

Sulabh creates doors out of human excreta

Sounds incredible, but doors and window planks made of human faeces instead of wood has become a possibility!

India's sanitation specialist Sulabh International, led by its visionary founder Bindeshwar Pathak, has succeeded in developing a strong raw material out of human waste and Mexico-based designers Santiago Sierra and Mariana David have designed doors out of it.

The doors have been put on display at the Lisson Art Gallery of London. The exhibition of these human excreta-based doors was inaugurated Nov 29.

Pathak, the brain behind this discovery, said the Mexican designers have succeeded in designing 22 sculptures in the shape and size of doors out of manure from human excreta obtained from the pits of Sulabh lavatories.

Twenty-one such doors are at the London exhibition and one has been put on display at the Delhi-based Sulabh Museum of Toilets.

Pathak said the discovery was another milestone to protect the environment by saving millions of trees from being felled for timber.

The works capture the history and present condition of Indian society, in particular, of the members of its lowest cast, the scavengers, said a Sulabh International press statement.

Art lovers and designers are showing a keen interest in these doors at the exhibition and are planning to visit Sulabh to get a first hand experience of the door making process.

The Sulabh researchers are now trying to make different kinds of furniture, doors and other sculptures out of human excreta.

In India, the continuous exposure to dirt and human faeces, coupled with poor living conditions, makes people employed as manual scavengers vulnerable to diseases, amongst which tuberculosis is the most common.

Despite various governmental acts that prohibit the employment of scavengers or the construction of dry, non-flush toilets, this practice is still common throughout the country.

According to official statistics, an estimated one million people in India are manual scavengers (the majority being women) whose work involves the removal of human faeces from public and private latrines and open sewers.

Unofficial estimates of the actual number are much higher. Scavengers clean public latrines on a daily basis, using a broom and a tin plate. Human faeces are piled into baskets carried on the head to a location that can be up to four kilometres away from the latrines.

The UN has recently recognised the efforts of Sulabh and the contribution of its founder Pathak for implementing the 'Total Sanitation Campaign' through the indigenous two-pit toilet technology now

popular as the Sulabh Shauchalayas (lavatories).

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