

LIVES BEHIND GARBAGE

a documentary on everyday life of the garbage pickers



©
homo reflector productions
www.homoreflector.com



admiration
Applied Sociology
ASA University Bangladesh



lives behind garbage
photobook
a homo reflector production

publication sponsor



advisors	Prof. Dr. Dalem Ch. Barman Prof. Md. Muinuddin Khan
inspiration	Prof. Dr. Helal Mohiuddin
special thanks	Dr. Ahasun Habib Md. Mahbubul Islam Nagorik Uddog.
concept, design & editing	Zayed Siddiki
assistant editor	Abu Jafar Shohagh
photography	Sujit Sajib Naiem Ahmad
photobook team	Shoyeb Talukder Rahinon Nahid Sabbir Rahman Nadia Zaman Yeanur Hossain Khan Rasel Patuary Uday Kumar Shil
acknowledgement	all HRP members for enthusiasm, creativity and hard work

LIVES BEHIND GARBAGE

a subaltern peep through the door-crack of humanity

*Livelihoods! Mystery! Mirage!
Clean lives? Who live? Who give?
Gain? Pain? Who packet what? Why?
Survival? Crows survive! Humans survive too!
Crows-humans survival alliance!?*

Lives Behind Garbage (LBG) is a celluloid portrayal of everyday lives of the garbage pickers in Bangladesh. LBG visualizes social exclusion and human rights violation, eviction-led livelihood uncertainties, employment woes, inaccessibility to education, housing, health and hygiene, and water and sanitation. As well, LBG voices marginality and subaltern development ideas; recommends appropriate waste management and environmental mediation thoughts.

Sustainable livelihoods be the key to sustainable development.

Zayed Siddiki
Director
Lives Behind Garbage

State of Dalit livelihood in Bangladesh

A SYNOPSIS

“The state shall not discriminate against any citizen on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth”-

The constitution of Bangladesh, article 28(1),1972.

Despite the constitutional pledge for nondiscrimination, caste-based social and economic exclusion is still prevalent in Bangladesh. Members of the Dalit- a scheduled caste- are denied renting or building houses outside designated localities. They are systematically disallowed worshipping in temples, participating religious activities, and entering tea shops and restaurants and residential premises of the non-dalit.

Most Dalits have no access to formal education. A 2006 study depicts that 64% of Hindu Dalits have no education at all. More than 80% of the Dalits experience discriminatory practices in school admission*.

The majority of the urban Dalits are landless people living in slum ghettos (“colonies”) or shanties. Their rural shelters are thatched-roof make-shift houses constructed with as basic materials as straw and mud. Constructing these abodes on public lands, they experience frequent eviction and relocation and constant threat of re-eviction.

A large section of the Dalit people is employed as an extremely low-waged street sweepers and garbage cleaning workers in the public and private sectors. These employments do not provide job safety, security, or legal protection against criminal victimization of the Dalits. Despite the fact that the Dalits are the worst victims of frequent crime incidents, they receive scanty or no legal protection but grievance settlement of through informal arbitration.

Dalit Human Rights

Extreme poverty situation of the Dalits is characterized by deprivation of access to education, healthcare, social security, safe housing, sanitation and decent work. Everyday vulnerabilities of the Dalit communities, as reported in different studies, are livelihood insecurity, uncertainty, violence, verbal and physical abuse and aggression, and rape and murder. Justice denied for a teenage Dalit girl raped in July 2009, in Jessore**.

*Caste-based discrimination in South Asia: A study of Bangladesh. Prof. Iftekhar Uddin Chowdhury, IIDS working paper studies, vol 7, 2009

**Work statement (April 2008- June 2011). BDERM

The Dalit Women Moni Mala's saga is worth referring here. The married woman was abducted, converted to Islam and forcibly married to a person who later tortured her to death claiming dowry*. Recent incidents** of forced eviction from decade- long settlements intensify their livelihood strife.

Poverty and Employment: Despite traditional informal sector jobs of the Dalit's remained underpaid and exploitative, emergence of a fierce competition in shrinking job market poses further threat to their livelihood choices. Roughly 95 percent of them earn less than the national wage. Therefore, they resort to loaning from informal money-lenders on high interest rate. City corporations' cleaning worker recruitment process, being bureaucratic and cumbersome, puts the Dalits in sheer disadvantage. The employed Dalits frustration and agony of prolonged 'master-roll' ('unabsorbable temp') status sometime prompts them commit suicide***.

Education: It portrays a dismal reality. Most Dalits have a year or two years of formal schooling experience at most. The Dalits have 10% school enrolment against 85% national average of the same. With 95% dropout rate, 5% Dalits attain basic literacy only. Dalit parents prefer children work to study because teachers and students alike discriminate Dalit students for their impoverishment and lower caste ascription. A survey reveals 81.7% of Hindu Dalits and 84% of Muslim Dalits' discrimination experience during admission period****. It is revealed that Dalit students are forced to sit on the floor, clean rubbish or toilets in schools and stay disallowed to celebrate national historical days and events*****.

Humiliation and social exclusion comprise denial for Dalits' to enter non-Dalit houses, cremate or bury Dalit corpse in public graveyard*****, and compulsion of bringing own bags for shopping. Entering the homes of non-Dalits as 29.2% of Hindus and 45.3% of Muslims report moderate to strong discrimination in this regard. Around 46.3% and 70.7% of Hindu and Muslim Dalits respectively have had to carry plastic bags for shopping at the market.

Housing problem and eviction comprise an integral part of Dalit livelihood. Their makeshift colony sheds are excluded from water, electricity, sanitation, road or any amenities, and vulnerable to sun, rain, wind and any natural adversities. 8-12 people live in small rooms for generations. Once 200 Dalit families settling in Miranzilla and Naya Bazar, and 120 families in Hazaribagh area now elevated to 1200 families. However, there is no housing support since 1963 to address this increase.

* 24 October 2010 at Golanibazar, Satkhira, Dalit Human Rights Situation in Bangladesh (2008-12), FAIR, Kushtia.

** Dalit families were evicted from RM Das road at Sutrapur on March 29, 2009, The Daily Star, 10 April 2009.

*** Kamal Das committed suicide on 28 October 2010 in protest of the commitment breach of the department authority which he served as a master roll for 26 years.

Dalit Human Rights Situation in Bangladesh (2008-12), FAIR, Kushtia.

**** Caste-based discrimination in South Asia: A study of Bangladesh. Prof Iftekhar Uddin Chowdhury, IIDS working paper studies, vol 7, 2009.

***** The Headmaster in Bhojgati Primary School in Monirampur of the Jessore District barred Dalit students to attend the Independence Day celebration on 26 March 2010.

***** The dominant caste people did not allow the cremation of Anada Das, a Dalit of Rishi community, at Bhalukghar, Keshabpur, Jessore on 20 October 2011. a case study by Paritran, 2011.

Health and sanitation; 60000 Dalits living in Dhaka have access to very few toilets. In rural areas 400 to 500 Dalits share one water point. In a slum 12000 Dalits share two water points. Diarrheal diseases and dysentery causes havoc in colonies. They are also denied of hospital admission. Cleaning workers do not receive safety shoes and protective gear- even not at times of high-risk cleaning and emptying of sewerage drains, and blocked pipes and septic tanks.

Dalit women constitute the bottom, the most marginalized, by caste and gender hierarchy. They encounter double burden of oppression. First, within the Dalits themselves. Second, on grater society. Such conditions offer a critical, alternative approach to “feminism” in a post colonial setting. Deeply ingrained patriarchal and conservative values prioritizing chastity, purity, and in-marriage result in child marriage of as young as 10 to 12 years’ old girls marriage and male-depenence. Girl’s are not allowed to move out of home without male accompaniment. Such bindings restrict their access to job and income. Older women who are allowed to work as sweepers and cleaners stand frequent physical, verbal and sexual abuse from the employers and the common people. Dhaka City Corporation grants female sweepers a maximum of 2 months of maternity leave- an exception of the standard 6-month leave rule endorsed as constitutionally safeguarded right of a pregnant worker. Women do not have representation in the Panchayat*. The Dalit communities are governed through a Panchayat system- a court of senior men exercising community-focused decision-making.

Rape and sexual assault downgrade self-esteem of the Dalit women**. A study shows that Dalit girls feel insecure as non-Dalit boys perceive sexual abuse of Dalit girls their “rights” or “privilege”.

* Panchayat-The Dalit community governance and arbitration system.

** In July 2009, a Dalit girl was raped, and a young Dalit woman was gang raped in Dakatia village, Jessore. Dalits Human Rights Situation in Bangladesh, 2009 by Mazharul Islam, Annual Human Rights Report 2009, Neeti Gobeshona Kendra (2010).



Crows-humans survival alliance



photo- iqbal apon, naiem ahmed



Fight for survival continues until last breath



photo-sujit sajb, zayed siddiki

Clean lives? Who live? Who give?



photo-naiem ahmed



photo-naiem ahmed, sujit sajjib



photo-sujit sajjib



life in sweeper colonies



photo- sujit sajjib



photo- sujit saji

cleanliness workers' slum life

13 lives behind garbage
photobook

Dalit women

victims of social exclusion, caste and gender hierarchy



photo-naiem ahmed, siujit sajjib



Dalit children in scavenging world



photo- sujit sajjib, iqbal apon, rahinon nahid

Still smile lit faces.....



photo-naiem ahmed



and, dreams never die

photo-sujit sajjib

17 lives behind garbage
photobook



photo- sujit sajiib

toward a well lit life....

lives behind garbage
photobook

copyright



HOMO REFLECTOR PRODUCTIONS

www.homoreflector.com

homo.reflector@hotmail.com

HOMO REFLECTOR PRODUCTIONS

connect us



publication sponsor

