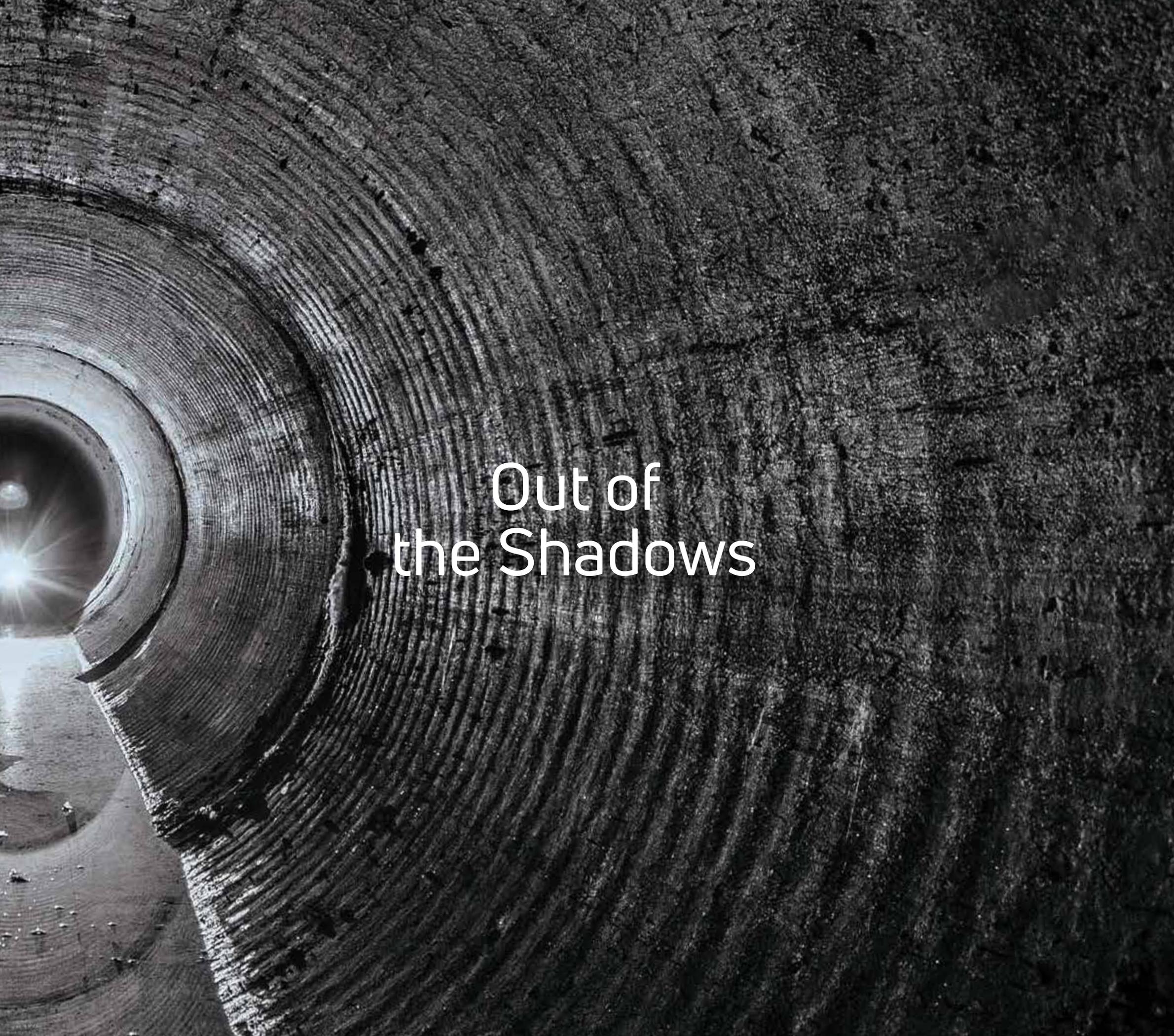




101 STORIES OF INSPIRATION





The image features a dark, heavily textured surface, possibly a piece of wood or stone, with a prominent circular hole on the left. Through this hole, a bright light source is visible, creating a lens flare effect. The interior of the hole appears to be a sandy or light-colored surface. The overall mood is mysterious and dramatic.

Out of
the Shadows



“Cleanliness is next to godliness.”

-Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi



101 Stories
of Inspiration





Vice-President of India

I am happy to know that the Integrated Health and Wellbeing Council is publishing a coffee table book showcasing '101 Stories of Hope' of individuals whose lives were transformed, from manual scavenging to dignified jobs in the mainstream. This is a laudable achievement and I commend IHW Council and other social organisations involved in this noble task.

The past seven years have been phenomenal in the way we have seen 'Swachhta' emerge from the realm of obscurity to become a subject of national prominence. 'Swachh Bharat Mission' has turned cleanliness into a nationwide 'Jan Andolan' with active participation of people from all sections of the society.

Mahatma Gandhi, the inspiration behind the Swachhta movement had always emphasised on the 'dignity of labour' and 'Antyodaya' — the rise of the last person. The initiatives like 'Satyagraha se Swachhagraha' and 'Swachhta hi Sewa' are aimed to achieve these noble objectives.

In this Yajna of making India clean, the corporate sector and voluntary organisations also have an equally important role to play along with the governments. I am sure that the IHW Council will continue its good work for the betterment of the lives of sanitation workers through professional training from leading institutions in government, private and NGO sectors.

I wish all the success to the programmes and initiatives started by the Integrated Health and Wellbeing Council. I sincerely hope the Book, containing many motivational stories of individual workers, will inspire many more 'stories of hope' with renewed efforts from all stakeholders.

A handwritten signature in white ink, reading 'M. Venkaiah Naidu', is positioned above the printed name.

M. Venkaiah Naidu
Vice-President of India





**Ministry of Water Resources,
River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation**

It is a matter of great pleasure that IHW Council, in association with Jagran Pehel and Reckitt, have come out with a coffee table book showcasing '101 Stories of Hope' of individuals whose lives were transformed, from manual scavenging to dignified jobs in the mainstream. This transformation was undertaken by a host of social organizations in the wake of Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi's clarion call for restoring the dignity of our sanitation workers as 'Swacchagrahis'.

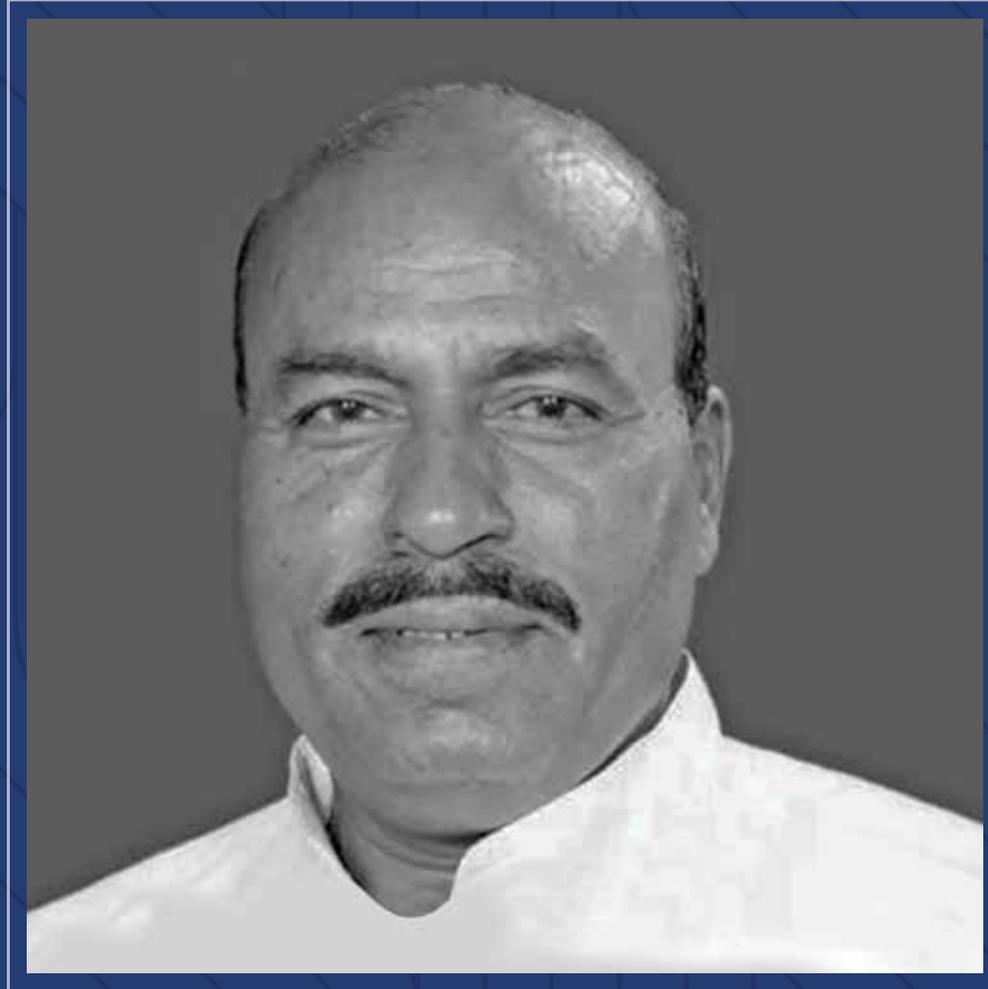
Never ever in the history of the country, sanitation was given the importance it deserved, and it is reflected in Government's initiative like Swachha Bharat Abhiyan. This mission, launched on Oct 2, 2014, has taken the form of a mass movement, and today the entire country is Open Defecation Free. Such Missions are incomplete without the contribution and positive approach of our sanitation workforce and their dedication towards their work.

In this context, the publication of such a coffee table book is very timely and commendable. Such a publication will highlight and propagate the remarkable development in the sanitation sector in India, and also showcase how the lives of these trained sanitation workers have been transformed.

I convey my best wishes to the publishers of this great collection, which will not only inspire sanitation workers in the country, but will also lead to a change in the behaviour of people towards those involved in sanitation work.

A handwritten signature in white ink, appearing to read 'Gajendra Singh Shekhawat', is centered below the text.

Gajendra Singh Shekhawat
Union Minister of Water Resources,
River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation







Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment

Sanitation workers provide an invaluable public service, vital to our daily lives and the environment. They have been working together even during the pandemic, as our frontline of defence against the spread of the coronavirus, but we cannot deny the fact that these are also the most vulnerable amongst the trilogy of societal saviours.

They are real heroes in my opinion. They make it convenient for us to keep our neighbourhoods clean, which prevents chaos and disease. I applaud the contribution of the organizations that bring such a remarkable change to the entire sanitation and hygiene sectors in India and changing the lives of sanitation workers through the professional training programme and helping India to organize the unorganized sector.

I also congratulate the IHW Council, Jagran Pehel and Harpic World Toilet College for these thoughtful initiatives and fully support such ideas with encouragement and motivation.

A handwritten signature in white ink, appearing to read 'Ramdas Athawale', is positioned above the name.

Ramdas Athawale

Union Minister of State, Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment





Sanitation workers are the unsung heroes of our society. We cannot imagine what would happen to us if we were without them.

I applaud the effort of this book, *Out of the Shadows*, with its 101 inspiring stories of sanitation workers. We need to take a moment to celebrate the great contribution they make towards ensuring our lives are so liveable.

Jack Sim

Founder, World Toilet Organization & BOP HUB, Singapore





Sanitation workers are an indispensable part of our lives. It is their hard work that ensures we are able to live in a clean environment. However, through the ages, their work has lacked recognition. They've been stigmatized and discriminated against in our society. Even now, they continue to work in hazardous situations, often putting their lives at risk.

Sanitation workers have been at the frontline during the Covid-19 pandemic. I congratulate IHW Council for compiling a coffee table book on sanitation workers. It is a great way to recognise our real heroes, who deserve so much recognition and respect for their invaluable work in keeping us safe, healthy and happy.

Dr. Bindeshwar Pathak
Founder, Sulabh International Social Service Organisation





Sanitation workers are among the most underprivileged group of workers who struggle against an inter-generational cycle of poverty, discrimination and ill-health. It is heartening to see the 101 stories of hope from the Harpic World Toilet College Programme, which provide skills and employment opportunities to sanitation workers.

With urban women constituting over 50%, of the total estimated 5 million sanitation workers, UN Women is delighted to partner with the Programme to create decent jobs for women in the sector.

Susan Ferguson
Country Head, India, UN Women





At Reckitt, we take pride in our purpose: To protect, heal and nurture in the relentless pursuit of a cleaner, healthier world. It is our fight, 'to make access to the highest quality hygiene, wellness and nourishment a right and not a privilege'. These principles are embodied in our social impact programmes, which demonstrate our purpose and fight. Launched in 2018, with Jagran Pehel in Aurangabad, the Harpic World Toilet College (WTC) programme strives to reach out to the underprivileged sections of society with an aim to nurture their skills, to enable them to live a life of dignity.

The stories this programme has generated are inspiring and humbling. They showcase the message of the Mahatma: A small group of determined and like-minded people can change the course of history. Through the efforts of the teams that support WTC, the lives of 7,000 individuals and their families have changed for the better. These 101 stories weave a tapestry of hope that showcases the potential of these individuals.

Gaurav Jain

Senior Vice President, South Asia, Reckitt





‘Give a man a fish, and you feed him for a day.
Teach a man to fish, and you feed him for a lifetime.’

This quote embodies the ethos of the Harpic World Toilet College programme. Right from the start, the Harpic World Toilet College (WTC) programme has been unconventional in its vision, approach and model. This initiative has moved away from the standard approaches of community mobilization and focuses on the problem at hand: Breaking intergenerational poverty in the community of sanitation workers and giving them the power to lead a dignified life. By rehabilitating, reskilling and upskilling these individuals, the WTC programme run by Jagran Pehel has helped these individuals find jobs that give them a life of dignity. Seven thousand sanitation workers and their families have experienced the power of a focused mission that has transformed their lives for the better.

These 101 stories celebrate the triumph of the human spirit and are testament to what is possible when the right system levers are engaged. In its third year now, the programme has expanded to six more states and is employing modern tools to widen its reach. These stories are proof that there is much more to come!

Ravi Bhatnagar

Director, External Affairs & Partnerships, South Asia, Reckitt





“A JAGRAN CSR INITIATIVE”

The Harpic World Toilet College embodies ours and Reckitt’s ethos of purpose-led business for broader social good. When we first launched the Dettol Banega Swasth India (DBSI) campaign, in 2015, we were striving to build a holistic and sustainable ecosystem, based on a flourishing economy for sanitation and hygiene standards, with an aim to reach 100 million Indians by 2020.

To incorporate the resolution of issues like manual scavenging, lack of a bottom-up sanitation economy and misinformation around best practices, the Harpic World Toilet College (HWTC) was established in 2018, as a collaboration between Jagran Pehel, Reckitt and World Toilet Organisation. HWTC provides training to sanitation workers, with the need to eliminate the inhuman nature of the constant struggles and life-threatening circumstances they are faced with, along with the prevalent issues of human rights violation and exploitation.

In 2020, due to Covid-19, HWTC changed their training strategy to incorporate an online training module, which has helped expand its outreach. We intend to further expand the ambit of DBSI to transform the sanitation and hygiene ecosystem in India. Our successes would not have been possible without the commitment of all our partners or the stories of the people.

This book is an ode to all, the stakeholders who have collaborated with us to work towards eliminating the scourge of manual scavenging, and those who have fought to rise above their circumstances and affect long-term change, making our fight worth the cause.

S.M. Sharma
Founder, Jagran Pehel





Through my career as a health journalist and enthusiast, I have been passionate about the health and wellbeing of the underprivileged. Over the last two decades that I have been at it, I have never seen as massive a transformation in the sanitation sector and among the sanitation workers, in India, as I have in the last 7 years. I believe this to be the combined impact of leadership in the country and of purpose-led corporate houses that ensure social transformation is integral to their corporate ethics.

We, at IHW, were delighted to work on this meaningful project along with the Harpic World Toilet College, Jagran Pehel and Mission Paani teams, to highlight and promote the transformation our sanitation workers have experienced over the last few years, with the thoughtful contribution of initiatives such as Harpic World Toilet College, Sulabh International and other organisations in India.

Each and every story in this book is so inspiring and motivating, it makes me realise just how this underprivileged community struggles against poverty, discrimination and critical health conditions. And yet, they continue to work hard, changing the mindset of those around them, transforming the sector with the help of professional institutions.

Enjoy reading these inspiring experiences of our sanitation heroes!

Kamal Narayan
CEO, IHW Council



Foreword

The Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and Their Rehabilitation Act 2013 bans the employment of individuals as manual scavengers. However, as a 2018 survey by various local authorities revealed, the practice—though muted—is still very much prevalent, and precious lives continue to be lost. According to the National Commission for Safai Karamcharis, 941 people have died, so far this year, while cleaning sewers and septic tanks.

According to the Manual Scavengers Act, the employer who engages workers for cleaning the sewers or septic tanks is obliged to provide the requisite PPE, safety gear and devices, and ensure prescribed safety precautions. However, most employers neglect to follow any of the aforementioned, while the employees are ignorant and, more often than not, desperate for any kind of employment.

In 2018, 58,098 identified as manual scavengers were given a one-time cash assistance of ₹40,000 to enable rehabilitation, and 16,057 were provided with skill development training, along with their dependents, by the Ministry of Social Justice. While this is but a drop in the ocean, every drop counts, as the stories in this book will reveal.

Out of the Shadows brings to you 101 stories of sanitation workers who have been rehabilitated through the efforts of organisations such as Harpic World Toilet College, Gramalaya, Sulabh International, Centre for Development, Hari Bhari Patiala, Navsarjan and Human Research and Development Centre. These are stories of grit and perseverance, but these are also stories that demonstrate how change begins with but one idea. The idea of a woman who gave her land to build toilets so the women of her village wouldn't have to go into the fields, or the idea of a 5-day online programme that gave so many courage of conviction and a belief in their own abilities, or the idea of educating sanitation workers on proper nutrition and healthcare. We hope you are as inspired reading this book as we were creating it!



In line with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), this initiative seeks justice for and the empowerment of the most essential section of our society, the sanitation workers.





Stories of Hope



USHA



RAM



MAYA



SUNIL



PINKY



SUNITA



MUKESH



LAXMAN



RAM



NILESH



SURAJ



ASHOK



LAXMI



SANTOSH



GAJANAN



AVINASH



SOMINATH



CHHAYA



VISHAL



BHARAT



GANESH



AKASH



GAUTAM



PRADIP



KISHOR



SHAIKH



RAHUL



MANISHA



AKASH



KAILASH



AVINASH



BALU



ARCHANA



VARSHA



SHAMUVEL



RATAN



VILAS



MANOJ



VIJAY



VIKAS



PRIYANKA



BALASAHEB



PREM



SANTOSH



KRISHNA



VIKRAM



SADHANA



PRAMOD



MEENA



SAYYAD



RAJU



SANTOSH



RAVI



SATISH



DILIP



CHHAYA



AVINASH



SHAIKH



MANOJ



SATISH



RANJIT



PREM



GULAB



VANDANA



ARCHANA



RADHA



TARA



DIPAK



SAIRAM



PRAMOD



SHRIKANT



VILAS



VINOD



PRAKASH



MANOJ



SANDIP



BHIKKUBHAI



PUSHPABEN



CHITRA



SHANMUGA



LAKSHMANAN



SARAVANAN



N KUMAR



RANJANBEN



RANCHHODBHAI



HANSABEN



BHARTIBEN



ASHABEN



KULWINDER



AMAR



LAADI



DEEPAK



VIKAS



PRIYANKA



MANORANI



VIJAY



UGANTA



ASMA



SELVA



VINUBHAI



ISHWARBHAI





“Everyone must be his
own scavenger.”

-Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi

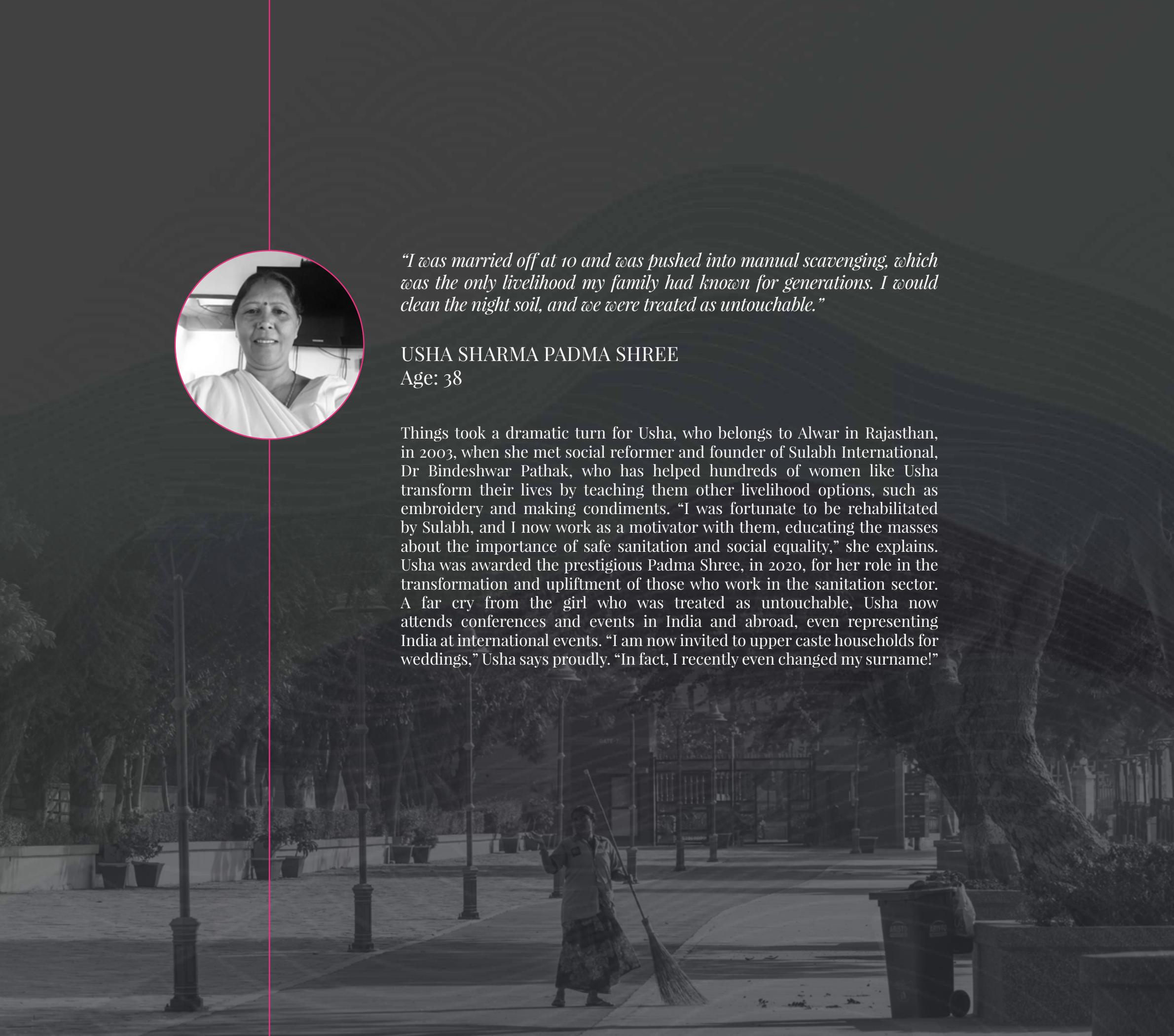


“I was married off at 10 and was pushed into manual scavenging, which was the only livelihood my family had known for generations. I would clean the night soil, and we were treated as untouchable.”

USHA SHARMA PADMA SHREE

Age: 38

Things took a dramatic turn for Usha, who belongs to Alwar in Rajasthan, in 2003, when she met social reformer and founder of Sulabh International, Dr Bindeshwar Pathak, who has helped hundreds of women like Usha transform their lives by teaching them other livelihood options, such as embroidery and making condiments. “I was fortunate to be rehabilitated by Sulabh, and I now work as a motivator with them, educating the masses about the importance of safe sanitation and social equality,” she explains. Usha was awarded the prestigious Padma Shree, in 2020, for her role in the transformation and upliftment of those who work in the sanitation sector. A far cry from the girl who was treated as untouchable, Usha now attends conferences and events in India and abroad, even representing India at international events. “I am now invited to upper caste households for weddings,” Usha says proudly. “In fact, I recently even changed my surname!”





“As a manual scavenger, I was ignored and treated badly. I had no semblance of how to conduct myself and was consumed by abuse and addictions.”

RAM NAMDEV LOKHANDE

Age: 37

What followed Ram’s training at Harpic World Toilet College wasn’t just upskilling and a housekeeping position at a hospital, but an entire shift in mindset and upliftment of his standard of living. “I am now able to perceive the respect I get from others,” he says. “In fact, as a housekeeper at a hospital, I’ve had the honour to serve people through the pandemic. I’m proud of the work I’ve done!”





“For 12 years, I worked in the unorganised sector, in deplorable conditions. And then, my husband left me, leaving me to fend for myself and our three daughters.”

MAYA SABLE

Age: 35

On completing her training at Harpic World Toilet College, Maya got placed at a Clean and Care Facilities Service in Housekeeping, where she is getting more than double her previous salary. She now has access to PPE kits, a Provident Fund, ESI and insurance. She works a wholesome 8 hours a day, and is actively raising awareness among other workers and getting them training at HWTC. “All sanitation workers should be given proper training,” Maya says firmly.





“I was working a manhole when a bunch of women, seeing me filled in muck, spat at me. Humiliation was an everyday challenge, but this particular incident left me heartbroken. For 16 years, I cleaned gutters and manholes, wearing nothing but a pair of pants, putting my life in danger, every day.”

SUNIL SIRASWAL

Age: 36

Following his training at Harpic World Toilet College, Sunil continues to work as a drainage cleaner but with machines. “Mr Amitabh Bachchan gave me one,” he proudly claims. Sunil is also actively involved in a self-help group, of which he is president. “My work helps keep Aurangabad cleaner and its people healthier,” says Sunil, who has also found ambition. “I will be an entrepreneur—the king of sanitation!” he beams.





“I am the only breadwinner in my family of five. I would have less than ₹5000 to pay rent, feed and educate my kids. My daughter had to leave school because I could no longer afford it. I also had to pay for my mother-in-law’s treatment and medication.”

PINKY VIVEK JADHAV

Age: 30

“I have rights, too, and now I know it,” says Pinky of her training at Harpic World Toilet College. During the pandemic, she became a beneficiary of the Jagran Pehel Covid-19 Relief Fund, with which she set up a small grocery shop near her home. “My family and I are very happy in our little shop that gives us everything we need for a better life,” she smiles.





“Separated from my husband, I am the sole earning member of my family. To meet our expenses, I worked as a sanitation worker at Dattakvasti M Ward Project, Mumbai, as well as in a grocery store in Chembur. But it was just not enough, forcing me to pull my daughter out of school.”

SUNITA BASAVRAJ BAMANE

Age: 35

Sunita’s training at Harpic World Toilet College brought to the fore her excellent communication skills. “I never thought of it that way, because I felt I was only doing what I had to do, to make ends meet, but I realised I was very hardworking—I had been working two jobs, after all—and I could use that to my advantage,” she says. The HWTC placement got her a job in a safe environment, with sound facilities and a salary of ₹16,000 a month. “I can now well afford the rent for my house and my daughter is back in school!” she signs off.





“I finished school, but my family was badly off, so I started working with the Dattakvasti project in Mumbai, as a CT/PT (community toilet/public toilet) worker. I worked long hours, in unsafe, unhygienic conditions, and could barely make ends meet.”

MUKESH PAKHARE

Age: 38

As soon as he completed his training programme at Harpic World Toilet College, Mukesh was taken on as a mobilizer by HWTC, at a salary of ₹28,000, every month. He has excellent communication skills that his training helped hone, which has helped him as well as HWTC reach out to many more sanitation workers. Mukesh has also enrolled in a college so he can complete his graduation. “I never thought my life would change or get better, but I am proud of how far I’ve come, as is my family,” he says.



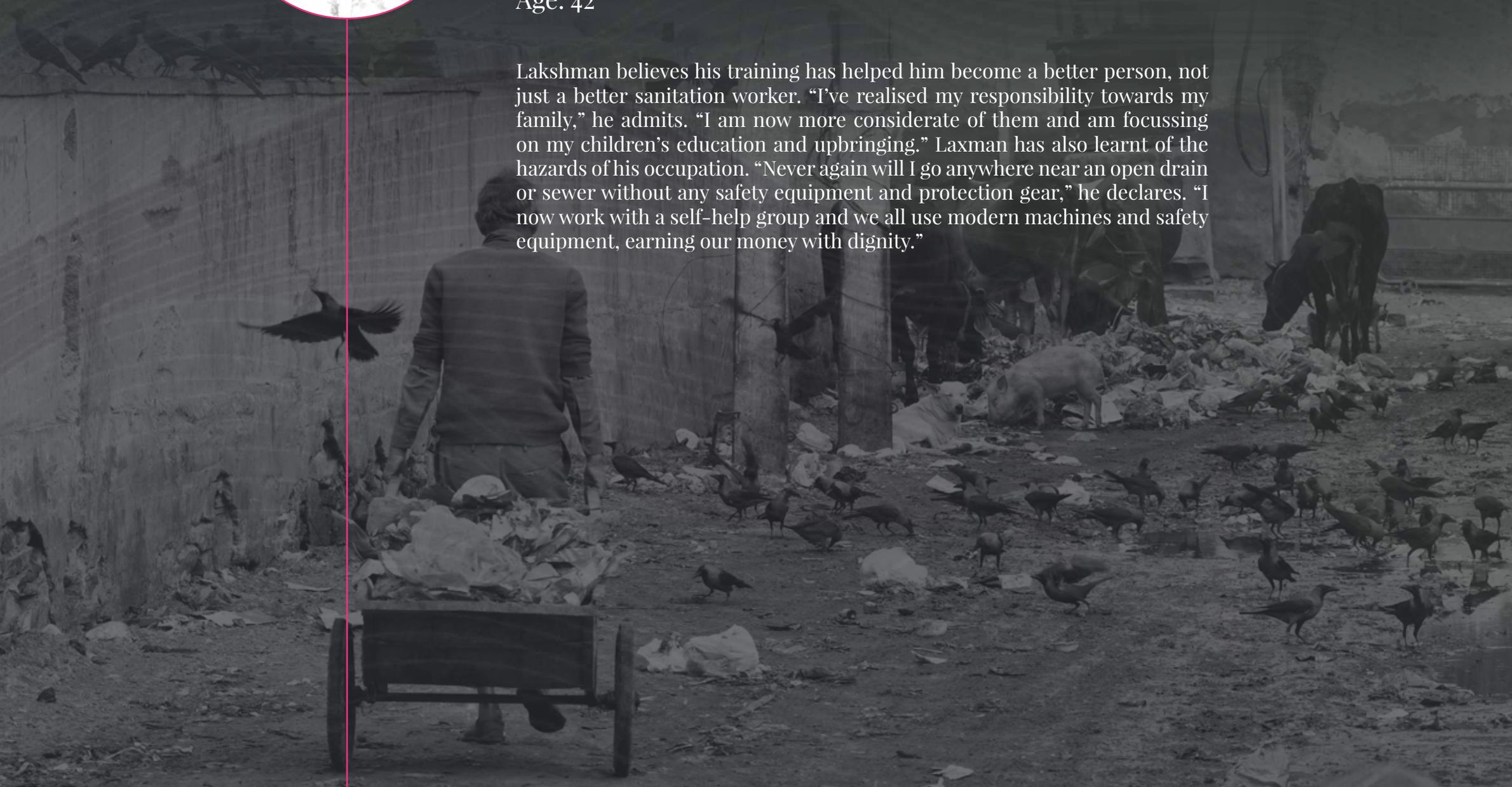


“I began scavenging when I was very young. I also started drinking and chewing tobacco. That’s where all my money went, instead of on my children’s education. At work, I’d go down a manhole, without safety gear, and the contractor would take advantage, appreciating me, only so he could push me to keep on putting my life on the line.”

LAKSHMAN DAHIBHATE

Age: 42

Lakshman believes his training has helped him become a better person, not just a better sanitation worker. “I’ve realised my responsibility towards my family,” he admits. “I am now more considerate of them and am focussing on my children’s education and upbringing.” Laxman has also learnt of the hazards of his occupation. “Never again will I go anywhere near an open drain or sewer without any safety equipment and protection gear,” he declares. “I now work with a self-help group and we all use modern machines and safety equipment, earning our money with dignity.”





“I had always aspired to a government job. A safe, secure job, which would allow me to set an example for the other young men in my family and community. But poverty came in the way, and I ended up doing sanitation work.”

RAM MALI

Age: 32

“There was so much I just didn’t know, up until I started training at Harpic World Toilet College,” says Ram. “Like the Manual Scavenger Act of 2013, which actually prohibits the employment of people as manual scavengers.” And yet, that is what he’d been employed to do. Ram is now well aware of his rights and understands opportunities in the sanitation business. He believes it is possible for him to live with dignity, and even aspire to entrepreneurship through the collective efforts of his community. Today, Ram is the General Secretary of Swachhata Mitra, a self-help group in Pune. “I’m going to write the competitive exams for a government job, again,” he says with confidence.





"I arrived in Aurangabad, 5 years ago, in the hope of a better future for my family. But as soon as I arrived, before I could find any source of income, my wife took ill. Fortunately, she survived, but those years were tough."

NILESH BHIMRAO SALVE

Age: 29

Today, Nilesh has a respectable job at a hospital, and medical insurance for his entire family, besides a lovely home that he is able to rent. His training at Harpic World Toilet College has taught him the importance of cleanliness. "Not only am I working in a professional manner, but I have also gained abundant knowledge to inculcate good values in my children and to be able to provide them with quality higher education," he beams. People wonder why he doesn't get himself another job, a better job. But Nilesh is proud of the work he does. "After my training, for the first time, I cleaned the toilet in my own house," he says. "I've learnt important lessons like sanitising, washing my hands before and after working, not using toxic chemicals and using Harpic for toilets."





“Conservation of national
sanitisation is Swaraj work,
and it may not be postponed
for a single day on any
consideration whatsoever.”

-Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi



“I started scavenging immediately after I completed my 12th. It was the same work my parents had done. Alone and scared, without a support system to fall back upon, I worked in terrible conditions and was constantly worried about my future. I believed this was going to be my life.”

SURAJ DANDGE

Age: 29

His training at Harpic World Toilet College taught Suraj the importance of proper hygiene and sanitation, besides getting him a job at a company called Varrac in Aurangabad. “It was the happiest moment of my life,” he tells us. “I now work at a reputable place and earn a decent salary. I feel like I’ve finally got my dignity back, along with better health!”



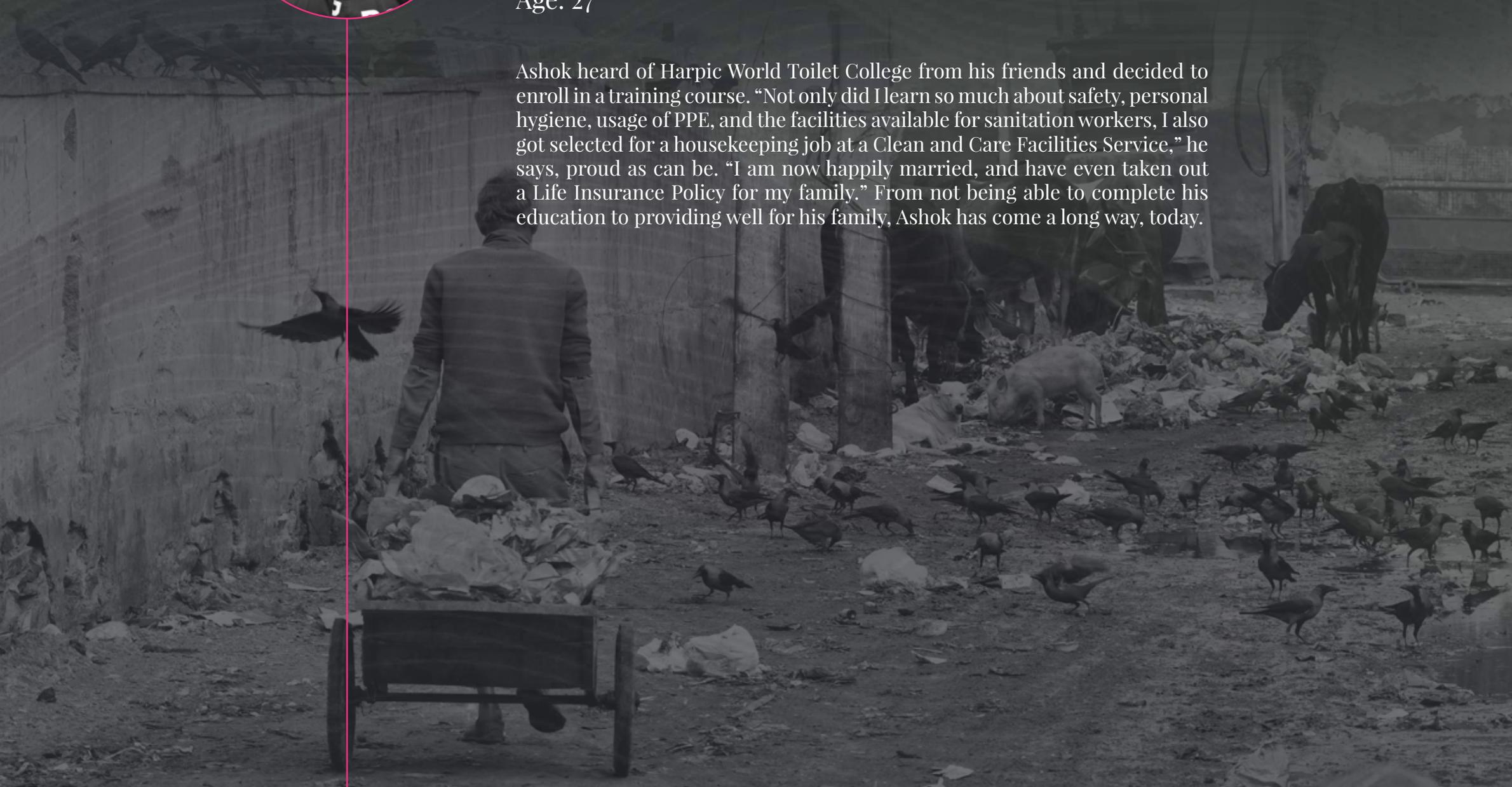


“My alcoholic father would often get into fights with my mother. She finally left him and moved out with me and my brothers. The eldest, I had to drop out of school and take on the responsibilities of the home and hearth. My contract sweeping job fetched me a salary of only ₹6,000. It wasn’t enough but I didn’t expect any better.”

ASHOK PAKHARE

Age: 27

Ashok heard of Harpic World Toilet College from his friends and decided to enroll in a training course. “Not only did I learn so much about safety, personal hygiene, usage of PPE, and the facilities available for sanitation workers, I also got selected for a housekeeping job at a Clean and Care Facilities Service,” he says, proud as can be. “I am now happily married, and have even taken out a Life Insurance Policy for my family.” From not being able to complete his education to providing well for his family, Ashok has come a long way, today.





“For eight years, I cleaned public toilets without any respite or acknowledgment, even from my family. I may have been cleaning toilets, but I still brought home money. And I did what I did without any safety equipment, in deplorable conditions.”

LAXMI VIJAY GHODKE

Age: 35

After her Harpic World Toilet College training, Laxmi got placed at MGM Hospital, Aurangabad. “They were so impressed with my work and my dedication, I was quickly promoted to supervisor,” she claims, the pride shining through her smile. She is the first lady supervisor in the hospital. “And now, my family, especially my children, love to boast about my accomplishments,” she says. ““Our Laxmi is a supervisor in a hospital!’ they say.”





“My family and I cleaned nasals (drains) with our bare hands. The very idea of caring for our lives was alien to us. If our work posed a threat to our safety or caused us to end up with a disease, that’s just the way it was.”

SANTOSH KHAITRE

Age: 35

Santosh proudly talks about his visit to Bollywood megastar Amitabh Bachchan’s home in Mumbai. “He gave me the Kamroder machine to clean drains with,” Santosh says. “I can now clean drains without having to get myself down and dirty.” Ever since his training at Harpic World Toilet College, concepts like workplace norms, machine operations, sanitation values, market and demand, have all become part of Santosh’s vocabulary. His main focus, now, is the health and education of his children. “I want to make sure they have a good life and a bright future ahead of them,” he says. Santosh is also a member of a self-help group at Aurangabad, where he uses his knowledge of the business to change lives.





“I was just out of Class 5, when I had to find work to support my family. Due to my lack of education and my background, I got rejected for almost 15. So I started scavenging, while working in a liquor shop, on the side, to satiate my alcohol addiction.”

GAJANAN HINGE

Age: 36

His training at Harpic World Toilet College helped Gajanan snap out of his alcohol-induced haze. He was also able to land a permanent job at Sterlite Industries. “In my family, no one knew or even cared about the safety measures involved in sanitation work—I’m the first,” he declares. Gajanan is now teaching his family members all about better cleaning techniques and has even gotten his younger brother enrolled for training. He wants to create awareness and has actively been suggesting the HWTC training to other sanitation workers he knows. “I want to start a sanitation business of my own, so I can take the pressure off my family,” he says.





“My entire family has worked in sanitation, for the last two generations. But I had different plans, with no intention of being a cleaner or sanitation worker. In fact, I even completed my graduation with an A grade, but due to a crisis in the family, I got pushed into working as a cleaner, cleaning sewage and drainage blocks.”

AVINASH SAKAT

Age: 24

Avinash’s training at Harpic World Toilet College helped him get a job as a professional cleaner. Having seen both his parents fall sick often from working in unsanitary conditions, he was desperate to help them do better. “I decided I would build up on my savings and prepare for a better future for all of us,” he tells us. So Avinash started educating his family in professional cleaning practices and enrolled his younger brother as a trainee. He then ensured he moved both his parents to the housekeeping sector to work in a safer environment. With the help of the counselling programme at HWTC, Avinash has now enrolled for a management programme, an MBA degree in Human Resource Management, from a reputed institute. “I want to pursue my entrepreneurial dreams and eventually establish my own business in the sanitation sector,” he says.





“I was passed over for marriage proposals because I was a scavenger. My father, also a scavenger, passed away at 50, from having worked in hazardous conditions. My unhappiness drove me to alcohol and tobacco. Coupled with my complete lack of knowledge about septic tanks, PPE and unhygienic conditions, it was a recipe for disaster.”

SOMINATH KADAM

Age: 36

An old trainee referred Sominath to Harpic World Toilet College, and that was a turning point for him. Sominath got placed as a housekeeper at the Government Science Institute, Aurangabad, and is doing fairly well. “I am now completely sober, well-dressed and well-spoken,” he says proudly. “I also have substantial savings for my marriage.” His family is delighted at this change in him and are looking for a suitable girl for Sominath.



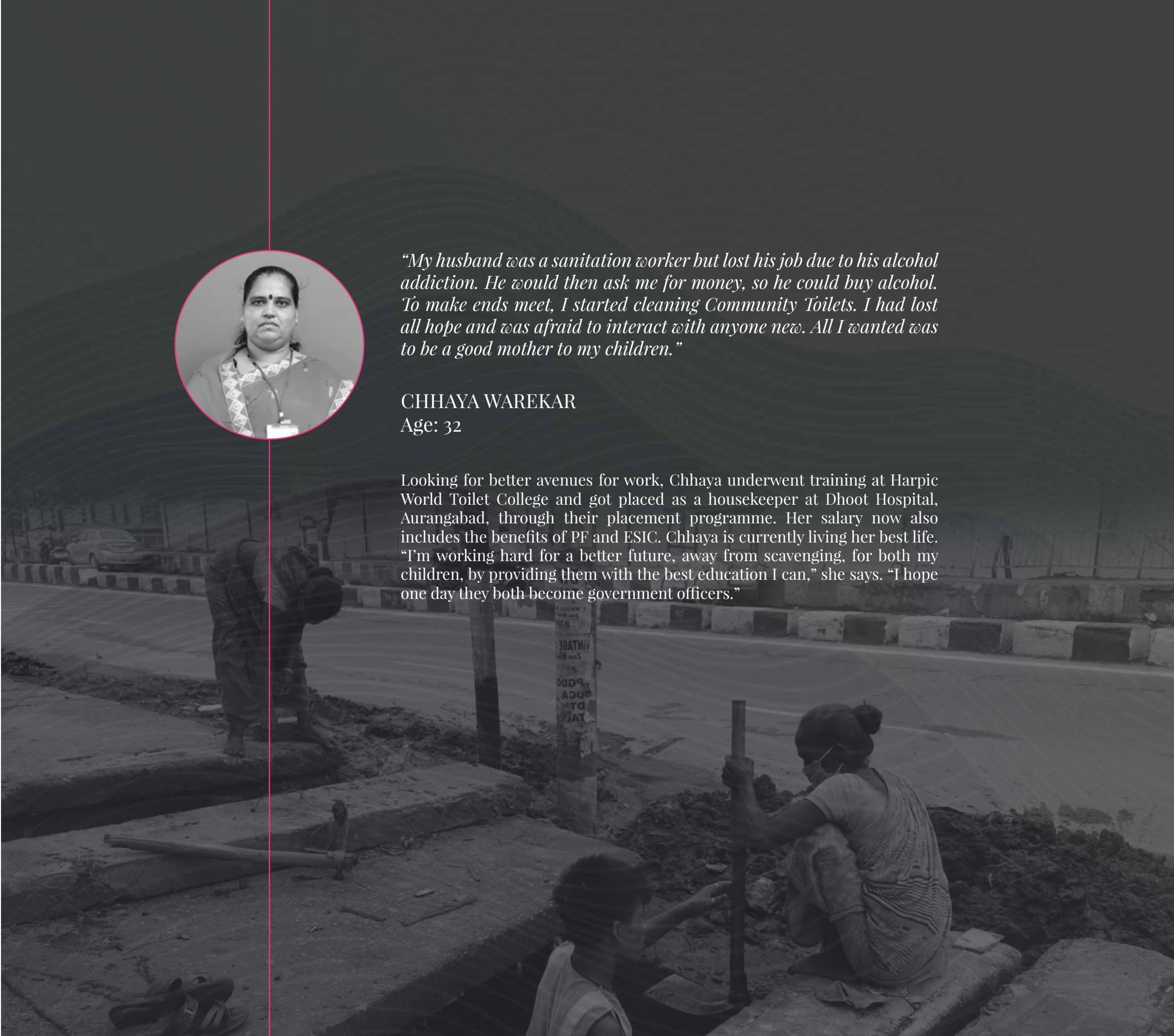


“My husband was a sanitation worker but lost his job due to his alcohol addiction. He would then ask me for money, so he could buy alcohol. To make ends meet, I started cleaning Community Toilets. I had lost all hope and was afraid to interact with anyone new. All I wanted was to be a good mother to my children.”

CHHAYA WAREKAR

Age: 32

Looking for better avenues for work, Chhaya underwent training at Harpic World Toilet College and got placed as a housekeeper at Dhoot Hospital, Aurangabad, through their placement programme. Her salary now also includes the benefits of PF and ESIC. Chhaya is currently living her best life. “I’m working hard for a better future, away from scavenging, for both my children, by providing them with the best education I can,” she says. “I hope one day they both become government officers.”





“Both my parents had been manual scavengers. They would fall sick often due to the terrible conditions they worked in, and when I was 22, my father passed away while cleaning a drain. My mother suffers severe chronic stomach problems, leaving me the sole breadwinner in my family of seven. I was illiterate, so following in my parents’ footsteps was a given.”

VISHAL CHANDALIYA

Age: 35

Vishal was cleaning a manhole when he met a mobilizer from Harpic World Toilet College. After his training, he got placed as a housekeeper at MGM Hospital, Aurangabad, where benefits like PF and ESIC are part of his salary. “I now work with all safety measures in place, and have even given up tobacco, which had become part of my everyday life,” he confesses. “I’m proud of having been able to ensure a secure future for my kids!”





“My father and I, both sanitation workers, were completely dependent on the thekedar (contractor), who employed us. One time, we both came out of a drain we’d been cleaning for over 6 hours, and the thekedar refused to pay us! I wanted a better job, but couldn’t find any because I was unskilled and lacked experience.”

BHARAT JONSAN ARSUD

Age: 27

Following his training at Harpic World Toilet College, Bharat has found a permanent job as a professional housekeeper at the CIPET Centre in Aurangabad. Relieved to no longer be working under a contractor, and to be independent, working in safe conditions, handling his own pay, Bharat has also helped his father leave his scavenging job. “I am so lucky to have a son like Bharat,” says his father, proud as can be. “He has put an end to my ‘dirty work.’”





“It is health that is real
wealth and not pieces of gold
and silver.”

-Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi



“I got evicted from my rented house as I was unable to pay the rent. But I felt even worse when I couldn’t afford to buy a new sari for my wife during the festive season, when all the women around us were dressing up so nicely!”

GANESH AMBADAS GAIKWAD

Age: 28

From ‘Ganya’ to ‘Ganesh Sir’, Ganesh has come a long way! He had known for a while that he had to bring about a change in his life, so he started training with Harpic World Toilet College. He got placed in a sizable organisation, where he garnered a reputation for himself as a hard worker and is now training people. “I’ve started saving and have even quit chewing tobacco,” says Ganesh. “I now gift my wife four saris every year! She’s thrilled with my promotion.”





“I spent my 20s, partying. My parents thought I was irresponsible and naïve. I kept poor company and had enough and more vices. One day, the roof of our house just collapsed. It had been raining incessantly, and the roof couldn’t take it any longer. It came crashing down! As did my reality!”

AKASH RAMNATH CHABUKSWAR

Age: 25

Akash knew he had to get his act together and behave responsibly. So he joined the Harpic World Toilet College training programme, and hasn’t looked back ever since! Akash got himself a job at Prozone Mall, Aurangabad. “I also helped my family get new jobs and we all started saving,” he tells us. “A year into my new job, we were able to book a new flat for ourselves. No more crashing roofs for us!”



“They called us the ‘Toilet Couple’. My wife and I. We worked as cleaners in residential societies and community toilets, earning a measly ₹4,000 to ₹6,000 a month. People’s taunts, combined with the terrible salary and the deplorable working conditions, were unbearable.”

GAUTAM KADAM

Age: 28

Gautam and his wife both joined the training programme at Harpic World Toilet College, following which they got placed in housekeeping with reputable companies. Not only did Gautam learn the difference between cleaning and housekeeping, he also has a newfound respect for his wife. “I have now come to understand gender equality, which had been an alien concept to me,” he says. “My wife and I are both equal partners. In everything!”





“In spite of being a college graduate, I was unable to find a job. I searched for over a year and a half. Eventually, I gave up and took up scavenging. My degree felt like such a waste!”

PRADIP NATHASI KHANDAGALE

Age: 35

Under the guidance of his mentor at Harpic World Toilet College, Pradip learned how to put his knowledge and skills to better use. His training helped him secure a job in the housekeeping department at Hotel Atithi, a 3-Star hotel in Aurangabad. And now, just a few years later, Pradip is the manager of the same hotel. “As my family says, I am a king, today, and Harpic World Toilet College has been the kingmaker of my life,” he beams.





“I would clean the sewage by going deep into it, without any safety precautions. And all I would get was a paltry 500–600 rupees. I’m not sure what was worse: That I was risking my life for nothing, or that I didn’t even know that I was risking it!”

KISHOR PAKHARE

Age: 29

Kishor now works as a trainer at Hegdewar Hospital, in Aurangabad, and has over 30 trainees under him. “My best moments are when I’m providing training—I feel like I’m helping so many people do better for themselves,” he says. Kishor believes these workplace colleagues to be his chosen family. “Even though my family is now proud of me, but when my son was sick and admitted in hospital, not one of them stepped forward to help me—it was these people I work with, who came to my rescue. They are my family, and I want to do everything I can to help them with a better future, too!”



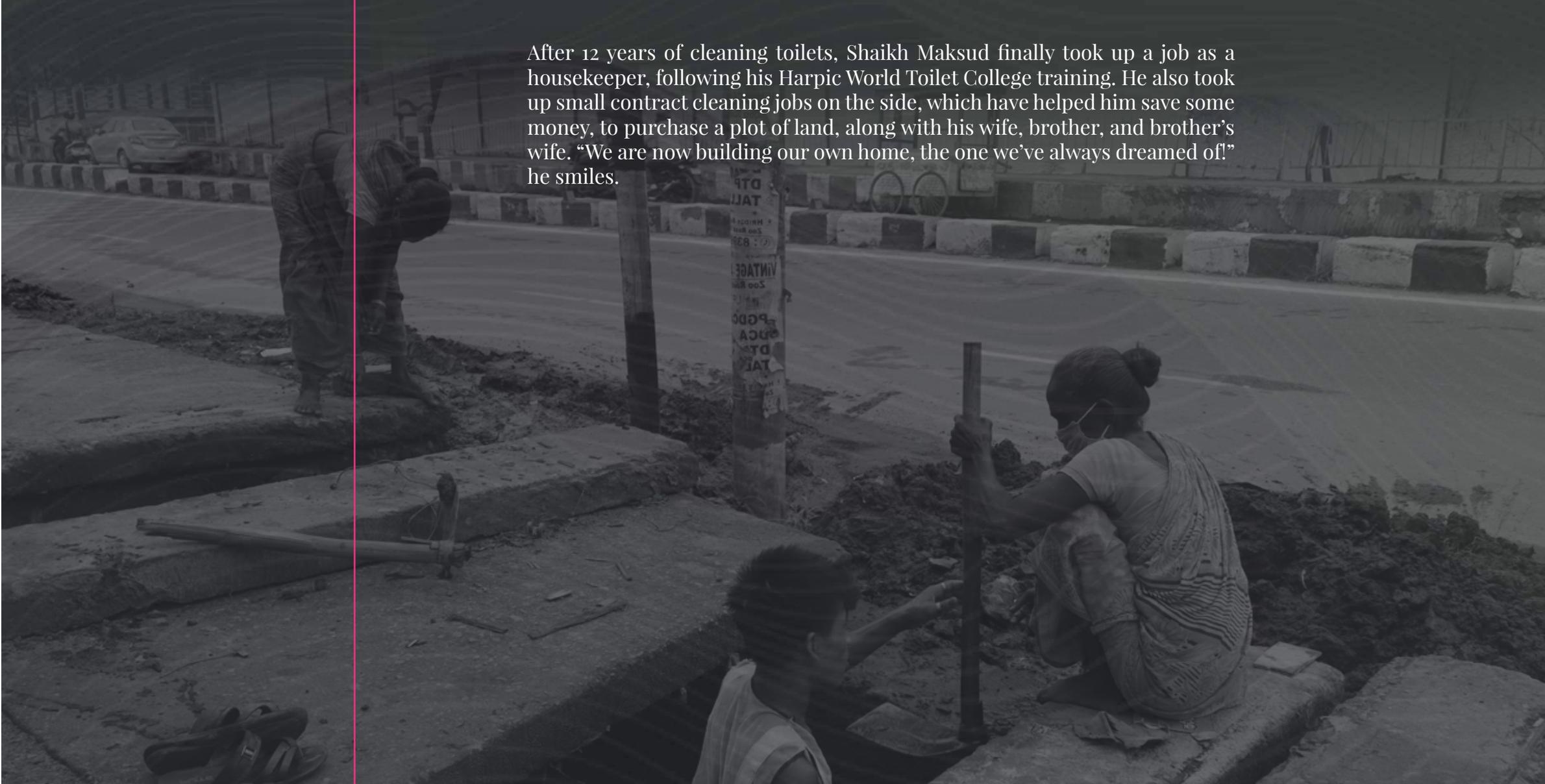


“I used to live in a room that was all of 10 by 15 square feet, along with my family. I had to clean toilets for a living. It’s frowned upon, in my community, where everybody, including my extended family, works in mutton shops. But I didn’t seem to have much of a choice. Ganda hai, par dhanda hai (It’s a dirty business, but it’s still business.)”

SHAIKH MAKSUD SHAIKH MEHMOOD

Age: 36

After 12 years of cleaning toilets, Shaikh Maksud finally took up a job as a housekeeper, following his Harpic World Toilet College training. He also took up small contract cleaning jobs on the side, which have helped him save some money, to purchase a plot of land, along with his wife, brother, and brother’s wife. “We are now building our own home, the one we’ve always dreamed of!” he smiles.





“I started scavenging when I was just 16. My father, who was a scavenger, too, died of heart failure. I was convinced I would meet the same fate sometime soon.”

RAHUL RAJU SHAHRAO

Age: 23

Not only is Rahul no longer scavenging, but he has always been able to help his mother leave it behind. “When I walked into a 3-Star hotel for an interview, I couldn’t believe myself,” he laughs giddily. Today, Rahul has a fantastic job at the hotel, thanks to the Harpic World Toilet College placement programme, and his nightmares are all a thing of the past.



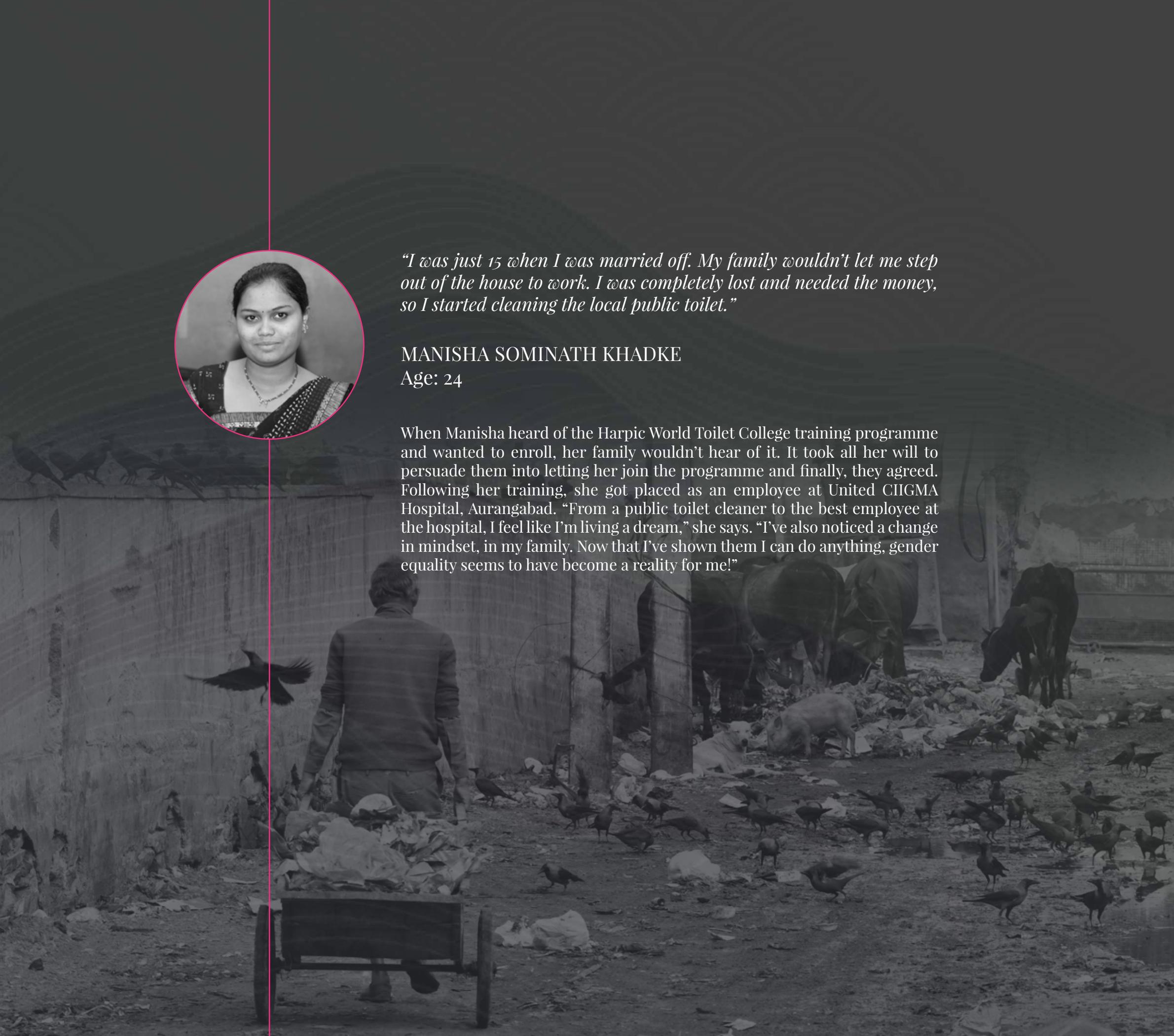


“I was just 15 when I was married off. My family wouldn’t let me step out of the house to work. I was completely lost and needed the money, so I started cleaning the local public toilet.”

MANISHA SOMINATH KHADKE

Age: 24

When Manisha heard of the Harpic World Toilet College training programme and wanted to enroll, her family wouldn’t hear of it. It took all her will to persuade them into letting her join the programme and finally, they agreed. Following her training, she got placed as an employee at United CIIGMA Hospital, Aurangabad. “From a public toilet cleaner to the best employee at the hospital, I feel like I’m living a dream,” she says. “I’ve also noticed a change in mindset, in my family. Now that I’ve shown them I can do anything, gender equality seems to have become a reality for me!”





“I was known for my anger, which created a whole lot of social and personal challenges for me, and for my family. I would get angry at incredibly small things. And so, people would avoid me, as well as my family. I lost out on friends and was thrown out of many jobs.”

AKASH RANDIVE

Age: 26

Life gave Akash a second chance when he chanced upon the training programme at Harpic World Toilet College. What followed was a complete transformation. “I became a different person,” says Akash. “My anger issues are now a thing of the past. There has been no looking back since!” Today, Akash is beaming with confidence. His positive mindset and professionalism have brought him financial stability, familial happiness and strength to do more in life. “I’ve gone from being an angry young man to a cool guy,” he laughs.



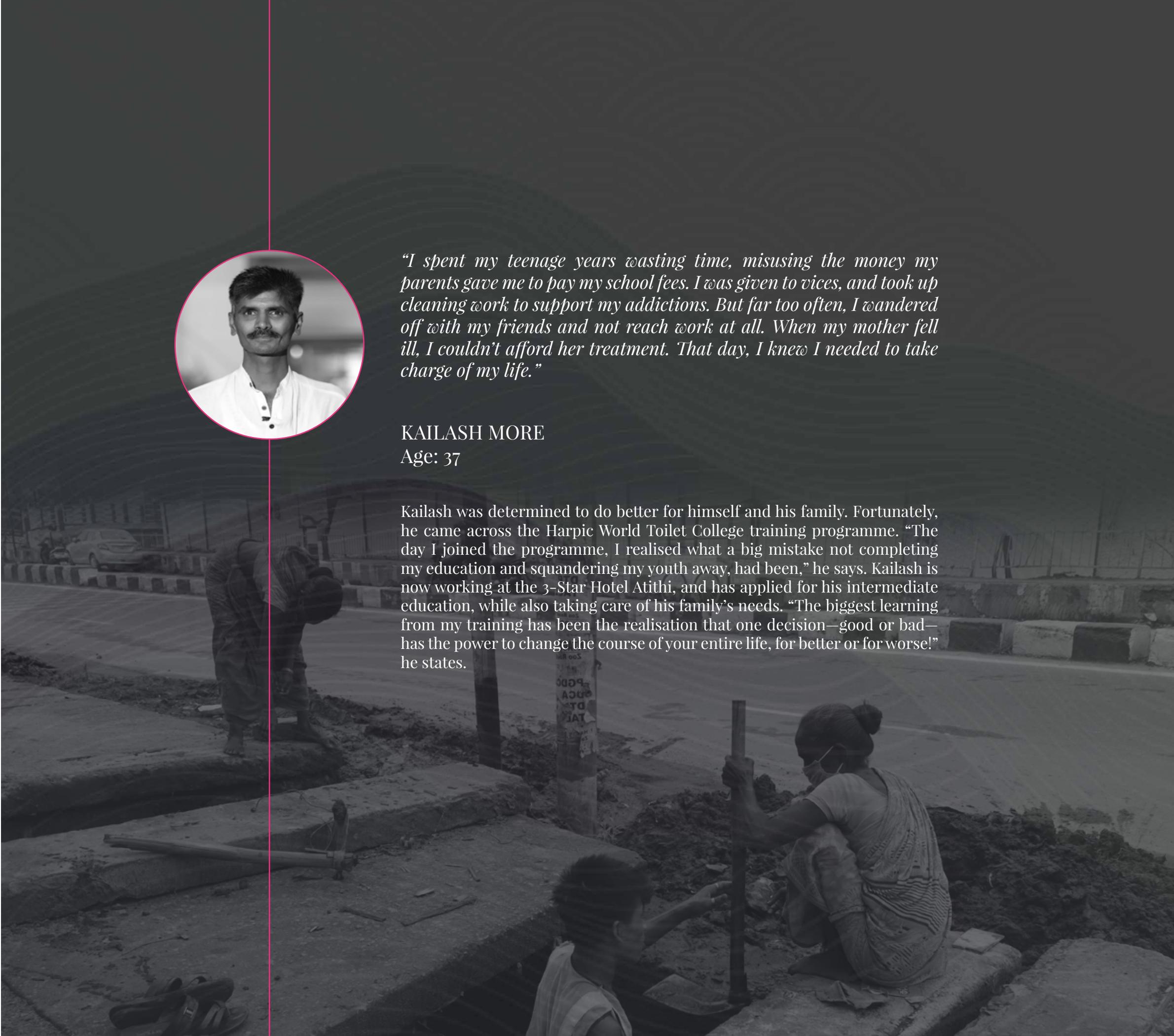


“I spent my teenage years wasting time, misusing the money my parents gave me to pay my school fees. I was given to vices, and took up cleaning work to support my addictions. But far too often, I wandered off with my friends and not reach work at all. When my mother fell ill, I couldn’t afford her treatment. That day, I knew I needed to take charge of my life.”

KAILASH MORE

Age: 37

Kailash was determined to do better for himself and his family. Fortunately, he came across the Harpic World Toilet College training programme. “The day I joined the programme, I realised what a big mistake not completing my education and squandering my youth away, had been,” he says. Kailash is now working at the 3-Star Hotel Atithi, and has applied for his intermediate education, while also taking care of his family’s needs. “The biggest learning from my training has been the realisation that one decision—good or bad—has the power to change the course of your entire life, for better or for worse!” he states.





“We can no more gain
God’s blessings with an unclean
body than with an unclean mind.
A clean body cannot reside in an
unclean city.”

-Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi



“My father passed away when I was just two. The situation at home was terrible, so I had to take up scavenging by the time I was 12, to support my family. As I grew older, I began to look for a skilled job, but had no education or technical knowledge.”

AVINASH BHAGINATH GADE

Age: 23

Avinash joined the Harpic World Toilet College online training programme, which, he believes, has taught him everything he needs to know about the sanitation business—from new technology to the various jobs available in the industry. “I now feel enthusiastic about this work I once despised so much,” he states. “I wanted to achieve so much in life, and was convinced I needed to change my field of work for it, but clearly not.” Not only has Avinash’s confidence got a solid boost, but the attitude of those around him has changed, too. Relatives who wanted to have nothing to do with him, now ask after him. He also has savings, to boot. “I got my younger sister married, all with my own hard-earned money,” he boasts, rightfully.





“Even though I was a bright student, I had to cut short my college education due to family issues. So I joined my mother as a sanitation worker. I would earn only between ₹3,000 and ₹4,000 a month, depending on the kind of demand there was. It was really tough going!”

BALU CHAVAN

Age: 32

After completing his training at Harpic World Toilet College, Balu got placed at Vits Hotel, a 3-Star hotel in Aurangabad. He now has a fixed income and the condition of his family is much improved, too. “My perspective towards sanitation has changed,” he says. “I think big now and have understood the scope in the sanitation field.” The rest of Balu’s family has also been able to leave scavenging. “I now earn more than my entire family, put together,” he says happily.





“I used to clean the toilets in my community for just ₹25 and, sometimes, people would even refuse to pay me that amount! I come from a conservative family, and wasn’t allowed to leave my home for a proper job, let alone for a training programme at Harpic World Toilet College.”

ARCHANA SONAVANE

Age: 32

Fortunately for Archana, the Harpic World Toilet College came up with a digital programme. “Enrolling for it was the best decision ever,” she declares. Her training helped Archana break the shackles that had been holding her back. She got placed at CIIGMA Hospital, Aurangabad, and recalls, “The greatest day of my life was when I stepped out for my new job.” Her husband lost his job during the Covid-19 pandemic, but Archana herself had a stable job that she was able to sustain and which helped her support her family through the pandemic. In fact, she now single-handedly looks after her family and their needs.





“My husband died in an accident nine years ago. It was a terrible time for me. I had a household to run, two daughters to look after, their education... So I took up cleaning work. But I needed a better paying, more stable job, as my older daughter was ready for college. I needed to make more money, and to be sure the money would come.”

VARSHA VIJAY LANDGE

Age: 34

When Varsha heard about the Harpic World Toilet College, she enrolled for the training programme right away, following which, she was placed at Hegdewar Hospital, Aurangabad. “I have a permanent job now,” she exclaims happily. She was able to put her daughter through college and she is an engineer, now!





“I worked in the housekeeping sector for four years. Even after diligently working the same job for so many years, I was passed over for promotion to supervisor. I would often take up odd jobs in pursuit of money, but quite often, people would pay me late—sometimes, not at all!”

SHAMUVEL PAKHARE

Age: 28

After training at Harpic World Toilet College, Shamuvel was appointed as a field officer in Mumbai, with a starting salary of ₹25,000 per month. That was the happiest day of his life, he believes. “Earlier, people would often taunt us for being such a big family, but now, I can take care of all of them, especially my younger sister’s education,” Shamuvel says, proudly.





“I was a graduate, but I joined sanitation work in desperation. My father and brother had been working in the sanitation sector for many years, and I seemed to have no choice. So I started working in different hospitals in and around Aurangabad. All my hardwork at school and college had come to nought.”

RATAN UTTAM GAIKWAD

Age: 36

The Harpic World Toilet College training motivated Ratan to study further, and he now has a Masters in Social Work, and is married to Seema, who’s a nurse. “I wanted to use my degree and my HWTC training to bring about a change in the sanitation sector and to impact as many lives as I possibly could,” he says. So he joined HWTC as a mobilizer and believes that was the best decision he ever made.





“Even in the scorching heat, people would refuse me a glass of water, because nobody wanted me touching their glasses. They were OK to have me risking my life to clean their drains and septic tanks, sometimes working 12-13 hours, but dare I ask for a glass of water, or even a decent wage!”

VILAS SUNDAR KHOSE

Age: 38

His training at Harpic World Toilet College helped Vilas get a job at Hare Krishna Safai Contractor Company, a professional outfit in the sanitation sector. “All I ever really wanted was a decent job that could help me support my family,” he says. “The way I speak and live has changed, my family and I are much happier, and better able to care for our health.” Vilas is paid fair wages, on time, and he works in better conditions. “I can get water whenever I want!” he declares. But his biggest joy is how proud his children are of him.





“I had been scavenging for more than 14 years, having a tough time making a living. I was barely able to make rent with my earnings, so my landlord threw me out.”

MANOJ SURESH KAMBLE

Age: 33

When Manoj joined Harpic World Toilet College to train in self-development, he had no idea what the future had in store for him. He was offered a housekeeping staff member job, but instead, he decided to start his own business. “My training helped me gain a better understanding of money and how to earn it,” he elaborates. “So I started taking contracts for cleaning up residential societies, and instead of doing it myself, I would hire a few people to do the job.” Manoj, who is quite sharp at his work, now has a few labourers working under him, and he himself earns a neat ₹25,000 per month. “Now, my dream is to buy a house in my home city, Aurangabad,” he declares.





“My entire family was involved in scavenging, without any knowledge of safety measures. People around us, including our relatives and extended family, would look down upon our family, refuse to visit our home, or even talk to us. It was a terrible feeling!”

VIJAY ASHOK UMAP

Age: 23

Vijay couldn't believe his luck when his five-day training programme at Harpic World Toilet College helped him get a permanent housekeeping job at the Honda showroom in Aurangabad, for a salary almost double of what he had been used to taking home. Now that Vijay has a secure job his relatives aren't ashamed of, their attitude towards him and his family has changed dramatically. “I am now the most eligible bachelor in my neighbourhood,” he chuckles.





“I just wanted my wife back! I’d spent years in the throes of alcohol addiction, drinking 24x7. It had gotten so out of hand, I started hitting my wife. Every day. And then, one day, she’d had enough. So she got up and left.”

VIKAS BHABUSAHEB PAKHARE

Age: 28

Vikas knew he had to mend his ways. When he heard of the Harpic World Toilet College training programme, he decided to enroll, hoping it would help him get his personal life back on track. And it did. Vikas was able to drop his addictions and get a job at MGM Hospital, Aurangabad. “I worked on my attitude and behaviour, stopped drinking, and apologised to my wife,” he tells us. “The day she agreed to forgive me and come back home with me, was the day peace and happiness returned to my life!”





“I will not let anyone walk
through my mind with their
dirty feet.”

-Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi



“My husband, who was the sole earning member of our family, suddenly fell sick and, before we knew it, he was bedridden. I didn’t know of any other jobs so I started cleaning toilets to make a living. I had small children to look after, I didn’t have a choice.”

PRIYANKA JADHAV

Age: 28

Priyanka’s colleagues told her about the online training at Harpic World Toilet College, which she promptly enrolled for. “My life suddenly changed,” she tells us. “I learnt about new technology, and how it could make my work efficient.” Inspired by her mentors, she also found new respect for her work, as did people around her. Soon after, Priyanka got a permanent job at MGM Hospital, Aurangabad. “Unlike many others I know, I was also earning during the pandemic,” she smiles. “I’ve started saving money so my kids have a secure future.” Priyanka, now, single-handedly handles all her family expenses, including her husband’s treatment.



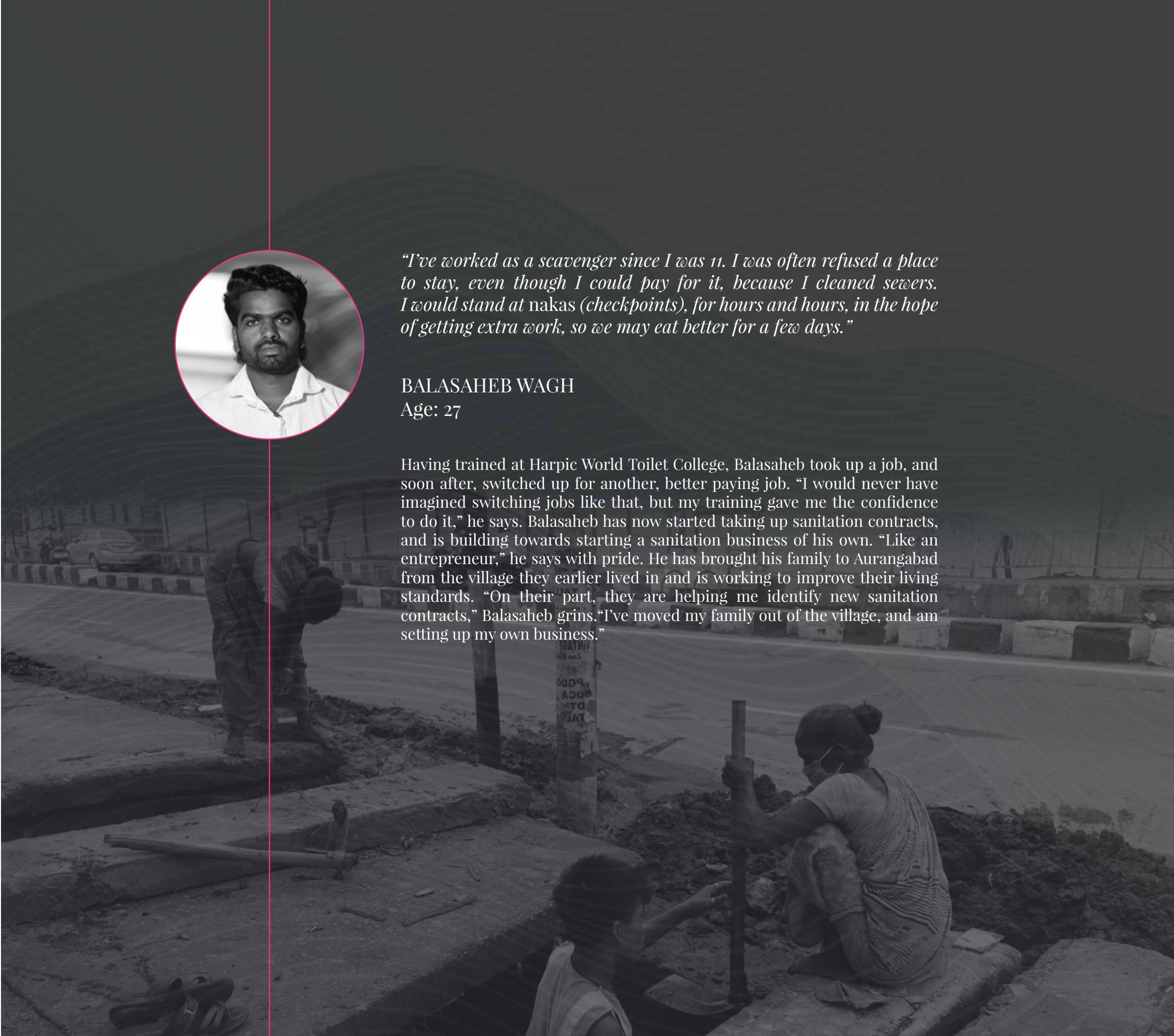


“I’ve worked as a scavenger since I was 11. I was often refused a place to stay, even though I could pay for it, because I cleaned sewers. I would stand at nakas (checkpoints), for hours and hours, in the hope of getting extra work, so we may eat better for a few days.”

BALASAHEB WAGH

Age: 27

Having trained at Harpic World Toilet College, Balasaheb took up a job, and soon after, switched up for another, better paying job. “I would never have imagined switching jobs like that, but my training gave me the confidence to do it,” he says. Balasaheb has now started taking up sanitation contracts, and is building towards starting a sanitation business of his own. “Like an entrepreneur,” he says with pride. He has brought his family to Aurangabad from the village they earlier lived in and is working to improve their living standards. “On their part, they are helping me identify new sanitation contracts,” Balasaheb grins. “I’ve moved my family out of the village, and am setting up my own business.”





“My father was an alcoholic and would be continually ill, so my older brother took care of us—my mother, my sister and me. When he was diagnosed with cancer, I had to drop out of school to look after everyone. My first job was at a tea stall, but the ₹2,500 I earned was hardly enough. I joined a hotel, but the story was the same. Eventually, I turned to cleaning and sweeping. Soon after my father and brother died, my mother was diagnosed with cancer. I had to do better by her than I had done by my father and brother.”

PREM SALVE

Age: 28

When Prem heard about the Harpic World Toilet College training programme, he walked straight in and asked to be enrolled. “My lack of education and experience had been coming in the way of me finding a better job,” he explains. “But I now know everything there is to know about my line of work, and more.” Today, not only does Prem have a better job, with a much better salary, he has also been able to ensure his mother receives the best cancer care she possibly could, at the Tata Memorial Hospital, in Mumbai.





“I lost my father when I was very young, forcing me to start making a living as a manual scavenger. As a sanitation worker, I found my abilities were constantly being underestimated by everyone around me, and not many had even the time of day for me.”

SANTOSH WAVHUL

Age: 24

Following his training at Harpic World Toilet College, Santosh noticed tremendous improvement in his soft skills, and got selected as a trainer at MGM Hospital, Aurangabad—the same place he was once a sanitation worker at. During the Covid-19 pandemic, Santosh mobilized his own slum and arranged a sanitation drive in his community. “People now call me ‘Masterji’, not only here but also at my workplace, for the good work I’ve been doing,” he says, satisfaction writ large on his face. “It has become my permanent identity.”





“Everybody I knew thought I was a hothead, picking fights and getting into arguments. The people in my community would keep a safe distance from me—nobody wants to get into a broil just like that!”

KRISHNA MAID

Age: 26

Krishna and his family were barely surviving when he was introduced to the professional training at Harpic World Toilet College. “Since the time I’ve completed my training, I’ve been noticing how people’s attitude towards me has changed, whether it’s my friends, colleagues or family,” he says. “People around me say HWTC has worked magic on me and changed me for good.” Not only has HWTC helped Krishna manage his temper and calm down, he also now has a professional job at a 3-Star hotel. “I’m no longer a loose cannon and now have a degree of command over my actions,” he says.





“I was only 16, when I became a scavenger. I was uneducated and never imagined I’d be able to quit scavenging. I had no idea what lay in store for me!”

VIKRAM ASHOK WAGHMARE

Age: 24

Training at Harpic World Toilet College helped Vikram realise the importance of education. So he joined the Industrial Training Institute, to study alongside his housekeeping job at an automotive company, which he got from the Harpic World Toilet College placement programme. And ever since, he’s been going from strength to strength. “I realised there are no shortcuts to success, and my diligence got me promoted to a machine operator, within a year,” Vikram boasts, and rightfully so. “I’m not yet successful, but with my education and my hard work, I know I’ll get there soon!”



“I lost my husband but not my will. He died of alcoholism, and I’ve been struggling to make ends meet, ever since. For a very long time, I cleaned community toilets, for ₹25 each, and earned a maximum of ₹4,500 in a month. But I was determined to find a new source of income, so I could give my kids a better education.”

SADHANA VIKAS CHAVAN

Age: 26

“Harpic World Toilet College was like a ray of hope for me,” says Sadhana. After her training, she was immediately placed at United CIIGMA Hospital, Aurangabad, as a housekeeper. Her permanent job and improved salary have helped her transfer her children to a better school. She has also opened a savings account for her own and their future.





“I worked many odd jobs as a manual scavenger, taking up all kinds of cleaning work, but it was all risky, without any safety precautions. I was paid only ₹500-600 to clean a deep sewage, with my bare hands. Because of my scavenging work, people didn’t want to have anything to do with me and my family.”

PRAMOD LOKHANDE

Age: 35

Once Pramod completed his training at Harpic World Toilet College, he got a housekeeping job at Hegdewar Hospital, Aurangabad. When his son fell ill and had to be admitted to hospital, the people who came to his aid were his fellow housekeepers at the hospital. “They were like my chosen family,” Pramod says. Their kindness egged him on to do better, and today, he is a trainer at MGM Hospital, Aurangabad. “Finally, even my family is proud of me!” he says with relief.





“I lost my job at the beginning of the pandemic. I had three children and no source of income! For 7 years, I had been cleaning community toilets—not something to look forward to or talk about, but as soon as Covid-19 struck, even that went away.”

MEENA HARIBHAU KHARAT

Age: 29

The pandemic was around the time that Harpic World Toilet College began its online classes. “It was so convenient,” Meena gushes. “I took the training through my mobile phone!” Meena got a job as a housekeeper at Dhoot Hospital, Aurangabad, with a fairly high salary. Enough for her to have settled her earlier debts, as well as have saved enough money to meet her family’s financial needs.





“Mine was a family of scavengers. Years ago, I had to drop out of school to help them financially. We were all dependent on the contractor for work, having to stand in lines, for hours, just to get assigned a job for the day. Some days, there’d be none to be had. That day, there would be no food for any of us.”

SAYYAD IRFAN

Age: 25

It had been Sayyad’s dream to work at the Taj Hotel, where he is now a Senior Housekeeping Operator. His friend told him about Harpic World Toilet College, where he learned housekeeping and cleaning and operating new machines. He also worked on his communication skills and grooming. Sayyad’s first job after his training was as a supervisor at AIIMS Hospital, Aurangabad. “But all I really wanted was a job at Hotel Taj,” he says. Finally, he got placed at the Taj as a housekeeping operator. “I worked so hard that within three months, I was promoted to the position of a senior operator,” he beams, pride and ambition shining through his eyes. “Now, I want to be a manager!”





“Sanitation is more important
than political independence.”

-Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi



“I worked as a scavenger while also battling alcohol addiction. I wanted to earn money only so I could fulfil my drinking needs. I never handed over even a single penny to my family!”

RAJU SHYAMJI KAMBALE

Age: 35

When Raju joined the Harpic World Toilet College training programme, he realised success would be easy to come by, if he gave up on his addiction. “I felt a sense of fulfilment, so I stopped drinking,” he says. “Not a drop of alcohol have I touched, since.” There was a time, nobody wanted to come close to Raju because he was always reeking of alcohol, but it’s a different story now. Raju got placed as a housekeeper at a hotel, and now he has his own savings account. “My family is very proud of me and my job,” he grins. “I feel like an *adarsh insaan*, an ideal person!”





“Growing up, I wanted to finish my studies and get a secure government job. But I had to drop out of school and look for work. A friend of mine would help people get work, so I would call him frequently, but I often found myself waiting for a job to come along, sometimes for days on end. Even when I got work, the money was less, and the work, risky.”

SANTOSH SHRIPAD DANDGE

Age: 35

Santosh went from being a sweeper to becoming a supervisor at a 3-Star hotel. After completing his training online from Harpic World Toilet College, he has also taken to counselling others in the community. “Earlier, cleaning was just about doing my job, but now that I understand the importance of cleanliness, there is a clearly defined purpose to what I do,” he elaborates. From never having even heard of a safety kit, Santosh now approaches his work in a professional and technical fashion. His focus is to help as many people improve the quality of their work and their lives as possible. “I’m sharing my knowledge with those I work with, so they can do better, too,” he says proudly.





“The worst day in my life was when my children fell sick, and there was no one to help me. I needed to do better for myself and for my kids. I had changed many jobs, but they were all in sanitation, and none that lasted long or paid me well. I had been a drainage cleaner, a toilet cleaner, and even a septic tank cleaner. Anything to earn money for my family.”

RAVI TRIMBAK BHALERAO

Age: 32

Post his training at Harpic World Toilet College, Ravi now works as a housekeeper at Sterlite Industries, in Aurangabad. “I used to be very brash—my experiences had hardened me, I suppose,” he says. “But my training taught me soft skills and I have become gentle in my approach—I know because I can feel the change in me.” Ravi has also experienced a change in attitude from his colleagues. “They now applaud me for my knowledge,” he says. “I feel respected.”





“I lived in a slum where all of us, including each one of my neighbours, were scavengers. We didn’t even have proper drinking water. My parents had been hoping to get me married, but each one of my proposals was rejected due to the nature of my work. I never thought I’d leave it behind.”

SATISH JAGANNATH SALVE

Age: 32

Satish was the first person from his community to leave scavenging and start a professional job. “So many things have changed in my life, post my training at the Harpic World Toilet College training,” he says. None of his family members is involved in scavenging, any longer. Moreover, Satish is getting married very soon.



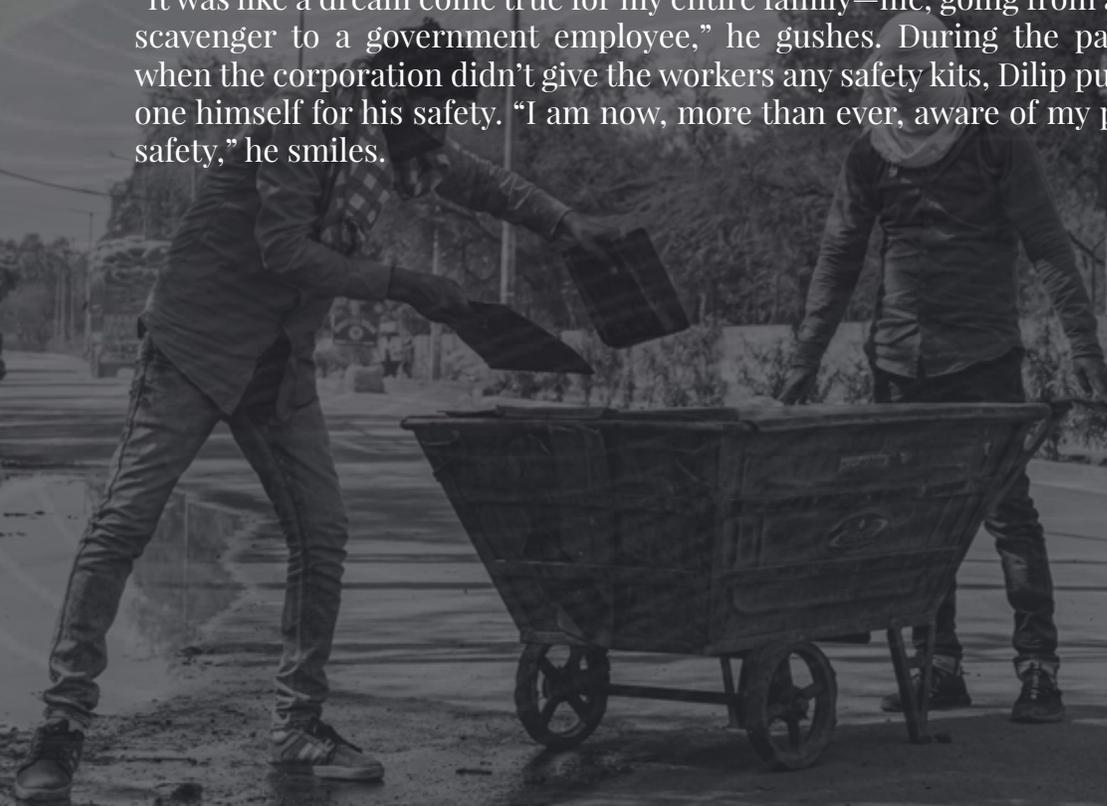


“For years, I worked as a scavenger, without ever paying heed to any safety precautions and without any awareness about technology that could help make my work more convenient and safe. Although I was working as a cleaner, I had no idea about cleaning equipment. I was scared, working in unhygienic conditions, surrounded by diseases. I never knew how to take care of myself.”

DILIP SAHEBRAO WAGH

Age: 27

Once he learned about the Harpic World Toilet College training, Dilip discovered a world outside of scavenging. “To begin with, I had no idea that such a training existed for cleaners,” he elaborates. “As I learnt newer techniques to get work done, my excitement at the scope of work in the sanitation sector grew.” Having got his certificate from Harpic World Toilet College, Dilip got a government job at Aurangabad Municipal Corporation. “It was like a dream come true for my entire family—me, going from a jobless scavenger to a government employee,” he gushes. During the pandemic, when the corporation didn’t give the workers any safety kits, Dilip purchased one himself for his safety. “I am now, more than ever, aware of my personal safety,” he smiles.





“I was working as a cleaner, but everything was very makeshift. One time, one of my kids fell sick and was admitted to the hospital. I needed to borrow some money, but everyone refused because they believed I wouldn’t be able to pay them back. This episode pushed me to look for something concrete by way of work. I didn’t want any of my children to end up scavenging!”

CHHAYA SANJAY SALVE

Age: 34

Chhaya, herself, had to fight her in-laws to go to work. But things changed after her Harpic World Toilet College training, when she got placed at Hedgewar Hospital, Aurangabad, and began earning twice of what she used to. “They are now so proud, they want to support me in every way they can—they even insisted I carry on working during the pandemic,” she reveals. Chhaya started working for her children, to secure their future and put them through a good school. “I have succeeded in doing that!” she smiles.





“I was a very careless teenager, and never took life seriously, till one incident changed my whole life. My father lost his leg during a scavenging accident, and I had to step in to take charge. So I left school and started scavenging, earning a meagre ₹5,000.”

AVINASH SUBHASH GAWAI

Age: 21

Fortunately for Avinash, he heard about the training programme at Harpic World Toilet College and decided to enroll right away. “I was in genuine need of a good job and as luck would have it, I got placed right away, at Empire Mall, Aurangabad, with a salary more than double my previous salary,” he says, visibly relieved at this turn of events. Avinash is now single-handedly taking care of the whole family’s expenses. “I am also pursuing my education, on the side, to gain knowledge,” he adds. “And none of my family has to scavenge for a living, any more.”





“I finished my schooling but then dropped out. There was just no encouragement to study. And without a decent education, I could hardly have hoped for a decent job!”

SHAIKH MOHAMMAD SOHAIL MOHAMMAD GAFFAR

Age: 28

Having completed his training at Harpic World Toilet College, Shaikh Mohammad got placed for a housekeeping job in the Department of Social Work at the renowned Babasaheb Ambedkar University (BAMU), Aurangabad. “I think the professors at the department saw something in me, like some kind of a spark, and egged me on to resume my education,” he says. With their encouragement, Shaikh Mohammad has enrolled for a Bachelors degree in Social Work from BAMU. “I am very proud of how far I’ve come, with my work as well as my education,” he says. “I can now perceive the respect I get from those around me, and my parents are so proud!”





“I started scavenging when I was 15. Both my parents were scavengers, and they both suffered from asthma and other respiratory issues. Because of the kind of work we did, as well as all the illnesses we suffered, nobody wanted to come anywhere near us. Someone once insulted my mother for the work she did. That incident never left me!”

MANOJ TANAJI DHOKE

Age: 31

Harpic World Toilet College helped Manoj get a job at MGM Hospital, Aurangabad. “I suddenly felt a new enthusiasm for my profession,” he says. From having no idea about any kind of cleaning equipment or safe working conditions, Manoj now understood the field of sanitation as well as its scope. He is now doing well, is earning well and has even purchased a life insurance policy for his family.





“All I really cared about was two square meals a day. How I earned them was besides the point. Living in a family of 7, in a slum, I left school after Class 9 to earn money, scavenging alongside my four brothers.”

SATISH SOMNATH KASARE

Age: 26

Satish joined the Harpic World Toilet College training programme and got placed at CIPET, Aurangabad, as a housekeeper. “Once I had a better job, I guided the rest of my family towards better work, too,” he says. Satish and his family have left the slum and moved into a better neighbourhood. His brothers, too, joined Harpic World Toilet College and have moved into different sectors for work. “Between us, we are earning more than ₹30,000 per month,” Satish exclaims happily. “Life is good!”





“To pass urine anywhere on the street, at any place not meant for the purpose, should be regarded as an offence.”

-Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi



“I was like a musafir, a nomad always moving from one place to another, in search of work. I moved from Paithan to Aurangabad, looking for better pay, as I needed to get my sister married. I hadn’t thought of any work beyond scavenging—I only came to Aurangabad believing I’d get paid more for the same work.”

RANJIT PRABHAKAR BORDE

Age: 31

What Ranjit hadn’t realised was, his life was going to take a turn for the better. In Aurangabad, he came across Harpic World Toilet College, which then led to a housekeeping job at Waluj MIDC. Up until then, a housekeeping job had seemed unfathomable to him. With the improved conditions and salary, Ranjit could bear all the expenses of his sister’s wedding. “I plan to stay at Waluj permanently,” he says. “I have a fixed job and an income here—I no longer have reason to keep moving.”





“I lived my life like a gully boy. My entire family of nine, including my three sisters, worked as scavengers. I had to leave college and take up cleaning work, because we were so poor. We didn’t even know scavenging was illegal.”

PREM PRABHAKAR JADHAV

Age: 24

It was only once Prem joined Harpic World Toilet College that he realised scavenging was, in fact, illegal, under the Prohibition of Manual Scavengers Act of 2013. Prem now works at an airport. “I still remember the first day of my new job—I stepped into the airport and saw an aeroplane for the first time ever,” he gushes. “I now live like an officer!” Prem first persuaded his sisters to quit scavenging, and now he’s trying to get the rest of his family to do the same. “My aim is to get all of them to train at Harpic World Toilet College so they can get work in other sectors, and leave this hazardous job,” he says.





“Uneducated and unemployed, I started cleaning toilets alongside my father-in-law. Soon, I started cleaning manholes and choke-ups, even though I had no idea how to do it, nor did I have any equipment to do it with, or any safety gear. And before I knew it, I’d been doing this for 15 years!”

GULAB SINGH TOSAMABAD

Age: 37

Today, Gulab continues to work in the same profession, as a toilet cleaner at schools, but he now knows his rights and is more aware of his work, health and hygiene. “I always wear protective equipment, wash my hands after work, shower after I get home and demand I be treated better by my employers,” he elaborates on the changes that have come about after his training at Harpic World Toilet College. “I ask that I be given PPE and I’ve found my employers are happy to give me gloves, masks, soap, gumboots, whatever is required. It’s just that we need to ask for it.” His confident attitude and superior knowledge have also helped him get an increment in a very short period of time. “I’m happy that the society’s view of sanitation has changed and the work is now well paid,” Gulab signs off.





“I got married very young. I was an excellent student, but had to leave studies because of the terrible financial situation at home. So I started scavenging, working as a toilet cleaner at the local police station. That’s all I believed I was good enough for.”

VANDANA U. GAIKWAD

Age: 32

Vandana believes her training at Harpic World Toilet College has helped improve her soft skills. She’s still working at the police station, but now plays an additional, very important role. “I’m in charge of the counselling for family violence-related cases at the police station,” she reveals, the pride shining through in her eyes. In fact, Vandana may even have changed her brother’s fortunes completely. Egged on by her, her brother Ratan (story on page 81) is now a mobiliser for Harpic World Toilet College. “He even went on to complete his Masters in Social Work,” she tells us. “I’d like to say I’ve emerged a strong woman with a stronger vision!”



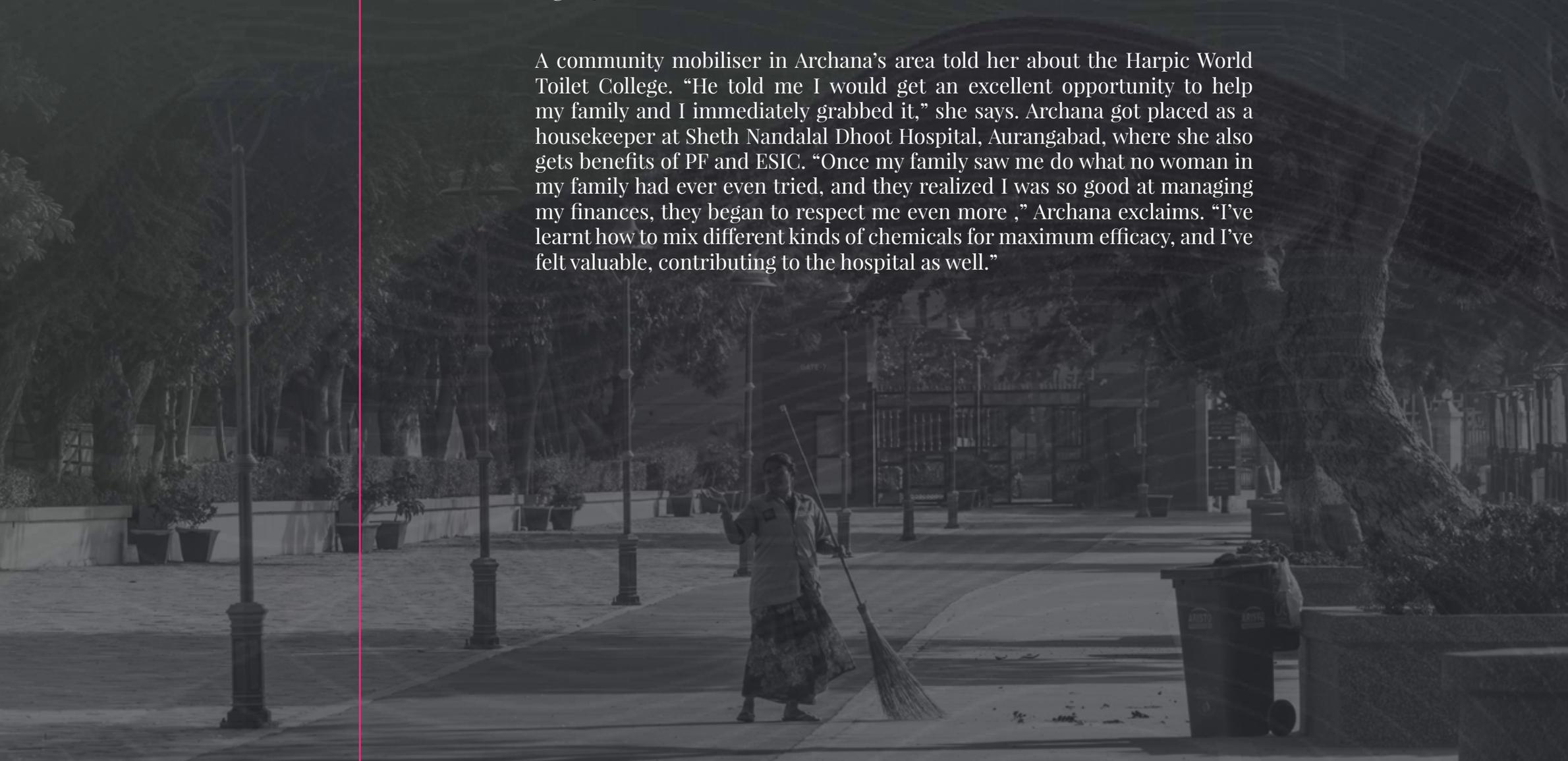


“My father-in-law always said, women are born only for making food and giving birth to children—chul ani mul, as they say in Marathi, my mother tongue. Somehow, I convinced my family to let me work, and started cleaning in a residential colony, but all I was making was ₹2,500 a month. I began to wonder if the fight with my in-laws had been worth it, after all.”

ARCHANA SHELKE

Age: 30

A community mobiliser in Archana’s area told her about the Harpic World Toilet College. “He told me I would get an excellent opportunity to help my family and I immediately grabbed it,” she says. Archana got placed as a housekeeper at Sheth Nandalal Dhoot Hospital, Aurangabad, where she also gets benefits of PF and ESIC. “Once my family saw me do what no woman in my family had ever even tried, and they realized I was so good at managing my finances, they began to respect me even more ,” Archana exclaims. “I’ve learnt how to mix different kinds of chemicals for maximum efficacy, and I’ve felt valuable, contributing to the hospital as well.”





“I had to leave college because the situation at home was such. I needed to help out, financially, and I also had two daughters I needed to look after. For want of anything better, I worked as a scavenger.”

RADHA SHANKAR KOLI

Age: 37

Radha is now placed at Lambodar Pharmaceutical Company in Aurangabad, making a decent living for herself and her daughters. “My training at Harpic World Toilet College has changed my life for the better,” she says. Radha has moved out of the slum and now lives in Mukund Nagar area, which is a fairly respectable neighbourhood. “My daughters have now graduated, I have a stable job and I have even saved a considerable sum for their further education,” she says proudly.





“I used to clean toilets in people’s homes for only ₹100 a toilet. It was mostly the work the other domestic workers would refuse to do. I had always been too scared to step out of my house. Of course, I had to step out, but I stayed close.”

TARA DEVANAND KOLI

Age: 35

Once Tara enrolled for the online training at Harpic World Toilet College, she found the confidence to push beyond her comfort zone, and seek out better opportunities. Tara found a new job at Hedgewar Hospital, Aurangabad. And before she knew it, she even had a promotion at hand. In the middle of the pandemic, while people were losing jobs, left, right and centre, Tara got promoted to Senior Housekeeper in the hospital and was also awarded Best Employee. “Getting rewarded for my hard work was exhilarating,” she gushes. “I no longer need to do the dirty work that others reject, and my family now respects me as well as the work I do.”



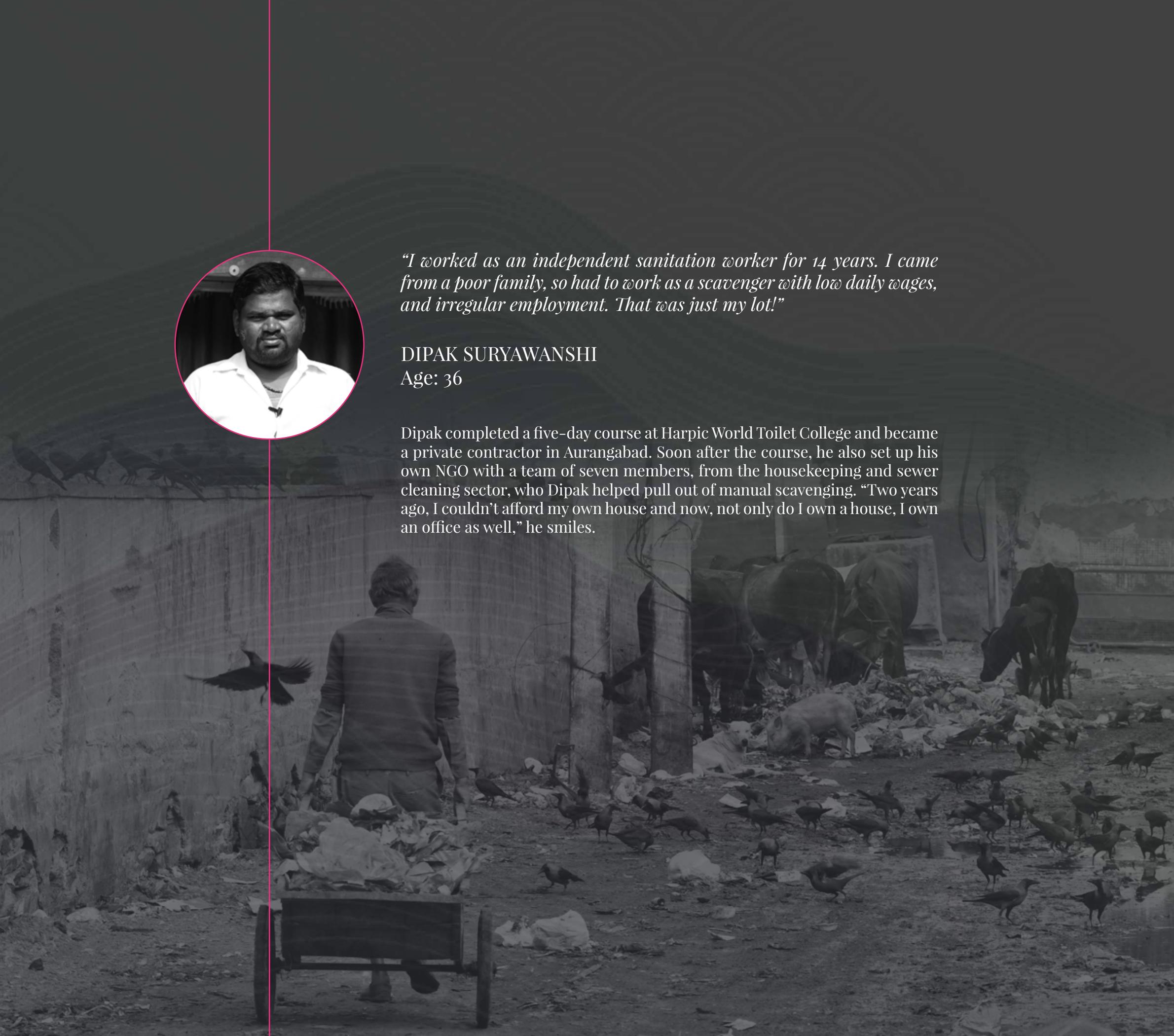


“I worked as an independent sanitation worker for 14 years. I came from a poor family, so had to work as a scavenger with low daily wages, and irregular employment. That was just my lot!”

DIPAK SURYAWANSHI

Age: 36

Dipak completed a five-day course at Harpic World Toilet College and became a private contractor in Aurangabad. Soon after the course, he also set up his own NGO with a team of seven members, from the housekeeping and sewer cleaning sector, who Dipak helped pull out of manual scavenging. “Two years ago, I couldn’t afford my own house and now, not only do I own a house, I own an office as well,” he smiles.



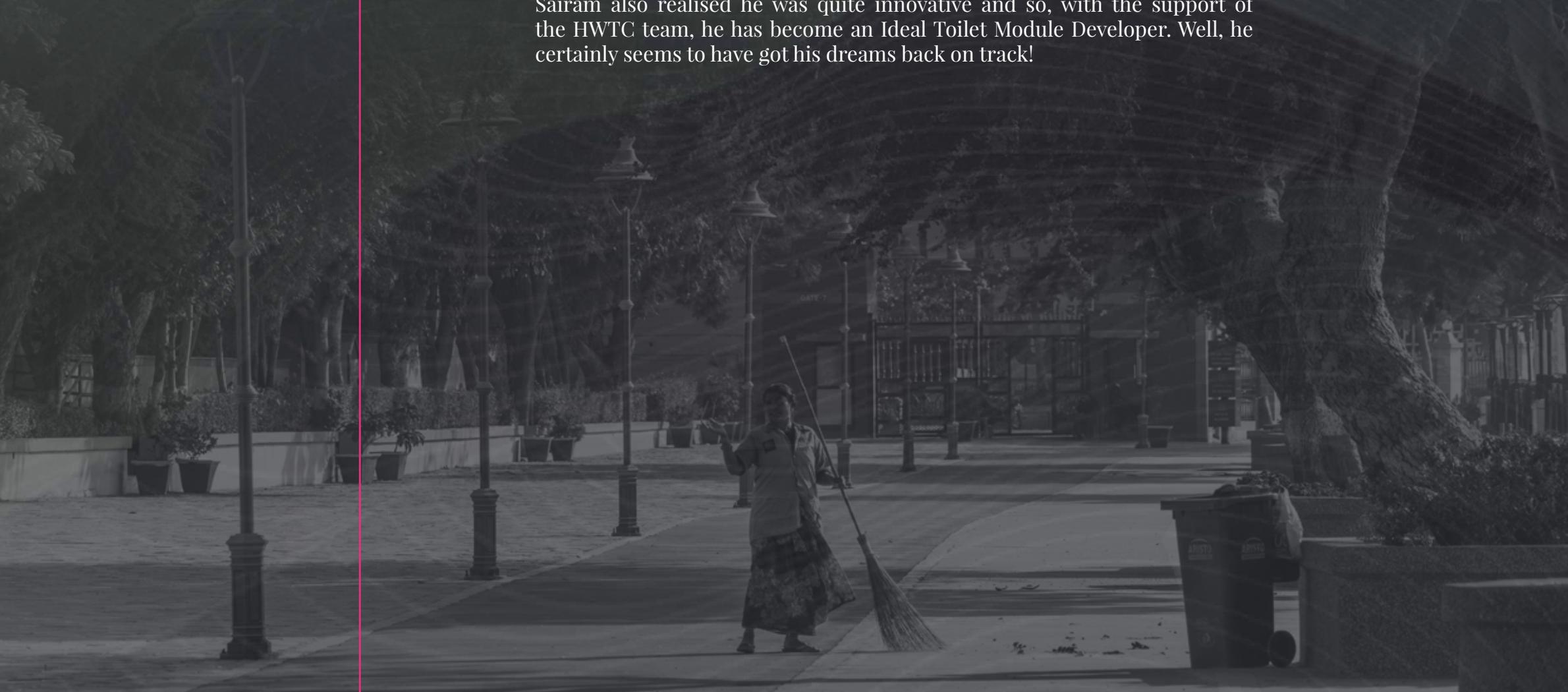


“I was a bright child, full of dreams cut short by poverty. I started cleaning toilets at 16, making less than ₹1,000 a month, but even that was a big help to my parents, who were scavengers, too. But the most difficult part was, people often refused to pay me after I’d done the work.”

SAIRAM KAMBALE

Age: 25

Today, things are drastically different for Sairam. He is due to graduate next year with a Bachelors in Science. “My mentors at Harpic World Toilet College gave me all the encouragement I needed to begin studying again,” he says. Sairam also realised he was quite innovative and so, with the support of the HWTC team, he has become an Ideal Toilet Module Developer. Well, he certainly seems to have got his dreams back on track!





“I spent my 20s feeling aimless, dejected. I was cleaning drains, people would pretend I didn’t exist and I believed I would live the rest of my life in penury.”

PRAMOD RAMESH PRADHAN

Age: 30

Things changed for Pramod after he received training at Harpic World Toilet College. “As soon as I enrolled, I saw a shift in my attitude,” he says. “HWTC gave me hope for a better life.” After his training, Pramod got placed as a housekeeper at the Fire Safety Station in Aurangabad, but he had even greater expectations. “When the opportunity arose, I grabbed it and enrolled for a diploma in Fire Safety and now I can proudly say I’m a professional fire safety officer!” says he.





“Those who spit after
chewing betel leaves and
tobacco have no consideration
for the feelings of others.”

-Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi



“I had been struggling to find work, but I just wasn’t educated enough. I was working as a scavenger, but I couldn’t even fulfil my family’s barest necessities. Like this one time, my son wanted to eat chicken, and I couldn’t even afford that—it broke my heart to say no to him for such a simple wish!”

SHRIKANT BHAGAJI SHINDE

Age: 31

Shrikant’s five-year-long job search finally ended when he completed his training at Harpic World Toilet College and got placed at CIPET Industries, Aurangabad. “Finally, we’re doing better,” he says. “During the pandemic, I even bought my son a phone so he could attend his online classes. It feels surreal. Once, I couldn’t get him some chicken to eat. Now, I’ve bought him a phone!”



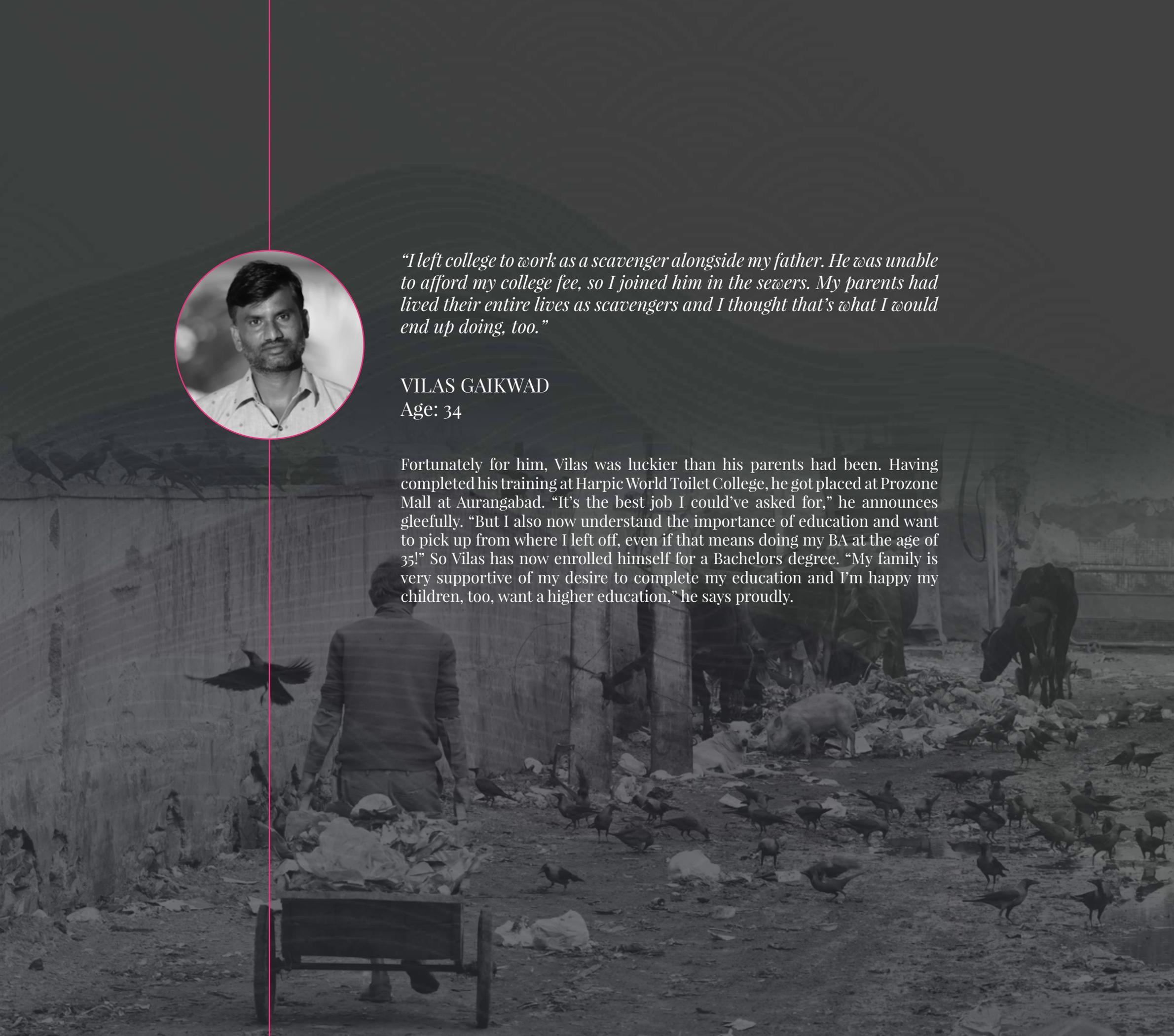


“I left college to work as a scavenger alongside my father. He was unable to afford my college fee, so I joined him in the sewers. My parents had lived their entire lives as scavengers and I thought that’s what I would end up doing, too.”

VILAS GAIKWAD

Age: 34

Fortunately for him, Vilas was luckier than his parents had been. Having completed his training at Harpic World Toilet College, he got placed at Prozone Mall at Aurangabad. “It’s the best job I could’ve asked for,” he announces gleefully. “But I also now understand the importance of education and want to pick up from where I left off, even if that means doing my BA at the age of 35!” So Vilas has now enrolled himself for a Bachelors degree. “My family is very supportive of my desire to complete my education and I’m happy my children, too, want a higher education,” he says proudly.





“I dropped out of college as I could no longer afford the fees, and went on to work as a drainage cleaner, alongside my father, for a meagre ₹1,500 a month. This one time, a friend saw me cleaning a sewer line. I was so embarrassed, I never thought I could see him again!”

VINOD MUGDAL

Age: 25

Today, Vinod works at Hotel Taj, Aurangabad, where he was placed after his training at Harpic World Toilet College. “Harpic World Toilet College also reminded me of the importance of education,” he admits. Vinod now wants to resume his college education and receive the B.A. degree he had to leave behind. His family is rooting for him and can’t wait for him to get both his degree and a promotion at the Taj!



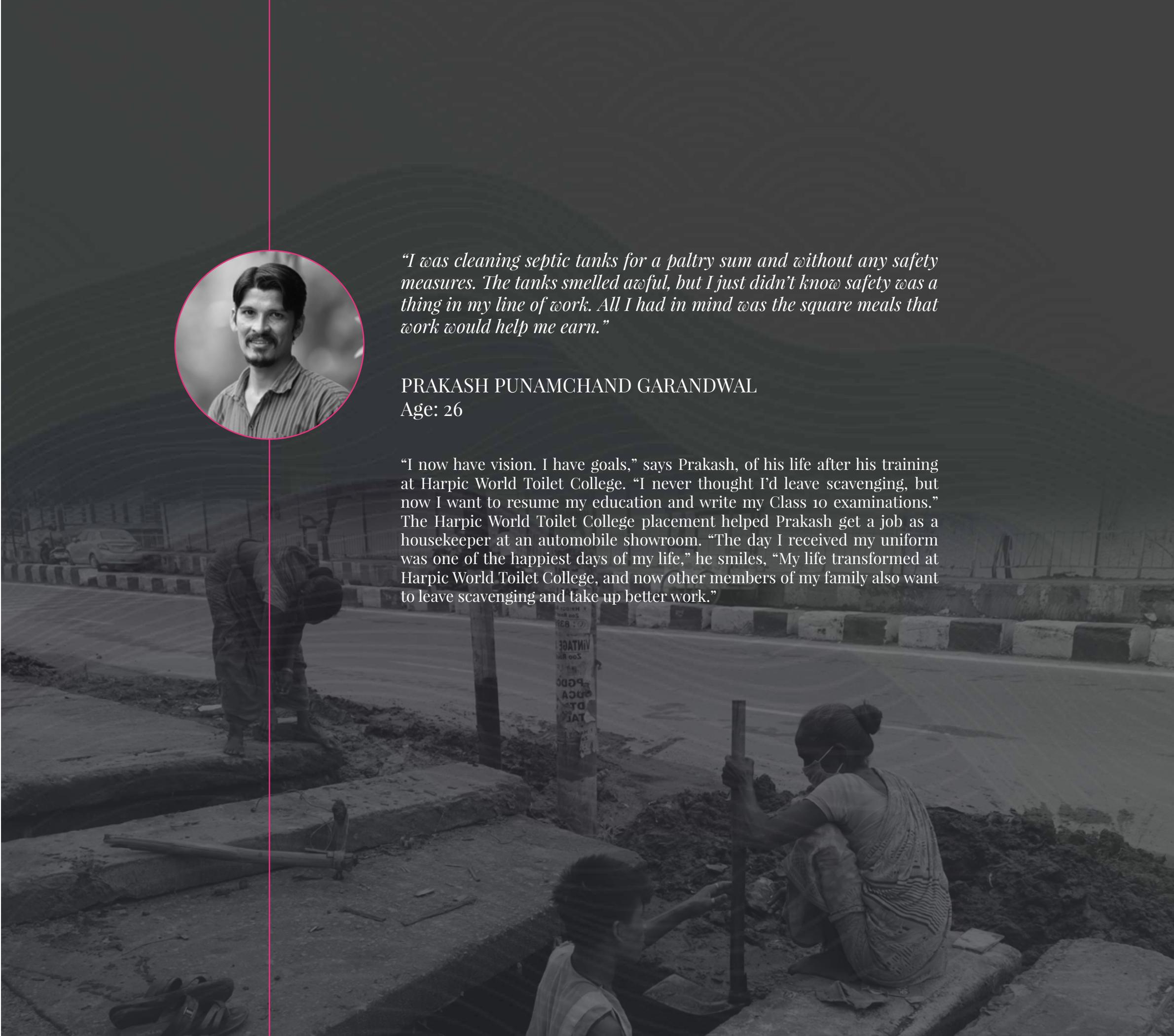


“I was cleaning septic tanks for a paltry sum and without any safety measures. The tanks smelled awful, but I just didn’t know safety was a thing in my line of work. All I had in mind was the square meals that work would help me earn.”

PRAKASH PUNAMCHAND GARANDWAL

Age: 26

“I now have vision. I have goals,” says Prakash, of his life after his training at Harpic World Toilet College. “I never thought I’d leave scavenging, but now I want to resume my education and write my Class 10 examinations.” The Harpic World Toilet College placement helped Prakash get a job as a housekeeper at an automobile showroom. “The day I received my uniform was one of the happiest days of my life,” he smiles, “My life transformed at Harpic World Toilet College, and now other members of my family also want to leave scavenging and take up better work.”





“I used to clean chamber choke-ups and manholes with my bare hands. And of course, they were all reeking hazardous gases, leading to diseases of all sorts. I had zero knowledge about safety measures. And despite all of this, my income was extremely irregular.”

MANOJ DHAS

Age: 43

Today, Manoj is the proud owner of a brand new suction machine. At Harpic World Toilet College, he learned about equipment and safety in sanitation and realised he could earn way more with a machine than by working manually. “I knew I had to purchase my own machine to earn better and, today, I’ve managed to do that for myself,” he says proudly. His family is super excited for him, too. “I’m now one of the finest earners in the sanitation business,” he claims. “We have to work in dirt, while people’s harsh attitudes and insults only serve as salt to the wounds.” But Manoj now has partnered with an NGO, along with HWTC, to help his community of sanitation workers, and has been working on various welfare projects with them, to help eradicate the stigma attached to sanitation.



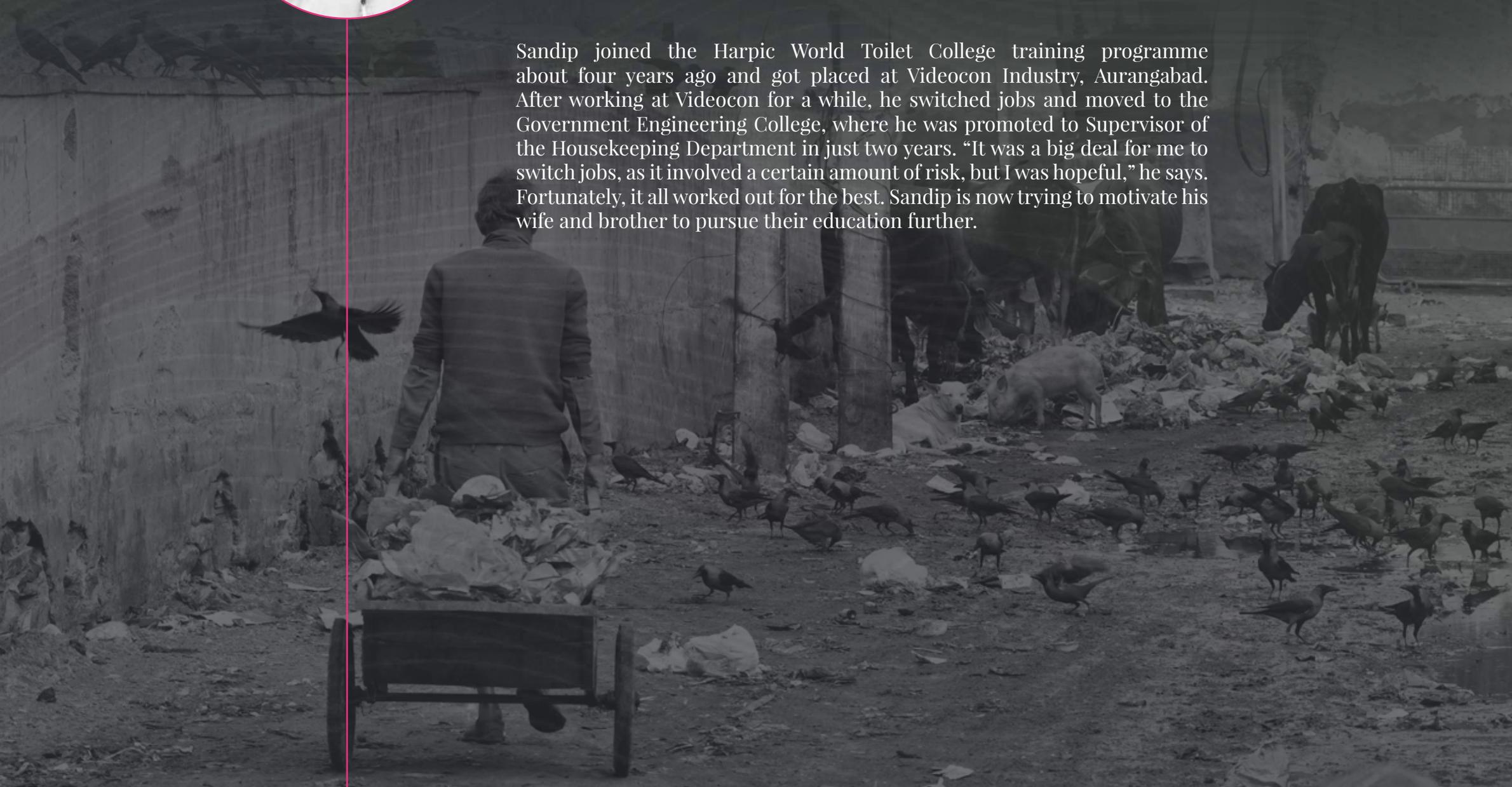


“I started scavenging at 17, on a daily wage. That was 21 years ago, when Aurangabad was not very developed and there were limited sources for income. I had also failed in my Class 10 examination, so there was very little scope for me, anyway.”

SANDIP NARAWADE

Age: 38

Sandip joined the Harpic World Toilet College training programme about four years ago and got placed at Videocon Industry, Aurangabad. After working at Videocon for a while, he switched jobs and moved to the Government Engineering College, where he was promoted to Supervisor of the Housekeeping Department in just two years. “It was a big deal for me to switch jobs, as it involved a certain amount of risk, but I was hopeful,” he says. Fortunately, it all worked out for the best. Sandip is now trying to motivate his wife and brother to pursue their education further.



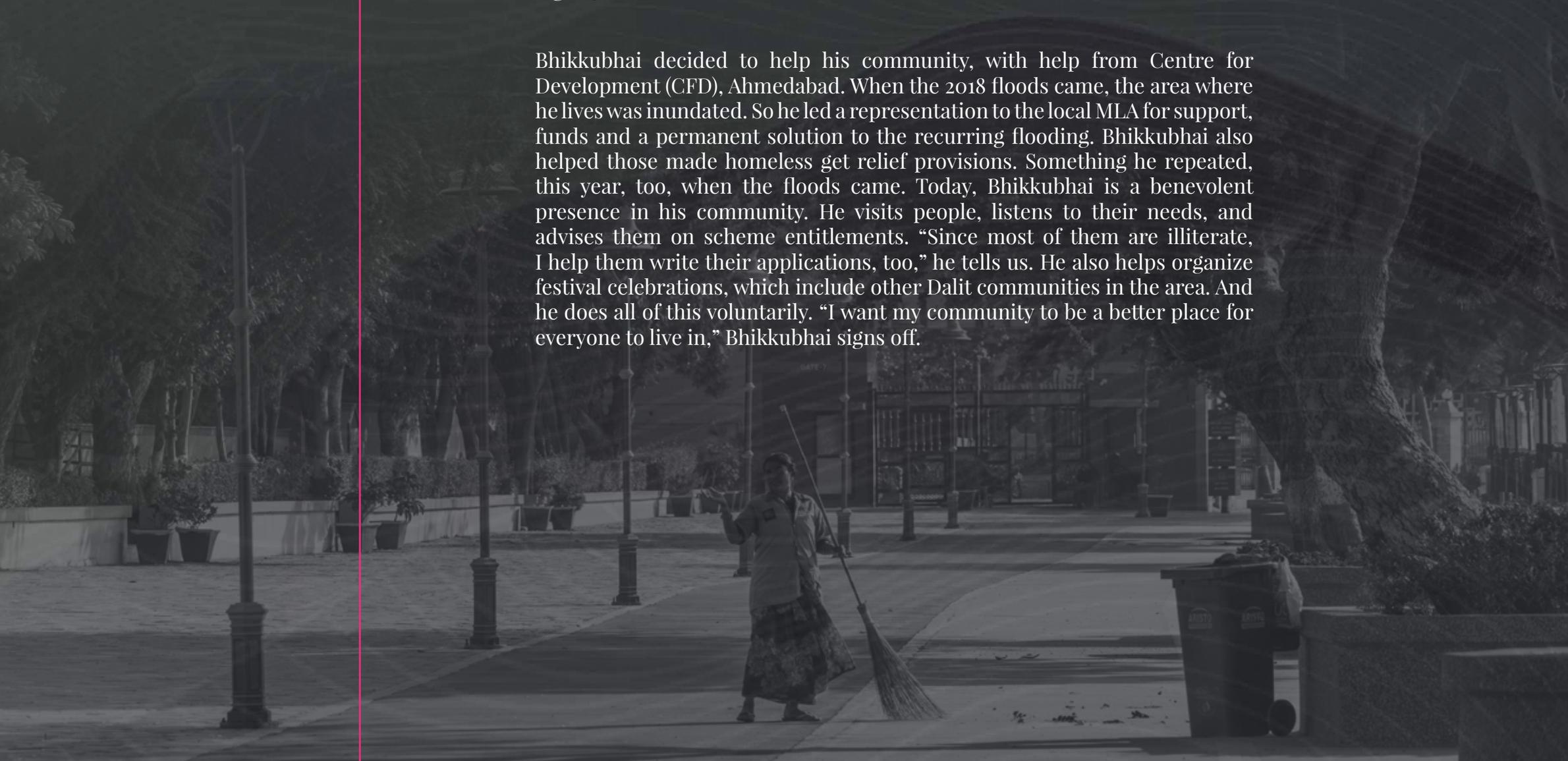


“For 26 years, I’ve lived in the Kali Talavadi area of Ahmedabad, with my family of 11, including my parents, wife, kids and grandkids. I dropped out of school when I was very young, and ever since I’ve been working as a cleaner with the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation (AMC). The worst part of the work I did, was the discrimination I’ve suffered through the years.”

BHIKKUBHAI MOTIBHAI GALIYAL

Age: 50

Bhikkubhai decided to help his community, with help from Centre for Development (CFD), Ahmedabad. When the 2018 floods came, the area where he lives was inundated. So he led a representation to the local MLA for support, funds and a permanent solution to the recurring flooding. Bhikkubhai also helped those made homeless get relief provisions. Something he repeated, this year, too, when the floods came. Today, Bhikkubhai is a benevolent presence in his community. He visits people, listens to their needs, and advises them on scheme entitlements. “Since most of them are illiterate, I help them write their applications, too,” he tells us. He also helps organize festival celebrations, which include other Dalit communities in the area. And he does all of this voluntarily. “I want my community to be a better place for everyone to live in,” Bhikkubhai signs off.





“I live with my husband and son in a slum in the Behrampura area of Ahmedabad. My husband and I worked as cleaners in two different residential societies. But the going was tough.”

PARMAR PUSHPABEN RAMESHBHAI

Age: 32

When she came across the Centre for Development (CFD), Pushpaben wasted no time signing up as a volunteer. As an active member of a Community-Based Organization (CBO) formed by CFD under the Samaveshi Shaher project, she has emerged a prominent grassroots social worker in her community, the Valmiki Society, thanks to the constant capacity development sessions and exposure provided by CFD. “I lend support to those who don’t have documentary proofs, such as PAN card, Aadhar and caste certificate, and facilitate employment opportunities for cleaners,” she elaborates. Pushpaben has also been instrumental in forming three Sakhi Mandals under the Samaveshi Sehar project, including 30 women from her locality. “These women are now able to incur small savings every month,” she explains. “I have also been able to help women in my community avail gas cylinders (LPG) under the Ujwala Yojana.” Pushpaben no longer works as a cleaner, having just completed her first project as a contractor for a paint job at a private residence. “I can proudly say I have broken the stereotype of it being a male-dominated profession by doing such a good job of!” she smiles.



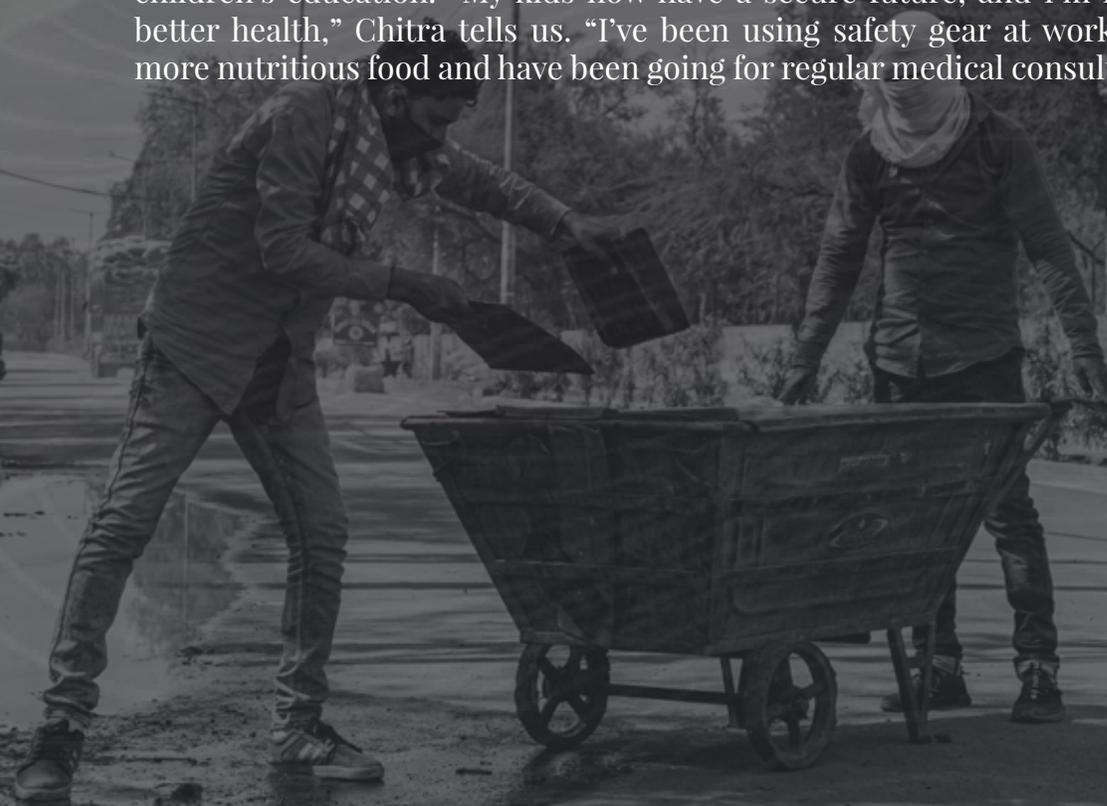


“I have been collecting waste from households for the last 13 years, besides washing the community toilets. I found it more convenient to work with bare hands, so that’s what I did, without realising the dangers of it. I would clean clogged toilets by putting my hands into the toilet filled with faecal matter and soiled sanitary napkins. I put up with the stink and the dirt, but then started having trouble breathing. The doctor told me to beware of bronchial disease.”

CHITRA

Age: 38

Fortunately, Chitra, who works with the Tiruchirapalli City Corporation, came across Gramalaya, where she attended many sessions with health educators, who taught her the dangers of faecal oral transmission and exposure to cleaning chemicals, and educated her on safety gear and equipment. She also learned about insurance and government schemes and was assisted with her children’s education. “My kids now have a secure future, and I’m in much better health,” Chitra tells us. “I’ve been using safety gear at work, eating more nutritious food and have been going for regular medical consultations.”





“My work includes waste collection and segregation, for the Tiruchirapalli City Corporation, twice a day. The segregation of waste at source is meant to encourage people to recycle. But I often find pieces of metal, broken bottles and medical waste, including used sanitary napkins, which have all, at different points in time, hurt me or caused me to fall sick!”

SHANMUGA PRAKASH

Age: 38

The Gramalaya health educators have taught Shanmuga how to navigate these hazards through safer practices and protective gear. “This awareness and implementation of these safety measures have saved me from many a health hazard,” he states. “I’ve been insisting other members of my family attend the classes at Gramalaya, too.” Shanmuga is now also more aware of the opportunities available to sanitation workers. “I’d never heard of these before,” he says.





“It does not require money to
be neat, clean and dignified.”

-Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi



“I migrated from Madurai to Tiruchirapalli after getting married. While I was looking for work, a friend suggested sanitation work in Kamala Nehru Nagar, a slum in Trichy town. And so, I started cleaning toilets and drains. I would fall unwell often, a rash here, some disorder there, but I continued to work.”

LAKSHMANAN

Age: 30

One time, Lakshmanan got severe diarrhoea along with a skin allergy. “As always, I ignored it and continued my work,” he admits. “But then, it developed into a severe stomach-ache with unbearable rashes, making me bedridden.” That’s when a health educator from Gramalaya visited him. “For the first time ever, I learned that what I was doing was, in fact, very dangerous work,” says Lakshmanan. The Gramalaya team taught him everything about toilet cleaning, drainage cleaning, and waste handling. They also supplied him with PPE, including masks, gloves and shoes, at no cost, and taught him how to use these. “The most important thing I learnt was to wash my hands with soap every time I finished work, and to bathe as soon as I got home, at least twice a day, for my own as well as my family’s well-being,” he says.



“I used to work with bare hands and bare feet, which gave me skin allergies and rashes of all kinds. I would just apply some oil and never bother to figure out what was causing the problem. The acid and bleaching powder had also led to an ulcerous growth in my throat, making it difficult to swallow food.”

SARAVANAN

Age: 46

It was only when Saravanan, a sanitation worker with Tiruchirapalli City Corporation, met a health educator from Gramalaya that he understood the root cause of all his illnesses. “In the awareness classes she conducted, the health educator showed me the correct way of going about things and using safety gear, including PPE,” he tells us. “Up until then, I hadn’t realised how faecal matter was getting stuck under my fingernails and it was the virus from this that was making me sick.” Once Saravanan realised the importance of something as simple as washing his hands frequently, he noticed a drastic change. “I feel stronger, physically as well as mentally,” he says. “My whole life seems to have changed!”





“For a very long time, I suffered from a bad case of scabies. As a sanitation worker with the Tiruchirapalli City Corporation, I had been cleaning toilets and drains for years, without any gloves, masks, or other safety equipment. I worked even when my health did not permit it, causing the sores and rashes to get aggravated, increasing my suffering.”

N KUMAR

Age: 34

When a health educator from Gramalaya visited Kumar, is when he figured what was going on. “There are so many different kinds of viruses and bacteria that live in the sewers,” he exclaims. “The scabies and other rashes had been caused by faecal oral transmission.” Gramalaya not only trained Kumar in safety procedures but also provided him with safety kits. “They insisted we were to wash our hands frequently—with soap—and wear our gloves and masks diligently,” he tells us. Today, Kumar is free of all infections and is leading a happy, healthy life.





“I contracted conjunctivitis when I was three. My family, who belong to the cleaning community, didn’t know any better, so I didn’t get proper treatment. When I started losing my sight was when I was taken to Ahmedabad Eye Hospital for treatment. Unfortunately, while waiting for an eye donation, my eyes started to ooze pus and had to be removed. So I grew up blind.”

RANJANBEN VAGHELA

Age: 33

Ranjanben lives with her family in a cemetery in Khambhat city. “That is our address, and my work is to provide wood for cremation,” she reveals. But her parents were determined to help her do better. So she studied at Andh Kanya School, Ahmedabad, and then learned cooking at Pragnyachakshu School in Surendranagar. “I passed SSC in 2000, and since then, I’ve been associated with various organizations, such as Handicapped International, Disability Advocacy Group, Unnati, Janpath, Right to Information Initiative, Andhajan Mandal, Chetna and Action Aid,” she tells us. In 2013, she became a representative of the Advocacy Project for Positive Changes in the Lives of Persons with Disabilities in South and Southeast Asia for Anand District. “I was awarded the Smt. Sumatiben Choksi Medal, by the Gujarat state, in 2004,” she beams with pride, speaking of only the most coveted of the many awards she’s received.





“I came to Ahmedabad from Transad in 1989, because there was no work to be found in my village, as we were from the Valmiki Society. My wife and I took up cleaning work in private societies, but even our combined salary was miserable. I got recruited by the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation, for a temporary position. Every day, I rode more than 15 kms on my bicycle, but that got quite hectic, especially on the small temporary employment wage.”

RANCHHODBHAI KABIRA

Age: 57

Today, thanks to the Human Development Research Centre, Ranchhodhbhai has a permanent job. “As important as the work of a doctor or a farmer is, so is that of a cleaner,” he says. “I am proud of what I do—your health depends on my work!” He is a proud father who can provide a good education to his two kids. “I stay in a house under the housing scheme for sanitation workers,” he reveals. “Once I retire, I want to help eradicate the evils within the Valmiki Society.”



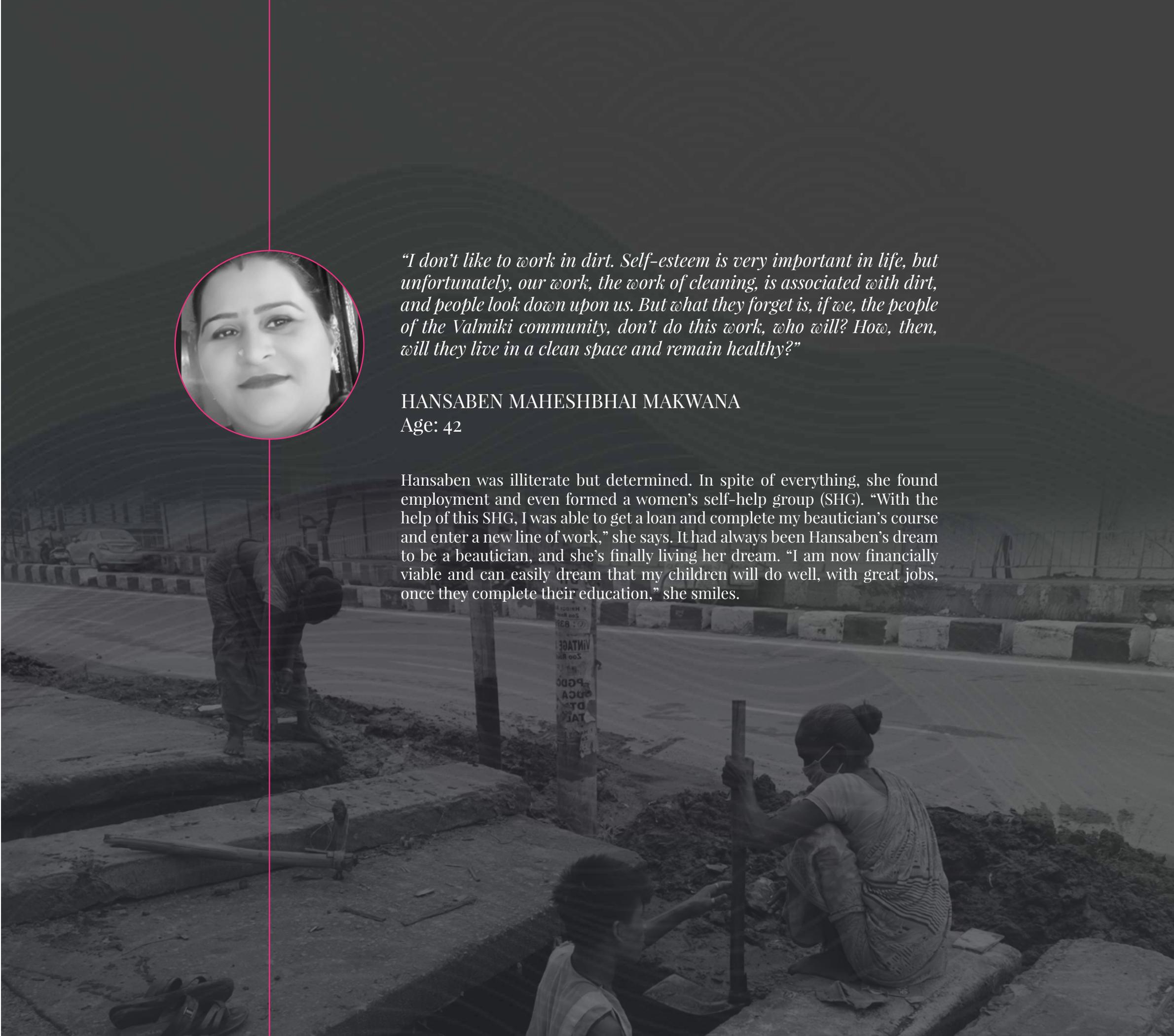


“I don’t like to work in dirt. Self-esteem is very important in life, but unfortunately, our work, the work of cleaning, is associated with dirt, and people look down upon us. But what they forget is, if we, the people of the Valmiki community, don’t do this work, who will? How, then, will they live in a clean space and remain healthy?”

HANSABEN MAHESHBHAI MAKWANA

Age: 42

Hansaben was illiterate but determined. In spite of everything, she found employment and even formed a women’s self-help group (SHG). “With the help of this SHG, I was able to get a loan and complete my beautician’s course and enter a new line of work,” she says. It had always been Hansaben’s dream to be a beautician, and she’s finally living her dream. “I am now financially viable and can easily dream that my children will do well, with great jobs, once they complete their education,” she smiles.





“My husband’s family migrated from Rajasthan to Ahmedabad, in Gujarat, almost 70 years ago. After my husband’s death, I became the sole breadwinner in my family, which pushed me to sanitation work.”

BHARATIBEN SARWAN

Age: 54

Bhartiben may have turned to sanitation work in desperation, but she’s found great pride in her work. “If we stopped cleaning for even a day, the amount of garbage collected would be unmanageable, the entire city would be filled with filth,” she states. “That is why my work is so essential.” As a single parent, she’s worked hard to give her children a bright future. “I’ve put both my children through school, and my son now works in a garment company,” she smiles.



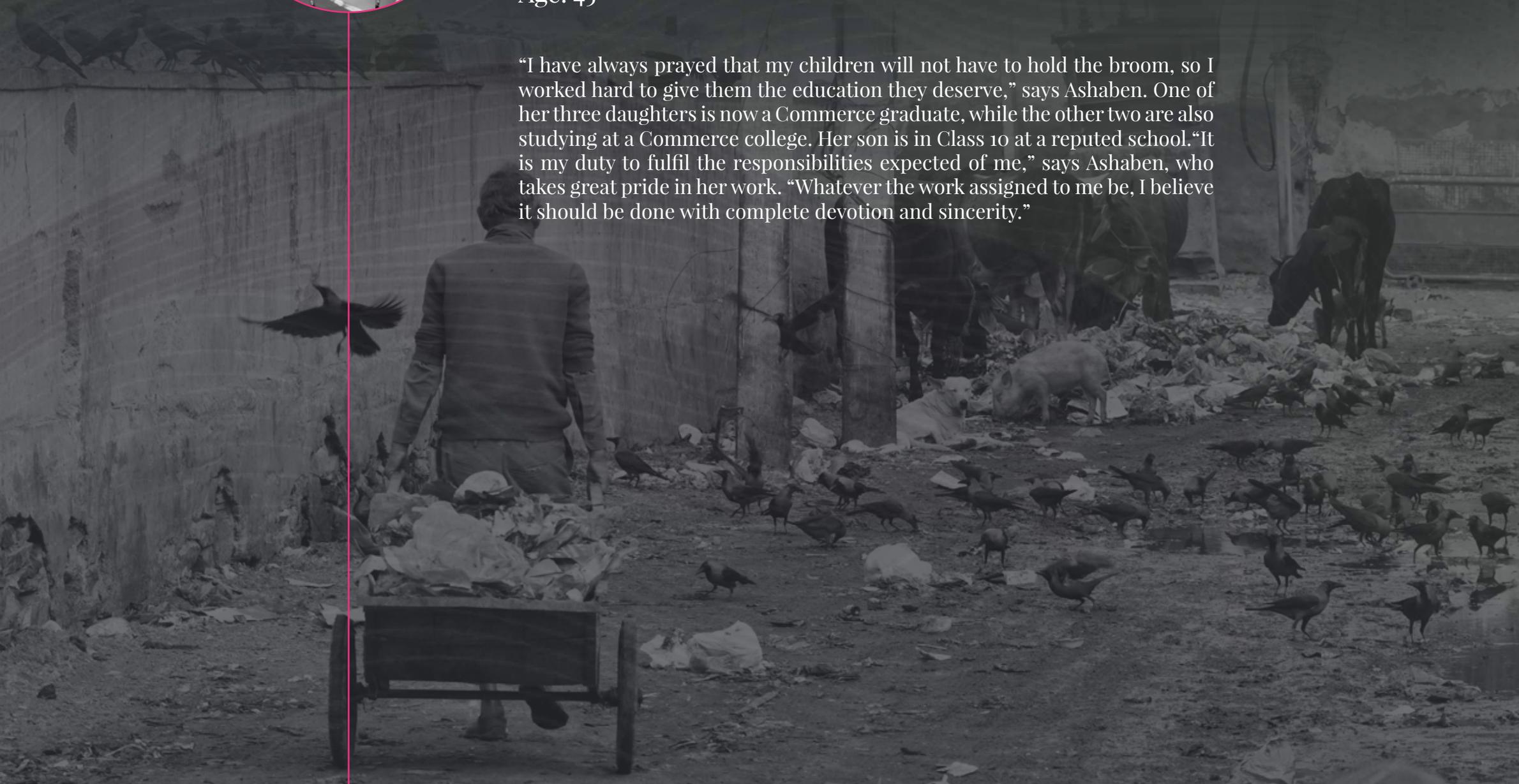


“My in-laws have been living in Jamalpur Health Staff Quarters in Ahmedabad for the last 40 years. I shifted here when I got married and ever since, my husband and I have worked as cleaners in the city. We have three daughters and a son, and my husband and I have had a single-minded focus: To give our four kids a better, brighter future.”

ASHABEN

Age: 45

“I have always prayed that my children will not have to hold the broom, so I worked hard to give them the education they deserve,” says Ashaben. One of her three daughters is now a Commerce graduate, while the other two are also studying at a Commerce college. Her son is in Class 10 at a reputed school. “It is my duty to fulfil the responsibilities expected of me,” says Ashaben, who takes great pride in her work. “Whatever the work assigned to me be, I believe it should be done with complete devotion and sincerity.”





“When I got married 20 years ago, I had been working as a daily wage labourer. I needed money, now that I had more responsibility, but being from the Valmiki community, I didn’t have too many options. So, I took up work as a housekeeper in a private hospital and joined a private agency as a cleaner on a contractual basis.”

KULWINDER KUMAR

Age: 42

Four years later, Kulwinder, who lives in Patiala with his wife and kids, came across the HariBhari team. “The visits and counselling sessions, by the HariBhari Patiala Waste Management team, taught me about waste management and safety at the workplace,” he explains. “I decided to take up a part-time job with HariBhari, so I could make enough to save up for a better future for my children.” HariBhari appointed him as a part-time housekeeper. “My wife also works as a housekeeper to support our three little boys,” he tells us. “We are all doing great!”





“I was 16 when I got home my first salary: One day’s wage for a sweeping job in the city. I had to drop out of school because my family was so poor they couldn’t support me. For the next five years, I worked with the Patiala Municipal Corporation, sweeping and cleaning sewages under municipal contractors, for a measly ₹2,850 a month. And then, during the Covid-19 lockdown, I lost my job.”

AMAR SAHOTA

Age: 30

A friend referred Amar to the HariBhari Patiala Waste Management office, for training in waste management, following which, he joined the organisation. The HariBhari team was very impressed with his work and made him a ward supervisor, ensuring waste collection and segregation. He has been with HariBhari for a few months now and couldn’t be happier. “I feel like my wishes have been fulfilled,” smiles Amar. “Now, my dream is for my children to get a good education, maybe even join the army. I hope they never have to endure what I have!”





“Corporate cleanliness can only be ensured if there is a corporate conscience and a corporate insistence on cleanliness in public places.”

-Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi



“I was all set to go to college, but my dreams were cut short by poverty. I started working at a construction site, to support my family. But the work was irregular, I started working odd jobs, as a sweeper, a sewage worker, a nala (drainage) cleaner, a construction worker, whatever came my way. Every day, I would travel 17km from my village to the city, but all I made was ₹400 a day. It was hectic and frustrating.”

LAADI SINGH KESAR SINGH RAMRASI

Age: 32

One day, while Laadi was at work at the Tripadi Labour Chowk, in Patiala city, he met a HariBhari field officer, who was mobilising workers for training and orientation on waste management and composting. Intrigued by the idea of composting, he visited the composting site and loved it. Having received his orientation on pit composting, Laadi joined the HariBhari Patiala Waste Management office for a monthly salary as a caretaker of pit composting. “I am so relieved and grateful at finally having a fixed source of income, for proper work that I enjoy doing, and for being able to fulfil my children’s and family’s wishes,” Laadi signs off.





“I always dreamt of becoming an officer and doing something big. My father is a retired sanitation worker from Patiala Municipal Corporation and my mother is a domestic worker. All I wanted to do was make them proud.”

DEEPAK VED

Age: 23

While things didn't exactly go as Deepak had hoped they would, he is a happy man today. He completed his graduation in 2020 and joined HariBhari Patiala Waste Management as a ward supervisor. “I monitor door- to-door garbage collection from households, and ensure waste segregation,” he explains. “In fact, I feel extremely fortunate to be doing the work I do. I am quite popular in the wards I work in, and get a lot of respect from both, the people I work with and the people I work for. I have work, a salary and dignity!”





“I was 17, and fresh out of school, but with no one to guide me better, I decided to look for a job. I got one, as an office supervisor in Delhi, but lost it due to health issues. So I had to fall back on the same work my parents had done—cleaning drains, working as casual labour, in Patiala. I would wake up in the middle of the night, to the stench in my nostrils and the sound of drainage water in my ears. I often dreamt of dead animals and broken glass. I wanted to quit and run, but had no option.”

VIKAS KUMAR

Age:

A friend told Vikas, who belongs to the lower caste Valmiki community, about a vacancy at HariBhari Patiala Waste Management. “I immediately applied for a ward supervisor’s job and, to my luck, I got selected for it,” he smiles. “I created a new identity for myself, with dignity and respect, with belief and dedication.” Vikas’s focus, now, is the education of his two daughters, Chahat and Aradhya. “My life has turned around and I want to make theirs even better,” he says.

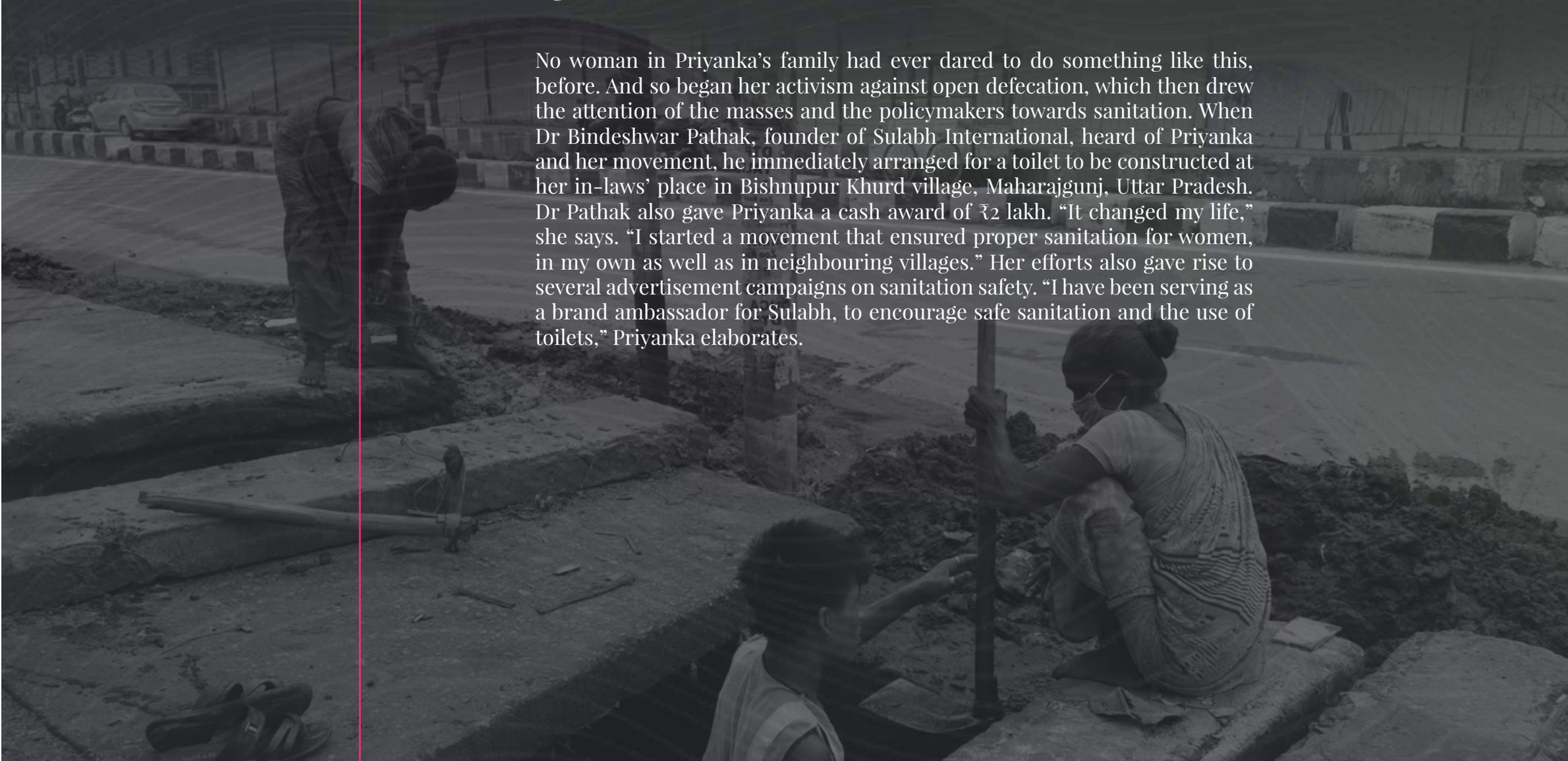


“When I first entered my in-laws’ house, after getting married, in April 2012, I was shocked to learn I would have to defecate in the open. When I resisted, my mother-in-law retaliated with ‘there’s no toilet at home, so what? We all defecate in the open, and so must you!’. In protest, I left my husband’s house, promising I wouldn’t return unless a toilet is constructed.”

PRIYANKA BHARTI

Age: 28

No woman in Priyanka’s family had ever dared to do something like this, before. And so began her activism against open defecation, which then drew the attention of the masses and the policymakers towards sanitation. When Dr Bindeshwar Pathak, founder of Sulabh International, heard of Priyanka and her movement, he immediately arranged for a toilet to be constructed at her in-laws’ place in Bishnupur Khurd village, Maharajgunj, Uttar Pradesh. Dr Pathak also gave Priyanka a cash award of ₹2 lakh. “It changed my life,” she says. “I started a movement that ensured proper sanitation for women, in my own as well as in neighbouring villages.” Her efforts also gave rise to several advertisement campaigns on sanitation safety. “I have been serving as a brand ambassador for Sulabh, to encourage safe sanitation and the use of toilets,” Priyanka elaborates.





“There were no toilets in my village. So I mobilized all the women in my village and led them to meet the then District Magistrate, Ms Kinjal Singh, requesting her to construct a public toilet complex for us. She agreed and arranged for the funds to build eight toilets in the village. The problem was, there was no land!”

MANORANI YADAV

Age: 48

So Manorani, a poor widow and mother of six, decided to give up her own. She donated the small piece of land she owned to construct a public toilet complex in her village of Bhabhanipur Bahraich, Uttar Pradesh. “It was a difficult decision as I was completely dependent on the daily wages I got from it,” she says. “But I knew it had to be done.” In a country badly in need of toilets, especially for women in villages, Manorani’s act of selflessness was exemplary, for which Sulabh International awarded her a cash reward and nominated her as a Sulabh Motivator. “This one step has changed everything and solved the problem of open defecation in the entire village... India needs such women,” Sulabh Founder Dr Bindeshwar Pathak said, while honouring Manorani at a programme held in Lucknow. “Her initiative is highly commendable!”





“Open defecation has been a huge problem in my village. Even though we now have toilets in the village, many families try to save water and make their children defecate in the drain, or out in the open. As a volunteer, I try to prevent that, even offering them pails of water from my own tank for flushing the latrine. We’ve seen a lot of suffering before we had such clean surroundings. We can’t afford to become complacent and let it all come to naught.”

VIJAY LAXMI

Age: 32

Vijay Laxmi’s story is at the heart of the toilet revolution in Hirmathla village, in Nuh, Haryana, which came about much before the Swachh Bharat Mission had offered to provide toilets to all Indians. A few years ago, Sulabh International selected Haryana’s Hirmathla village for its ‘Toilet for All’ campaign, aiming to ensure a toilet in every house. A volunteer for the campaign, Vijay Laxmi motivates people in her own as well as in neighbouring villages against open defecation. A sanitation worker and mother of three, she has been instrumental in making Hirmathla an Open Defecation Free (ODF) village. “I am but an ordinary woman,” she states with humility. “But I knew I had to put in this effort to create change, to bring in safe sanitation, and to motivate my community against open defecation, keeping strict vigil on the proper use of toilets by families in the village and even in nearby areas.”





“Born an untouchable, I started scavenging at 10. I would collect excreta from dry latrines in a basket and walk 3 kilometres to dump it in the woods for ₹300 a month. It was dirty work, and the smell of excreta would drive me mad. I often woke up in the middle of the night, screaming, covered in sweat, feeling numb and afraid. When I refused to do the work, my mother beat me. When I got married, my husband was unemployed, alcoholic and abusive. So I eventually got on a bus with my daughters, returned to my parents, and went back to scavenging.”

UGANTA UMARWAL

Age: 38

In 2008, Uganta was rescued by Dr Bindeshwar Pathak, founder of Sulabh International. At the time, she had been working in 15 houses, while her daughters helped her collect the trash. For many years, she had suffered from acute stress and sleep disorder. Dr Pathak promised Uganta a stipend and an opportunity to learn new skills at Sulabh’s vocational centre, Nai Disha, in Tonk, Rajasthan. “I enrolled along with my older daughter,” she tells us. “I learnt to stitch, and was also taught about personal health and hygiene.” The programme helped Uganta make a respectable living by stitching clothes. “I love my job, my life is transformed and I couldn’t be happier,” she says. “My only regret is I couldn’t educate my daughters.”





“In 2014, six brides, newly-wedded into my village, returned to their parents’ home, because their in-laws’ homes in our village didn’t have toilets. It saddened me but also made me realize the significance of having a toilet at home, especially for us women. Toilets play such a vital role in maintaining a woman’s respect and dignity!”

ASMA PRAVEEN

Age: 30

Today, Asma is an active volunteer for Sulabh International’s Sulabh Sanitary Movement. The incidents in her village, in Kushinagar, Uttar Pradesh, and the accompanying realisation, spurred her on to start a campaign to build toilets in every household in her village. Her efforts have helped build toilets in 70 households and she now runs toilet and sanitation awareness programmes across many districts of Uttar Pradesh, including Kushinagar, Gorakhpur, Deoriya, and Maharajganj. “I have been working to spread awareness about diseases born of improper defecation,” she tells us. “I also guide sanitary workers on proper precautions and safety measures, for their wellbeing.” For her tireless efforts, Asma has been felicitated and awarded, not only by the district magistrates of Deoriya and Gorakhpur, but also by former chief minister of Uttar Pradesh, Akhilesh Yadav, and by Dr Bindeshwar Pathak of Sulabh International.





“I clean the community toilets in our slum, for the Tiruchirapalli City Corporation, and supervise the disposal of sanitary waste. People would dispose of unwanted materials like bottles, plastic sheets and even soiled napkins and clothes used during their menstrual cycles. I had no option but to remove them with my bare hands. I often carried the stench with me, in my mind, while going about my everyday life. But that wasn’t all. I was also often at the receiving end of slurs and various forms of abuse from the very slum dwellers I was cleaning up after.”

SELVA MARY

Age: 55

Things took a turn for the better, for Mary, after she attended various health education programmes at Gramalaya. “The good people at Gramalaya have persistently encouraged us and insisted we use safety gear while working,” she says. “They’ve also inculcated a number of hygienic practices that have made my work easier and safer.” Besides, the periodical medical check-ups have ensured she and her family keep good health. Mary is now an office bearer at a unique Community-Based Organisation (CBO) formed by Gramalaya. “I feel very proud to be able to educate my fellow workers and family, besides doing better myself,” she states.





“For almost 23 years, I’ve worked for daily wages, back in my village, where I was at the receiving end of much casteism. At work, my family and I would be given segregated cups for our tea. When came the time for meals, we had to carry our own dishes to eat in, while others would be provided with everything they needed. Because of the way we were treated and spoken to, I was afraid to go to the Panchayat, afraid of the police, scared to raise my voice. I even considered killing myself.”

VINUBHAI GANGADIYA

Ahe: 46

Ironically, Vinubhai could not make sense of the how and why of it. “I was quite ignorant about the dynamics of caste and religion, and that casteism was what was playing out in my life,” he confesses. “I had no political knowledge, no concept of human rights, no understanding of organisation, but what I did have was a negative view of women.” At Navsarjan, Vinubhai heard about the idea of casteism for the first time ever, and realised he was a victim of it. “I got over my fear of talking to people, and today, I’m imparting training to others,” he smiles. “I get to see different places, and I get to learn while meeting new people.” Vinubhai has come a long way, personally, but is saddened to see his people continue to face discrimination. “Even educated people believe in a caste-based system,” he rues. “But we will get over this. The fight is on!”





“I belong to the Valmiki Society, a lower caste community that has been scavenging for generations. Me, my family and, indeed, my entire community have been victims of traditional caste-based discriminatory practices, for centuries. I would always try to stay out of the way of the upper caste people of the village, even though I would clean their courtyards, pulling out dead creatures, making sure they wouldn’t have to get their hands dirty. But then I would have to beg for food I could bring home to feed my family, every night.”

ISHWARBHAI BAGHELA

Age: 53

About 20 years ago, Ishwarbhai who lives in Jaffrabad, a small village in Anand district, Gujarat, decided he’d had enough, and began working to bring about a change in his people’s social, economic, educational and political status. He has been involved in creating public awareness among children, women, the youth and the elderly. “I believe education is essential for personal development, and that is what I’m aiming at creating,” he states. When the Manual Scavenger Act of 2013 was passed, Ishwarbhai rallied to ensure sanitation workers were aware of their rights and brought attention to the government administration’s responsibilities towards sanitation workers. “I helped the families of workers, who were killed while cleaning gutters, get compensation of ₹10 lakhs each,” Ishwarbhai tells us. “Today, my family and I live our lives with dignity and self-respect. My children are educated and I work in a local organization and am also state convenor of the National Safai Karmachari Andolan.”





India is facing a grave water crisis, with nearly half its population living in extreme water stress and major cities heading towards Day Zero. India's rural households do not have access to piped water and rely on sources that can be potentially hazardous to health. According to UNICEF, Open Defecation Free villages have 12 times less groundwater contamination and 2 times less drinking water. The Covid-19 pandemic has had a direct impact on millions of lives and the global economy making water a critical resource. The need to address water, sanitation and hygiene has never been more crucial.

Network18 and Harpic came together to address this crisis with the launch of Mission Paani in 2019. This Public Private Partnership is aimed at raising awareness and mobilizing action towards water conservation and improvement of hygiene and sanitation, in line with the Prime Minister's appeal towards cleanliness and water conservation. With this natural resource being the biggest enabler of better hygiene and sanitation, this campaign is further aligned with the UN's Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 6: Clean Water & Sanitation. This focus will enable Mission Paani to provide access to water and sanitation, for safety and freedom from disease.

In addition, Mission Paani will have a clear focus on United Nation's 2030 agenda for Sustainable Development: Leaving No One Behind. This principle ensures the campaign reaches out to those in extreme poverty and the most disadvantaged, and works towards eradicating discrimination and inequalities through our social programmes. Mission Paani has made a start on this agenda by working on improving the lives of sanitation workers, their families and communities, with the Harpic World Toilet Colleges spread across six States in India. The campaign will further be addressing the plight of women in rural India, who face the brunt of fetching water and keeping their homes clean and their loved ones healthy.

Through this collaborative 5-year programme, Mission Paani commits to creating an ecosystem that addresses issues of sanitation, hygiene and water, by driving behaviour change, and by working with Central and State governments, NGOs and other external partners to create a direct and measurable on-ground impact. Mission Paani will reach into small towns and villages to ensure socio-economic development, water availability and better hygiene practices.

The time to act is now, and Network18 Harpic Mission Paani will continue to focus on making a difference towards creating a cleaner, healthier and more hygienic environment that will lead to a 'Healthier Planet, Healthier Future'!



The Integrated Health & Wellbeing Council was founded on the principles of good health, good food, good water, good air and a wholesome lifestyle for all, to create a world where progress can be measured in metrics of wellbeing. Taking inspiration from the land of its north, India, known for some of the most ancient, yet proven, alternative medicines and globally-acclaimed wellness practices such as yoga, IHW has made it their mission to spread the word around health and wellness, taking up passionate environment and health projects, and furthering their journey of health advocacy, in line with the UN's global agenda of holistic approach to Sustainable Development Goals.

Every year, countless lives are lost to non-communicable and lifestyle diseases. IHW strives to draw attention to these oft-neglected issues and build conversations around everyday health and wellness that are often swept under the rug. This has been affected through mutual responsible actions and missions involving global leaders, government bodies, policymakers, medical service providers, academics, infrastructure providers, medical professionals, health enthusiasts and influencers, key stakeholders and grassroots organisations.



Jagran Pehel, a division of Shri Puranchandra Gupta Smarak Trust, registered under Societies Registration Act 1860, began operations in 2002. Promoted by Jagran Prakashan Limited, it has been actively involved in generating awareness, aimed towards behavioural change and advocacy on social issues of livelihood, hygiene and sanitation, health, education and gender as well as water and environment conservation, through innovative means of mass communication.

The good work Jagran Pehel has been involved with has been recognised through several awards, including the President Award for the URBAN ODF Community Program 2017, the Mahatma Award for Social Good WTC 2019 as well as the Healthcare Crusaders Award (Covid-19 Edition) for DBSI 2020. Over the years, Jagran Pehel has collaborated with different stakeholders like The World Bank, UN agencies, various healthcare providers and the State Governments to implement sustainable models of reaching out to people on various social issues.

Besides this, with key focus areas in Swachh Bharat Mission, Corporate Social Responsibility and Sustainable development – economic, environment and social sustainability, Pehel also partners with multilateral/bilateral agencies, Government and Non-Government Organisations to design and implement programs for all towards building an empowered community.

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