



A higher level of self-reliance



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Newsletter

Making scrap shops part of the solution

Often vilified, the scrap shop owner is nevertheless a key link in the recycling chain. SWaCH has recently been working on a project that will help shop owners and waste pickers to work more cohesively together, for mutual benefit.

The campaign has a dual focus – firstly, to actively involve the shop owners in the anti-child labour campaign; and secondly, to create a better working relationship with waste pickers.

Child labour

From the very beginning, SWaCH and KKP KP have taken a clear stand against child labour, particularly in waste picking. Members have actively campaigned to stop this practice. Surveys done in Pune in 1995, 2007 and 2010 clearly showed that the number of child waste pickers had decreased. However, with increasing destitution and migration into Pune, there are still pockets of the city where these under-age waste pickers collect and sell waste. SWaCH is now working to convince scrap shop owners to avoid buying waste from children, and also to avoid employing children in their scrap shops.

To this end, a series of meetings with scrap shop owners was recently held across Pune, to apprise them of the penalties they could face if they bought waste from, or employed, under-age waste pickers. In addition, each scrap shop was asked to prominently display a poster stating that child labour was a punishable offence and that no child labourers were employed in their establishment.

A working relationship

Waste pickers and scrap shop owners have a complex relationship. Waste pickers rely on the shop to buy their waste and give them small advances/loans, but they also suffer because of unfair trade practices. The waste pickers of Pune have recently jointly articulated a series of 5 demands that they presented to the shop owners:

- Speak to us respectfully.
- Do not buy from or employ children below the age of 18.
- Display the prices/rates of every item clearly on a board.
- Give us receipts for our waste that you buy.
- Give us a cash bonus at Divali. For those who sell to you right through the year, the bonus should equal one month's approximate earnings.
- Buy everything we collect – even low-value items.

One of the main grievances against the shop owners was that they did not buy low-value waste such as low-grade paper or plastic. These days, this is often the only waste available to waste pickers – and the source of their survival. The waste

pickers said that it was difficult to accumulate this type of waste to sell in bulk, since it required so much space.



Recognising that the issue for both shop owners and waste pickers was the huge space required to store low-value waste, SWaCH is negotiating with the PMC to provide 4 large godowns in the city for this purpose.

At the meetings, the e-waste rules were also explained to the scrap shop owners.

Green Visarjan 2012!

Years of creating awareness about the pollution of Pune's rivers, especially during Ganapati Festival, seem to have paid off in 2012: More than 90 tons of Nirmalya were collected at the 18 ghats adopted by SWaCH this year. SWaCH members and volunteers (many of them students of Fergusson College, Modern College and COEP), were present on the 23rd and 29th of September to oversee the Ganesh Visarjan. They encouraged citizens to use the separate PMC-built tanks set up for the purpose and to hand over the offerings to SwaCH, rather than throwing them in the river.

This effort towards a less polluting Visarjan was also supported by Cummins (14 ghats) and, Emcure Pharmaceuticals (2 ghats). Their volunteers came out in large numbers to encourage devotees to be eco-friendly. According to SWaCH staff, 14,516



idols were immersed in tanks on the final day, with Katraj notching the highest number - 2566 idols and 8 tonnes of Nirmalya collected on Anant Chaturdashi.

The collected Nirmalya was sent for composting to Bal Kalyan, the Blind Schools of Kothrud and Koregaon Park, DSK, Katraj compost pits and SWaCH-maintained pits on Aundh ramp. Compost will be ready in about two months. The compost in Aundh will belong to SWaCH and will be used for generating further awareness about the importance of composting.

14-year-old Aishwarya on Katraj Ghat said “Composting nirmalya rather than throwing it in the river, is a good plan made by SWaCH. This protects the environment.”

Another citizen, Mahesh Budlakh on Vittal Mandir Ghat said “to stop pollution is a holy duty of every citizen...”

Kimball Gallagher makes music with SWaCH

The five SWaCH members -- Saru Waghmare, Pushpa Shendge, Shobha Bansode, Kanta Shinde and Sudamati Kamble -- looked resplendent in their gold and green saris as they confidently faced the audience on Sunday November 4th and launched into the song ‘Aamhi Swachateche Varkari’ – one of four songs that they presented. The audience, comprising SWaCH members, their families and supporters, had gathered in Mazda Hall for an innovative and one-of a-kind event – activist songs by SWaCH members, classical piano music by American pianist Kimball Gallagher and percussion by Agneya Chikte, of Taal Inc.



The SWaCH group identified closely with the songs they sang. Said Shobha Bansode, one of the SWaCH performers:

“These songs are close to our hearts. They speak about our lives and our struggle. Some of these songs have been written in SWaCH, they are ours.”

She added that they had been practising rigorously over the past many days with Alka Pavangadkar.

Kimball Gallagher is a classical pianist who travels the world performing, linking up, wherever he can, with a humanitarian cause. In India, he linked up with waste picker organisations and performed with and for them in four different cities – Mumbai, Bangalore, Pune and Delhi. In each city, Kimball also learned the story of one waste picker and composed a short piece of music specially based on this story. In Pune, he based his composition on Abhijit Khandagle, the son of a waste picker and SWaCH member, who now works for waste pickers’ rights.

Addressing the audience, Abhijit spoke of how inspiring he found his mother’s story, the back-breaking work that she had done to keep her children in school and her determination to see them secure their futures. Abhijit said that it was her courage that made him want to work to ensure that the children of other waste pickers also got a chance at a better life.

Kimball explained the process that he went through to compose the music, and how he related the letters in the person’s name to a musical note. This was of great interest to the audience, many of whom were seeing and hearing a piano for the first time. Later, he also played Beethoven’s ‘Moonlight Sonata’. Kimball chose this piece, he said, because in its sparse use of notes (only three notes played 268 times) he was reminded of the frugal and careful way that waste pickers collected, recycled and used resources, with as little wastage as possible.

Making our schools e-waste-friendly

SWaCH recently organised a school poster competition on the theme: ‘How can we make our school an e-waste friendly place?’ On October 6 2012, the students who drew the three winning entries were felicitated at a ceremony co-organised by Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC), SWaCH and Deutsche Gesellschaft fur Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH Indo-German Environment Partnership (IGEP). Hon. Mayor of Pune Mrs. Vaishali Bankar was the Chief Guest. The best creative entries have been made into a colourful and informative calendar.



This project to raise awareness about the issue of e-waste and find practical solutions at a local level, is being implemented by GIZ in 4 cities across India. SWaCH Pune Seva Sahakari Sanstha is the implementing agency of the project in Pune.

Schools are encouraged to place a collection bin on their premises where small e-waste items (CDs, cell phones, cables, etc.) can be dropped. On its part, SWaCH will conduct Awareness Programmes in schools, and will also take the initiative to collect e-waste and send it to authorised recyclers.

Schools interested in joining the campaign for a safe e-waste collection system can contact SWaCH at 9765999500 and 9765999501.

Let's Meet:

Pratibha Bhosale – tempo driver



Pratibha Bhosale lives in Yerawada and works in Sangamwadi as a SWaCH pratinidhi. She has been with SWaCH for the past 5 years. Sadly, Pratibhatai's husband passed away while her two children were still small and she is now the sole bread winner of the family, supporting her children and in-laws. She says that her

job with SWaCH, a cooperative of waste pickers and urban poor, has added stability to her life.

Pratibha recently completed her tempo driving training and is proud to now have a permanent license. According to the tutors, she was very punctual during the training even though she had to juggle her two jobs -- house-cleaning work and SWaCH door-to-door waste collection -- as also her family's needs. When asked whether she was nervous about driving, she replied: "When the time comes, a person will rise to anything...I only want to have at least one good skill – which I have now acquired. Now I hope I can now get a well-paying job some day..."

Pratibha appreciates the proactive stance that SWaCH takes towards education – Kagad Kach Patra Kashtakari Panchayat, the waste pickers' trade union, gives scholarships, interest-free loans and free copy books and stationary to encourage members to educate their children -- but she rues the fact that the monetary aid is dwindling as the union membership increases. She wishes that some way could be found to increase the scholarships and financial aid for students, so that her children, and those of other waste pickers, can study further and in good institutions.

Like most SWaCH and KKP members, a stable and secure future for her children and a secure old age for waste pickers like herself, are the dreams that Pratibha Bhosale wants to see realised.

Segregation Drives: Some success!

Sangamwadi: Ram Society in Sangamwadi is a society with about 511 flats, where citizens did not segregate waste, despite repeated requests. A meeting was recently held with society members, where Dr Bhende and the corporator Sunil Gogale explained the importance of segregation to the residents. But the next day, although some civic-minded citizens did remember to segregate the waste, most just handed over mixed waste again! When alerted to the situation by SWaCH waste pickers, Dr Bhende threatened to bring the overflowing container into Ram Society and keep it there so that the residents could enjoy the stink they were contributing to. He was supported by those residents who had started segregating waste. The ploy was effective – and thankfully did not have to be carried out: From the very next day, the waste pickers started receiving clean, segregated wet and dry waste.

A similar scheme has also been successfully launched in a low income housing community of Wanowrie.

Yerawada: Sanjay Park is a vasti in Yerawada with over 300 houses where few residents would pay the waste picker adequately and regularly. The uncertainty in her earnings was

a major disincentive to the waste picker who would also leave out the houses where she did not get paid. With no effective collection, the ground in front of the vasti was littered with filth, a breeding ground for disease.

Recently, a meeting was held in the vasti with residents, the corporators, Dr. Bhende and SWaCH, and the benefits of a regular waste collection system were pointed out. Some residents agreed to support SWaCH and with their participation, a system was evolved, which has proven successful: The waste picker now collects segregated waste from all 300 houses, while the user fees are collected separately from as many houses as possible every month. Regardless of the amount collected, the waste picker is paid a fixed sum before the 10th of every month. This regular, assured payment has been a big incentive to the waste picker.

Kondhwa and Wanowrie: Following a statement made by the Kondhwa-Wanowrie Mohalla Committee blaming SWaCH waste pickers for the fact that citizens do not segregate waste, waste pickers in that area have decided to stop accepting mixed waste.

The waste pickers say that despite repeated requests to residents to segregate wet and dry waste, citizens have not made any serious effort to segregate waste so far.

Meenabai, a waste picker, says: "We have tried hard to raise citizen awareness on this issue... It's true we have not managed to change their habits, but how can they say that we have encouraged this practice? Some citizens ask us – what do we pay you for, then, if not to segregate the waste?"

To that, Meenabai says the waste pickers respond, "No, you pay us to take away your dry waste. We help the with the recycling of waste, and we get paid for that."

From August 9 onwards, since the waste pickers have started a segregation awareness drive in different areas, the societies have started engaging tempos to take away the mixed waste for dumping at various sites on the city's outskirts. But the local Mohalla Committee which is so quick to point a finger at waste pickers, has had little to say about this dangerous practice, or about how these growing heaps of mixed waste are to be tackled in the future. They also remain silent on the fact that waste pickers have lost contracts to various societies still giving mixed waste.

The habit of waste segregation is something that SWaCH, with the support of PMC, is trying to inculcate in Pune's citizens, through segregation drives which are informative, fun, interactive and include visits by local corporators. SWaCH will be happy to provide advice and support to citizens' initiatives on this issue.

Tempo driving training

Tempo training has recently resumed in SWaCH! In the earlier training phase, nine trainees had successfully completed the course, while eight had dropped out along the way.

As the new session was being planned, SWaCH staff visited some of those who had dropped out earlier, to try and understand their reasons for giving up the opportunity of learning how to drive. After some discussion, three SWaCH members from this group -- Poonam Mahadeo Nade, Pratibha Shailendra Bhosale and Surekha Lala Gaikwad -- opted to resume the training.

While Surekha is still learning to drive, both Poonam and Pratibha now proudly show their permanent driving licences.

SWaCH views the tempo training as an important option to offer women waste pickers and particularly, their daughters. The useful skill of driving a tempo is yet another way of empowering women waste pickers and preparing them for the future – those who have completed the training, speak of how their status in the community and home was elevated when they got their licences.

Dr. Isher J. Ahluwalia lauds Pune's 'shining example'

Dr. Isher Judge Ahluwalia, former Chairperson of the High Powered Expert Committee on Urban Infrastructure and Services, was in Pune recently to study Pune's waste management system. During her visit, she took a close look at the SWaCH model, visiting the Model Colony biogas plant, Bhosale Nagar sorting shed and Aundh ramp composting project.

Dr. Ahluwalia interacted with SWaCH members Sunita Madhukar Kale, Madhukar Sadhu Kale, and Surekha Lala Gaikwad, amongst others.



Dr. Ahluwalia beamed when she saw Sunita, her husband and son in the tempo they use for collecting waste, remarking: "Now, that's a good model!" She spoke at length with the SWaCH team, asking them detailed questions.

Dr. Ahluwalia's article based on her Pune trip, 'Clean it like Pune', appeared in the Indian Express on October 31 2012. In the article, she says Pune offers 'a shining example of what a city can do to manage the growing menace of garbage as it urbanises at a rapid pace.'

They strive to keep the city's rivers clean

Corporates, social organisations to collect *nirmalya*, Ganesh idols to prevent pollution of water bodies

DNA Correspondent

Even as the city celebrates Ganeshotsav with gaiety, a team of enthusiasts from corporates and social organisations have come forward to ensure the festival is environment-friendly. For this, they will work at 18 ghats in Pune during immersion days, so that *nirmalya* or the immersed Ganesh idols do not pollute the rivers flowing through the city.

NGO SWaCH, with participation from Cummins India Limited and Emcare Pharmaceuticals, has set a target of collecting 70 tonnes of *nirmalya* (the garlands, flowers and durvas), which otherwise flows into the river during visarjan. Nearly 700 employees of Cummins will participate in various programmes to prevent pollution in water bodies.

Joining these efforts in Pimpri-Chinchwad is a group of 90 people from Sanskar Pratishthan, which will collect *nirmalya* and idols so that they are not immersed in the river.

During the festival too, these organisations will be sensitising people regarding river pollution and encouraging people

to immerse idols in tanks provided by civic authorities.

Last year, the SWaCH initiative had resulted in collecting 35 tonnes of *nirmalya* from Mutha river at various ghats. This year, they plan to ensure that idols are immersed only in the tanks built by Pune Municipal Corporation. College students will also be part of this initiative.

SWaCH will also collect and recycle the waste through the support of around 180 waste-pickers, supervisors and ward coordinators as well as area coordinators. All the recyclable material would be sorted and segregated, so that flowers and fruits can be used for making compost.

Vishnu Shrimangale, coordinator for SWaCH informed DNA that Cummins India Limited would be deploying about 12 volunteers at all the 18 Ghats, while Emcare Pharmaceuticals would have in all 30 volunteers. He added, "About 40 students from Fergusson College would be part of this initiative for which even Government Catering College at Shivajinagar is sending its NSS students.

Fergusson College students would be deployed at Baba Bhide Bridge ghat for the immersion of Gauri Ganpati on the fifth day, which falls on Sunday and during the final immersion day for *survejanik* Ganeshotsav, which is on September 29. Talking to DNA, S Ravichandran, head of Corporate Responsibility, Cummins Group in India,

said, "Nearly 3,500 man hours are being devoted to this activity as also for spreading awareness. Last year, we ensured about 26 tonnes of Ganesh idols were immersed in tanks and also prevented three tonnes of *nirmalya* from being thrown into the rivers."

accommodate idols beyond a point

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SWaCH collects over 25 tonne of *nirmalya* from 16 ghats

Times News Network

Pune: The SWaCH cooperative collected more than 25 tonne of *nirmalya* from 16 ghats on Gauri and Ganesh immersion day on Sunday. Also, the SWaCH staff with the help of corporates and volunteers spread awareness on the need to immerse idols in artificial tanks.

As many as 1,864 idols in Katraj and 1,564 idols in Vitthalwadi were immersed in tanks built by the Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC).



Malati Gadgil, chief executive officer, SWaCH, told TOI that creating awareness among citizens to immerse idols in artificial tanks, give away *nirmalya* and not pollute the rivers has helped. Citizens were willingly immersing idols in artificial tanks. In fact, she said, at many places tanks could not

MT-22 Sept-12 'स्वच्छ' तर्फे निर्माल्य संकलन

पुणे : शहरातील अदरा टिकाणी गणपतीच्या निर्माल्याचे स्वच्छ संस्थेच्यावतीने संकलन करण्यात येणार आहे.

फुलांसह अन्य साहित्याचे निर्माल्य नदीत न टाकता तेथे संस्थेने ठेवलेल्या कुडीत टाकण्याचे आवाहन करण्यात आले आहे. शहरातील येरवडा, सगंमवाडी, बंडगाईन, एस.एम.जोशी पुल, विहल मंदिर, औंधगाव, बुद्धेश्वर, गरवारे, पांचाळेस्वर, कात्रज, दत्तवाडी, कमिन्स कॉलेज, औंध बोपोडी, मिडेपुल, खराडी, शाहू उद्यान, पिंपरीतील सुभाषनगर, सांजीवा अदरा घाटावर निर्माल्य संकलन केले जाणार आहे. येथे ७० टन निर्माल्य संकलनाचे उद्दिष्ट ठेवण्यात आले आहे.

SWaCH to ensure eco-friendly immersions

Times News Network

Pune: SWaCH, a collective of waste pickers in the city, will collect *nirmalya* and ensure that Ganesh idols are immersed in the tanks set up by the Pune Municipal Corporation at 18 ghats in Pune and in Pimpri-Chinchwad on September 23 and 29.

The collective aims to collect 70 tonne of *nirmalya*, which will be used for composting and recycling. Two hundred corporate volunteers and five waste pickers will be deployed at each ghat, along with SWaCH staff, between 4 pm and 10 pm. September 23 is Gauri immersion, while September 29 is Ahant Chaturthi, the last day of the festival.

The project will be carried out at the following ghats

- ▶ Yerrawade/Chitra
- ▶ Sangam
- ▶ Band Garden
- ▶ S.M.Joshi bridge
- ▶ Vitthal Mandir
- ▶ Aundhgaon
- ▶ Vrudheshwar
- ▶ Garvare
- ▶ Pahalshwar
- ▶ Katraj ramp
- ▶ Dattawadi
- ▶ Cummins college
- ▶ Bopodi
- ▶ Shide bridge
- ▶ Kharaodi (on September 23rd and 29th)
- ▶ Shaahu Udyan (on September 25th and 29th)
- ▶ Pimpri-Subhashnagar (PCMC)
- ▶ Sanghvi (PCMC)

SWaCH chief executive officer Malati Gadgil told TOI, "We will distribute 50,000 pamphlets among citizens, instructing them not to immerse idols and *nirmalya* in the river. Many idols are made from plaster of Paris

and chemical paints are used to colour them, which pollute the river."

"SWaCH will collaborate with corporate volunteers on the two days to ensure that idols are immersed in the environmentally safe tanks," she said.

The *nirmalya* collected will be segregated. The flowers, fruit, coconuts, etc. will be used for composting, while plastic, thermocol and paper will be recycled. After segregation, the *nirmalya* will be transported to the closest composting pit, Gadgil said.

Last year, 35 tonne of *nirmalya* was collected from 14 ghats. For the first time, 4% of the *nirmalya* will be converted to compost at SWaCH's facility in Aundh, which has the capacity to absorb three tonne per day. The remaining 60% will be composted at various city institutions, which will later use the compost for their own purposes.

"Except for the Pahalshwar ghat in Deccan Gymkhana, 17 ghats have artificial immersion tanks. We are in talks with the civic body to arrange for a tank at Pahalshwar ghat too. We will also compile the count of idols immersed in artificial tanks and of the citizens who gave *nirmalya* to waste pickers. We will seek feedback from citizens," she added.



A file photo of volunteers of SWaCH with a banner urging people to put *nirmalya* in containers near a visarjan ghat

SWaCH Pune Seva Sahakari Sanstha Ltd. is a collective of self-employed wastepickers that provides waste collection and management services. It is authorised by the Pune Municipal Corporation.

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