urban areas and 17% in rural areas. 35% manual scavengers were women. These figures are in respect of Scheduled Castes only. The figure estimated by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment as on March 2003, is 6.76 lakh scavengers.

**Socio-Economic Status of manual scavengers:** Manual Scavenging is not only a violation of human rights but also a disgrace to human dignity and humanity at large. Though untouchability has been abolished by the Constitution, manual scavenging has the inevitable effect of perpetuating untouchability. Manual scavenging continues to exist in India, despite being unacceptable and hazardous as a method of disposal of human waste, despite scientific and technological advancement on various fronts that saves manual labour, and despite the availability of simple and low-cost alternatives which can eradicate the twin problems of manual scavenging and safe disposal of human excreta. It passes on from generation to generation. Culture of acceptance prevailing among them is also depriving them of their basic rights.

**Responsibility of the States:** Though a Central legislation, the States are required to adopt the Act or have their own legislation passed by the Assembly. So far, 26 States have either adopted the Act or have enacted their own laws. It is the responsibility of the State Governments to implement the Act. However, even states who have adopted the Act have in many cases not proceeded to enforce it by issuing the requisite notifications requiring the owners of dry latrines to convert to water-sealed latrines, and cease the practice of engaging manual scavengers. Monitoring of the schemes has been lax, to say the least. The following states have reported that manual scavenging has either been totally abolished in their state or the practice does not exist, as there are no

dry latrines: Arunachal Pradesh, Delhi, Goa, Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim, Tripura and Tamil Nadu.

## 4. Our Perspective:

Manual Scavenging is primarily a Socio – Political issue, it denies life with dignity. This is one prime reason why every attempt to address it through livelihood aspect never succeeded in eradicating it. The occupation of Manual Scavenging has its roots in the caste system, which renders the community invisible and powerless. Further, condition and status of women pitches this issue into the premise of gender and women rights. They are not only forced into the occupation, but also face multiple situations of vulnerabilities and denial of rights & justice within all spheres of life. Thus this unfortunate dalit community faces the dual challenge of ‘Liberation’ and ‘Rehabilitation’ - Liberation from the inhumane occupation and invisibility to lead a life with ‘dignity’ and rehabilitation in the comprehensive terms encompassing social, religious, economic & political aspects.

This is the concern with the prevailing situation says that “this is entirely a question of self-esteem and dignity; and no financial assistance/ help or government schemes can search an answer to this question. There is an urge to make sincere efforts from both sides; firstly this vulnerable community should stop doing this work and secondly, the society should accept this vulnerable community by giving them equal status with out any discretion.

## 5. Our Approach:

The approach taken up by the campaign has given overall direction to the campaign. The interventions that were designed at the district and the state level have their origin in this.

### 1. Emphasis on ending the practice

Garima Abhiyan focused only on the aspect of ‘**dignity**’. It is because of this approach that the Abhiyan succeeded in its avowed mission and thousands of people of the affected community have been able to give up the practice of manual disposal of human feces.

### 2. Emphasis on equality, honor and dignity

The Abhiyan motivated the people of the community by emphasizing on the inhuman nature of the practice and disseminating among them the universal human values of equality, honor and dignity.

### 3. Emphasis on the fact that it is not an employment

Garima Abhiyan did not consider the task as a form of employment; but firmly believed that it is another manifestation of the ingrained inhumanity and inequality of the Indian caste system. Therefore other aspects such as economic rehabilitation were never focused.

#### **4. Motivating them to motivate others of their community**

The Garima Abhiyan believes that only those engaged in this practice can effectively free themselves of it as it is they who best understand its abject and humiliating nature. The pain and the fire in their voice would naturally evoke the same feelings in other community members as well. It is the awakened people of this community who would successfully convince others and make them leave the traditional occupation.

#### **5. Emphasis on working with the community**

The Abhiyan firmly holds that the practice can't be buried until the initiative comes from the community itself. Hence, the Abhiyan had focused more on working with the community. It developed the leadership among the community members and they were fore runners of the campaign. Efforts were made for empowering the community for giving up their engagement in the practice and for their development.

#### **6. Women: the Worst Victims**

More than 95% of the persons engaged in this practice happen to be women. Hence, apart from being an issue of the dignity of the Dalits, it also assumes gender dimension within the Dalit community. The women performing this task are victims of caste, gender and poverty. Therefore, the Abhiyan also perceived the practice as a gender issue and had tried to evolve strategy for addressing it. Hence the Abhiyan had ensured the presence and participation of women. Moreover, the leadership of the organizations formed at the district level had also been given completely in the hands of the women of the affected community.

#### **7. Children as motivators**

Abhiyan thought that children of the community need to be brought into the role of motivators as it was found that this strategy could prove to be a formidable weapon in the campaign.

#### **8. Speedy success becomes an object lesson for emulation**

Garima Abhiyan feels that for eradicating the custom in any geographical area, one should always choose places where there is an intense fire seething in the minds of the people of the affected community against the custom and the associated inequality and injustice. This might lead to speedy success of the campaign and the success can become an object lesson for others in the area to be emulated. The success story would naturally play an effectively motivating role.

#### **9. Non-dependence only on schemes**

Various programs and initiatives have been launched by the Government for eradicating this practice and rehabilitating the people engaged in it; but the findings of the district-wise surveys conducted by the Abhiyan in the initial phase of the campaign revealed

that the people didn't give up the practice even after availing the benefits of these schemes. Hence Garima Abhiyan never emphasized on these schemes.

#### **10. Making the broader society and the Government accountable**

The Abhiyan strived to make the society and the Government accountable. They were made to understand the inhuman nature of the practice and the fact that its abolition can't be opposed on any tenable grounds and they had no right to exert pressure on those who resolve to discontinue the practice. For attaining these aims, the Abhiyan engaged in the burning trolleys to connote that they had boycotted the practice and would not engage in it any further, organizing rallies across the villages to create awareness among the villagers, interacting with household owners with kuchcha toilets for demolishing them, pasting slogans and stickers informing the community that use of such toilets was illegal and holding community meetings for creating awareness.

## **6. Issue and Developments:**

### **1. The Employment of Manual Scavengers and Construction of *Dry Latrines* (Prohibition) Act:**

The practice of manual scavenging is continuing in India from Kashmir to Kanyakumari, from backward states to developed states. Even after making a law to abolish it in 1993 through "The Employment of Manual Scavengers and Construction of *Dry Latrines* (Prohibition) Act". It is not being implemented even today. In the past 19 years, many political parties have come into power but none of them tried to put an end to this practice or formulate concrete strategies for implementation of the Act. Government extending the time limit many times. But this practice has been continuing. That act was totally failed. Entry of 1993 act was sanitation and this act was passed under article 249 of the constitution. Parliament has been passed that act under this provision after passing any two state assemblies but this is depend on the states that they implement or they do not implement even after passed by the parliament. Due to this many state governments has not passed this act in their state assemblies even after 2 decade of 1993 act. Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation was responsible to implement of this act. There were no concrete provisions under that act towards the rehabilitation and total eradication of manual scavenging practice in many areas like railways, open defecation etc. There were some other problems in that act due to that this act could not be implemented effectively in all states.

### **2. The Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and Their Rehabilitation Bill, 2012 tabled in parliament (LokSabha):**

A bill that seeks to prohibit manual scavenging, rehabilitate those engaged in such inhuman employment and impose stringent measures to stop such practices was introduced in the Indian Parliament (LokSabha) on 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2012. Drawing from the Indian constitution that assures dignity of the individual, the Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and Their Rehabilitation

Bill, 2012, recommends eliminating the engagement of people to carry out hazardous cleaning of sewers and septic tanks. This bill introduced by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment Minister. We are very happy to the Ministry introduce this new legislation. Many parts of the proposed bill are very important like the definition of manual scavengers; they covered manually cleaning, carrying, disposing or otherwise handling in any manner, human excreta in an insanitary latrine or in an open drain or pit, etc. competitive 1993 act this definition is very comprehensive. Under the proposed bill announce some important provisions regarding to identification, monitoring, vigilance, rehabilitation and penalties. Many critics also there in the proposed bill regarding to liberation, rehabilitation and direct coverage of employers like Indian Railways. We are advocating for improvement in of this bill. There are still insufficiencies in the proposed bill regarding rehabilitation of manual scavengers and also process of adoption of the bill is very slow. So, we are struggling for improvements to the bill and speedy process for adoption of new legislation.

### **3. Census of India 2011:**

According to the Census of India 2011, there are still 794,390 dry latrines in the country, where the human excreta is cleaned up by humans. According to the Census of India 2011, 73% of the dry latrines are in rural areas where as 27% in urban areas. Apart from these there are 1,314,652 toilets where the human excreta is flushed in open drains. According to the definitions by RashtriyaGarimaAbhiyan - Jan Sahas and the Drafting Committee for the amendment in 1993 act, the human excreta flushed in open drains through toilets like these are also cleaned up by human beings. The census also adds that there are 497,236 toilets in the country where the human excreta is cleaned up by animals through eating it. This is however a very confusing statement as we believe that in toilets like these it is not possible that the human excreta is cleaned up completely through animals eating it. Ultimately it has to be cleaned up by humans only. Thus there are more than 26 lakhs [2.6 million] dry latrines in the country where the practice of manual scavenging still continues. The Census says that in states of Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Haryana, Delhi NCR, Rajasthan and Jharkhand there are very less no. of dry latrines exist. However this is far from being true as surveys conducted by GarimaAbhiyan and other organisations it has clearly come out that even in these states dry latrines exist and the practice of manual scavenging continues at a large scale in these states. It is a matter of surprise that in states where the practice of manual scavenging is clearly visible the Census reports negligible numbers of dry latrines.

### **4. Manual scavenging in Indian railway:**

Indian Railways is an institution in the country where dry latrines exist in great numbers and a large number of individuals are engaged in manual scavenging. Recently Rural Development, Water and Sanitation Minister Jairam Ramesh has called the Indian railway the world's biggest open toilet. He accepted we are the world's capital for open defecations. 60 per cent of all open defecations in the

world are in India. This is a matter of great shame. Indian railways is really the largest open toilet in the world. 11 million passengers every day and we all know the state of sanitation in our railway. At present only nine trains with 436 coaches are fitted with bio-toilets, while 4,000 coaches are produced annually which could be fitted with new bio-toilets developed by Defence Research & Development Organisation (DRDO).

**5. Uncompleted and unsuccessful rehabilitation of manual scavengers in India<sup>1</sup>:**

The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Government of India initiated the Self Employment scheme for Rehabilitation of Manual Scavengers (SRMS) in 2007. An amount of Rs.735.60 Crores was allocated for the rehabilitation of 3,42,468 individuals. This scheme was for the period January 2007 to March 2009 but was extended till March 2010. Under this scheme only 1,18,474 individuals showed interest to avail the benefits out of which 78,941 individuals were benefited and 39,533 individuals could not due to various reasons. According to the Ministry a total of Rs.231 Crores were released under this schemes between financial years 2006-2007 to financial year 2009-2010. Under this scheme 13275 individuals were benefited. Rashtriya Garima Abhiyan – Jan Sahas conducted a survey on Implementation status of SRMS in 3 states of India in year 2010-11. Some findings of this study are given below:

- a) 76 % people got benefits which they were not involved in the manual scavenging practice.
- b) Scheme was not launched in the 25% of districts and said that manual scavenging practice does not exist in these districts. But during the study found that manual scavenging practice is going on these districts.
- c) 98 per cent of people engaged in the profession are women. But it was found that benefits of SRMS were given to 51 per cent of men in these three states.
- d) 85% people said that they have faced various types of problems to get benefits of scheme like time wasting, bribe, misbehavior and problems related to the documents and processes.
- e) Middle men or commission agents would visit Dalit bastis telling households to sign on so and so papers as the government had chosen them as beneficiaries of a new scheme. The beneficiaries would never get to know the loan amount, sanctioning officer or other details of the transactions. After a while, the middle men would revisit them and hand over Rs 3,000 to Rs 4,500. Many of these people did not even know why they were being given the money or how much money had been borrowed in their names. In Madhya Pradesh, around 68 per cent of the beneficiaries were taken for a ride by the brokers, in Uttar Pradesh, 63 per cent and in Rajasthan 62 per cent.

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<sup>1</sup> Study on rehabilitation of manual scavengers (implementation status of SRMS scheme) in India by Rashtriya Garima Abhiyan – Jan Sahas [www.dalits.nl/pdf/120328.pdf](http://www.dalits.nl/pdf/120328.pdf)

## 6. Self-contradiction and non implementation of scholarship scheme for manual scavengers<sup>2</sup>:

An example of a particularly self-defeating government programme is a scholarship for the children of the manual scavengers, (Scholarship for the Children of Families involved in incline occupation) which require the families seeking the benefit to have been engaged in manual scavenging for at least 100 days in a year. This scholarship scheme provides a perverse incentive

# 7. Goal, Objectives and Strategies of Yatra:

## 7.1 Goal of the yatra:

*“To eradicate the slavery of manual scavenging and ensure Social, Political, economical rehabilitation of liberated manual scavengers through the Yatra”*

## 7.2 Objectives:

Maila Mukti Yatra – 2012-13 will be organized with the following objectives:

- To liberate other Dalit women engaged in scavenging practice in 200 districts of 18 states of India through speaking to liberated Dalit women from this practice.
- To associate and sensitize other sections of the society and involve them in this liberation movement
- To increase the government engagement as well to address this issue
- To provide a common platform to the women liberated from this practice to fight for their rights and rehabilitation
- To build a common and larger consensus and movement for eliminating this practice

## 7.3 Strategies:

- Identify people involved in Manual Scavenging and cleaning of dry latrines in the new districts. This will be done with the help of the women liberated in the districts where the Yatra had worked and ended the practice.
- Promote community ownership in the Dignity Campaign through fellowship interventions.
- Map and eradicate incidence of Untouchability, social exclusion, discrimination and atrocity in the areas where the Yatra is being launched.
- Facilitate the processes of social, political and economical rehabilitation of liberated families.
- Build the community leadership with special emphasis on liberated women.
- Sensitize and generate awareness within the stratified Dalit community about the particular challenges that manual scavengers face. This will help to build Dalit unity to address all forms of Untouchability, discrimination and social exclusion practices.

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<sup>2</sup> National Public Hearing on Rehabilitation of Manual Scavengers and their Children in India organized by Rashtriya Garima Abhiyan – Jan Sahas <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/article3261450.ece>

- Network with other stakeholders like NGOs, people's movements, community based organizations, media, etc.
- Build Capacity to promote rehabilitation efforts & self-reliance at the state level.
- Advocate for effective implementation of schemes, policies, and current act as well as build pressure at the state, national and international level for the introduction of a new act, policies and schemes for the liberation and rehabilitation of manual scavengers.
- Media advocacy to highlight the prevalence of the issue.

## 7. Activities during the Yatra:

1. **Maila Mukti Yatra:** The basic objectives of conducting *yatras* are to liberate other dalit women engaged in the practice in 200 districts of 18 states of India through those who have already come out of it, to associate and sensitize other sections of the society and involve them in this liberation movement and to increase the political will to address this issue. The *yatras* spread awareness amongst both the Manual Scavenging community and the larger community about the ongoing inhumane practice and seeks their support to end it. Pressurizing the *Panchayats*, local administration, and the Government to take appropriate actions to end manual scavenging is an essential aspect of the *yatras*. It brings the issue of Untouchability into the public sphere.

The *yatras* engages with those who have left the practice, those still performing manual scavenging, as well as those who are yet to join the struggle. To build solidarity (*sanghathan*) among members from other districts by participating in the *yatra*. This encourages the newly identified community members involved in this inhumane practice to have a direct dialogue with those who have left the practice and to understand the challenges they faced and the benefits they reaped. These dialogues build confidence and boost the morale of those reluctant to leave the practice.

2. **Awareness Generation Campaigns:** Communication materials will be prepared and distributed during the Yatra to make the community aware of the various acts, laws, policy and rehabilitation programs that currently obtainable. This material would include information about the inhuman nature of manual scavenging, the centrality of dignity, and draw attention to the importance of education. Leaflets and posters about the illegality of manual scavenging will be circulated in the villages along with new bill and regulated drafted by government, to pressurized those who still employ manual scavengers. .



3. **Meetings with government department and other stake holders:**

During the Yatra Meetings will be held with the government department, ministries, administration, local bodies and people's representatives to inform them of the current status of scavenging in their areas, and the particular problems faced by members of the Valmiki and Haila communities. The meetings will be focused on setting up a timely agenda to demolish dry latrines, and to obtain commitment for the efficient implementation of schemes for the rehabilitation of the community. Issues regarding discrimination in schools, the registering of Below Poverty Line (BPL) individuals and families to ensure they receive the benefits due to them, and the allotment of government schemes will also be raised during the course of the meetings. Total 500 meetings would be conducted during the yatra.



4. **Outreach Campaign in other districts:** Outreach campaigns will be conducted to provide opportunities for the newly identified community members involved in this inhumane activity to have a direct dialogue with those who have left the practice. Thus this would provide space for dialogues, which would enhance confidence and morale amongst those who are reluctant to leave the practice. Perspective building and peer learning among *Sanghathan* members will be an essential part of the outreach activities.
5. **Community Mobilization:** In order to mobilize communities to end manual scavenging a number of activities would be undertaken such as Yatra, community meetings, street play, puppet show and burning basket events.
6. **State and National Consultation and Convention:** During the launch of Yatra would be organize a National Sammelan on Eradication of inhuman practice of Manual Scavenging with the following objectives:
- To present an overall scenario of this in human practice in India.
  - To discuss the various factors that contributes to the continuation of the practice.
  - To provide a public platform for the liberated women and those still involved in the practice to voice their concerns and challenges.
  - To highlight the cases of abuse and exploitation among manual scavengers.

- To discuss the roles of various stakeholders – members of the manual scavenging community, the larger community, civil society organizations and the State –to end this practice and secure comprehensive rehabilitation
- And also we would be a National Culmination Program of yatra in Delhi. Participants will include both liberated manual scavengers and those still in the practice, activists, representatives from ministries (state and central) members of nongovernmental organizations, the representatives from the relevant Commissions, media representatives and other stakeholders.
7. **Press conferences:** To ensure better awareness amongst the larger society about the inhuman practice of manual scavenging and role of government's and other stake holders. Through the press conferences we would share ground realities to the media. During the yatra we would organized total 20 press conferences in deferent states.
  8. **Documentation:** Documentation would play a vital role in media advocacy, and would help to put pressure on the government to end the practice. It would also be essential for spreading awareness about manual scavenging to the general public. Due to this reason we would be prepared documentation of case studies on situation, challenges, success and failures and would be compiled for further dissemination. This

## 8. Coverage: Route

*Maila Mukti Yatra 2012* will be cover 200 districts of 18 states of India –

1. Madhya Pradesh
2. Uttar Pradesh
3. Bihar
4. Jharkhand
5. Wes Bangle
6. Orissa
7. Chhattisgarh
8. Andhra Pradesh
9. Tamil Nadu
10. Karnataka
11. Maharashtra
12. Gujarat
13. Rajasthan
14. Haryana
15. Punjab
16. Himachal Pradesh
17. Uttarakhand
18. Delhi



## 9. Time Frame and Schedule of Yatra:

### Maila Mukti Yatra 2012-13

#### Schedule

Date	From	To	KM	Night stay
30.11.2012	Bhopal	Bareli	120	Bareli/ Raisen (M.P.)
01.12.2012	Bareli/ Raisen	Sagar	130	
01.12.2012	Sagar	Meharoni/ Lalitpur	100	Meharoni / Lalitpur (U.P.)
02.12.2012	Meharoni / Lalitpur	Bangra/ Jhansi	120	
02.12.2012	Bangra / Jhansi	Mauranipur	16	Mauranipur (U.P.)
03.12.2012	Mauranipur	Charkhari / Mahoba	95	
03.12.2012	Charkhari /Mahobaa	Raath / Hamirpur	80	Raath / Hamirpur (UP)
04.12.2012	Raath	Hamirpur	100	
04.12.2012	Hamirpur	Kanpur	70	Kanpur (U.P.)
05.12.2012 and 06.12.2012	Kanpur	Luknow	100	Luknow (U.P.)
07.12.2012	Lukhnow	Raghavpur/Raibareilly	80	
07.12.2012	Raghavpur /Raibareilly	Mishramaou	90	

		/Fatehpur		
07.12.2012	Mishramaou Fatehpur	Allahabad	125	Naini /Allahabad (U.P.)
08.12.2012	Naini /Allahabad	Varanasi	135	Varanasi (U.P.)
09.12.2012	Varanasi	Baksar	160	Baksar (Bihar)
10.12.2012	Baksar	Aara	70	
10 and 11.12.2012	Aara	Patna	80	Patna (Bihar)
12.12.2012	Patna	Jehanabad	80	
12.12.2012	Jehanabad	Gaya	55	Gaya (Bihar)
13.12.2012	Gaya	Hazaribagh	145	
13.12.2012	Hazaribagh	Ranchi	100	Ranchi (Jharkhand)
14.12.2012	Ranchi	wassepur/ Dhanbad	185	wassepur/ Dhanbad
15.12.2012	wassepur/Dhanbad	Bardhaman	180	Bardhaman (West Bengal)
16 and 17.12.2012	Bardhaman	Kolkata	105	Kolkata (West Bengal)
18.12.2012	Kolkata	Baleshwar	275	Baleshwar (Orissa)
19.12.2012	Baleshwar	Katak	180	Katak (Orissa)
20 and 21.12.2012	Katak	Bhubaneswar	25	Bhubaneswar (Orissa)
22.12.2012	Bhubaneswar	Vijaynagram	340	Vijaynagram (A.P.)
23.12.2012	Vijaynagram	Vijaywara	350	Vijaywara (A.P.)
24.12.2012	Vijaywara	Hyderabad	250	Hyderabad (A.P.)
25.12.2012	Hyderabad	Hyderabad		Hyderabad (A.P.)
26.12.2012	Hyderabad	Kurnool	210	Kurnool
27.12.2012	Kurnool	Cuddapha	200	Cuddapha (A.P.)
28.12.2012	Cuddapha	Thiruvallur	230	Thiruvallur (Tamil Nadu)
29.12.2012	Thiruvallur	Chennai	50	Chennai (Tamil Nadu)
30.12.2012	Chennai	Kolar	330	Kolar (Karnataka)
31.12.2012 and 1.01.2013	Kolar	Bangalore	110	Bangalore (Karnataka)
02.01.2013	Bangalore	Tumkur	60	
02.01.2013	Tumkur	Chitradurga	135	Chitradurga (Karnataka)
03.01.2013	Chitradurga	Bijapur	320	Bijapur (Karnataka)
04.01.2013	Bijapur	Pandharpur	140	Pandharpur (MH)
05.01.2013	Pandharpur	Pune	215	Pune (MH)
06.01.2013	Pune	Thane	155	Thane (MH)
07.01.2013	Thane	Mumbai	20	Mumbai (MH)
08.01.2013	Mumbai	Valsad	205	Valsad (GJ)
09.01.2013	Valsad	Bharuch	150	Bharuch (GJ)
10.01.2013	Bharuch	Vadodara	80	
10 .01.2013 &11-01-2013	Vadodara	Ahmedabad	110	Ahmedabad (GJ)
12.01.2013	Ahmedabad	Himmatnagar	80	
12.01.2013	Himmatnagar	Udaipur	175	Udaipur (RJ)
13.01.2013	Udaipur	Chittorgarh	120	
13 and 14.01.2013	Chittorgarh	Ajmer/ Pushkar	210	Ajmer /Pushkar (RJ)
15.01.2013	Pushkar	Jaipur	184	Jaipur (RJ)

16.01.2013 & 17.01.2013	Jaipur	Rewari	200	<i>Rewari (Haryana)</i>
18.01.2013	Rewari	Rohtak	95	
18.01.2013	Rohtak	Sangrur	171	Sangrur (PJ)
19.01.2013	Sangrur	Ludhiana	90	
19.01.2013	Ludhiana	Jalandhar	70	Jalandhar (PJ)
20.01.2013	Jalandhar	Dharamshala	174	Dharamshala (HP)
21.01.2013	Dharamshala	Kullu	201	Kullu (HP)
22 and 23.01.2013	Kullu	Shimla	222	Shimla (HP)
24.01.2013	Shimla	Chandigarh	115	Chandigarh
25.01.2013	Chandigarh	Dehradun	200	
25 .01.2013 & 26.01.2013	Dehradun	Haridwar	65	Haridwar (Uttarakhand)
27.01.2013	Haridwar	Meerut	157	Meerut
28.01.2013	Meerut	New Delhi	70	New Delhi
29 to 30.01.2013	New Delhi	Local Programs		New Delhi
31.01.2013	Culmination of the Yatra in New Delhi			