

Press Release

Anjani Mashelkar Award for Technology That Eliminates Inhuman Practice of Manual Scavenging

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Pune

Just two weeks ago the Supreme Court came down heavily on the Government on the issue of the plight of manual scavengers saying that “*Sewers are gas chambers where manual scavengers are sent to die*”.

The Anjani Mashelkar Inclusive Innovation Award 2019 announced today to GenRobotics Innovation Pvt. Ltd. has the potential to change this picture forever.

Manual scavenging – in cities, often visible as manhole cleaning – is considered one of the worst professions in the world. The working and living conditions of scavengers are appalling. Most manual scavengers don't live beyond the age of 30.

On the 150th year birthday celebration of Mahatma Gandhi, who is known to have said “*sanitation is more important than political freedom*”, it is important to remember that the only college Gandhi established was one for scavengers in Gandhi Ashram. This breakthrough innovation by GenRobotics, which has already started deployment in some states, is capable of creating inclusion of lakhs of scavengers and their families who suffer from social oppression and extreme exclusion.

The winner GenRobotics' innovation is a robot called 'Bandicoot' that cleans manholes remotely using robotic arms and computer vision. This robot manhole is remotely operated and can clean up to ten manholes a day. Manual scavengers will not lose their jobs as they are being rehabilitated to become robot operators and get employed in the high technology sector, thus giving back to them and their future generations, dignity.

The Anjani Mashelkar Inclusive Innovation Award was instituted in 2011 with the aim of recognizing innovators who develop solutions for excluded members of society. For the last nine years, the award has focussed on making high technology work for the poor. The award will be given on 17 November 2019 at the hands of Mr. Ratan Tata in the inaugural session of the National Social Innovation Conference to be held by Pune International Centre.

To know more about Anjani Mashelkar Foundation, visit <http://mashelkarfoundation.org/>