

"A man is  
great by  
deeds, not by  
birth"  
-Chanakya

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**Through a Manhole Darkly: The Social Shaping of  
Machine Scavenging Technology in India**

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## Through a Manhole Darkly: The Social Shaping of Machine Scavenging Technology in India

### **Abstract:**

Manual scavenging is a persistent ill in Indian society. A series of technological innovations developed in the recent years may bolster the sanitation infrastructure in the country and perhaps also holds promise to limit or eradicate the practice. This article looks at a set of sanitation technologies through the Social Construction of Technology (SCOT) lens and points out inherent contradictions in their perception by relevant social groups in India. We make the case that manual scavenging is likely to persist, until the social groups of advocates, producers, users, and bystanders are aligned on what these technologies mean sociologically.

**Keywords:** *social construction of technology, social determinism, technological determinism, interpretative flexibility, closure and stabilization, science and technology in society, caste, machine scavenging*





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