

American Students Go Gaga Over Their Visit to the Sulabh Campus

- Janak Singh

Can you imagine a foreign tourist coming from an advanced country where people are planning their next visit to the moon and where even a whiff of foul smell can trigger epidemics, going gaga seeing a novel management of human excreta disposal and its exploitation for the production of methane gas for use as fuel for cooking food? Well, this is exactly what happened on the Sulabh campus recently (July 6, 2009) when half a dozen students from top American universities were so excited on seeing the Sulabh museum, the demonstration of technology perfected by this organization and the multifarious applications of what in common parlance is dismissed as shit for making life easy and the environment safe from pollution.

Asked about their reaction on visiting Sulabh Gram, where nothing but excreta disposal technique is the main speciality, a subject nobody would bother even to look at or think about in their homeland, they said: "Of course, this is the first new place we are visiting three days after our arrival in India. But we did not feel squeamish or uneasy in any way. On the contrary we were greatly impressed by the new technology

Sulabh has perfected. The truth is, no doubt we belong to a very advanced nation, excreta disposal is becoming a problem even in the USA. The drains are being choked, the sewers

are focused on ending the caste system, which is believed to be a major problem in India. Social imbalances are there all over the world. But in India they are said to be



American students taking keen interest in Sulabh technologies

blocked and problems of insanitation are being thrown up."

Samantha D. Leeds, student of Oregon State University, doing masters in Public Health, said, "Whatever Sulabh is doing and we have seen now with our own eyes, is of paramount interest to me. Not only this organization is doing great service to humanity in preventing environmental pollution in whatever small way it is engaged, its activities

responsible for resulting in an unfair treatment to a large number of people. In this context, the work being done by the founder of this organization, Dr. Bindeshwar Pathak, is laudable.

"Of course poverty and contemptuous treatment are there in South East Asia, more pronounced in Cambodia and Thailand. All this is due to poor development in these countries. But what is being done by

Sulabh in ending this evil is unconventional. We can't change the society immediately. The great thing

this technology would certainly help people everywhere.

"Seeing the Sulabh museum



Vocational trainings given to wards of scavengers aroused interest in the visitors

is he has set in motion the process which can result in slow and silent revolution of great significance. Things usually happen as a result of germination. What Sulabh is doing may result in transforming society. The greatest thing is persons liberated from scavenging are free from the stigma of untouchability. The work of this organisation is also doing justice to environment.

"It is stupid to say that one would not like to eat food cooked with methane gas fuel, the source of which is human excreta. We had our lunch with the Sulabh founder and some other members of this organization. Nobody felt uneasy eating food cooked here. In fact even in several other countries facing power problems, biofuel is being introduced for use in homes. The way Sulabh is harnessing water used in toilets is remarkable. Adoption of

was a great educational experience. I had not seen how people in different countries used toilets. The museum is

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very well designed. I had not seen such a thing in my own country or in any other part of the world. Certainly, I would talk to my friends about

Sulabh visit. This has been a very interesting experience."

Douglas Farqahar of Washington DC, who is studying at Pamona College in California, with Botany and Anthropology as his main subjects, has come to India for research in hospital services provided in the country. He said: "Of course what I have seen here is not related to my subject. But it is a tremendous experience to visit this complex. Caste system is India's major problem. Sulabh is trying to make a dent in this problem; it is indeed remarkable. At Sulabh, they are not only breaking caste barriers but also demonstrating technology which is eco-friendly. The organic manure they are producing is a great thing. Technology perfected here could certainly be tried out in other countries. Not only methane gas fuel produced here can be of great value, the water extracted from wastes can also be very useful.

"The evolution of toilets right from the dawn of history till today, as shown in the very interesting museum, is an eye-opening experience. It has greatly added to my knowledge. Never before had I seen such a thing. It is an educational experience of great significance.

"I don't consider my visit to the Sulabh campus, where ways of exploiting human excreta for very useful purposes, are shown in an interesting way as of no importance. Of course talk about human excreta in any group or meeting is frowned upon. But management of excreta is a big problem now all over the world. In that context Sulabh visit is worthwhile."●