

SUCHITA MÁLIK

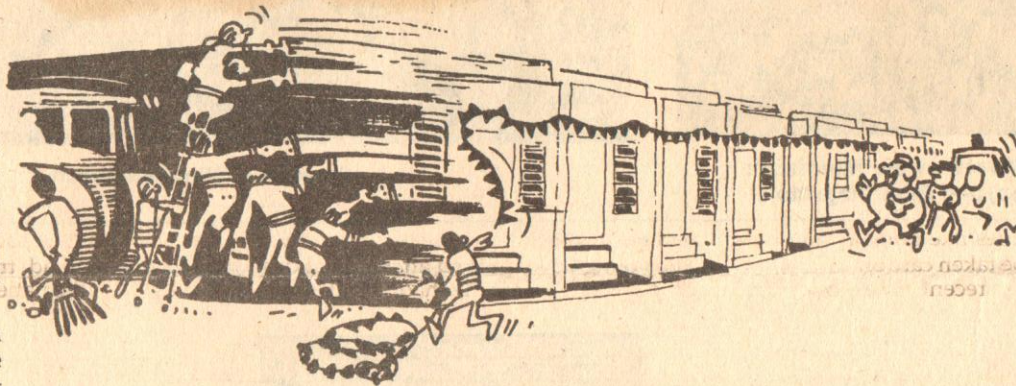
LOOKED out the window and saw a unusual sight. Workers were milling about in the lane. The neighbourhood was being spruced up: roads were being swept clean, hedges trimmed, garbage removed. Safai karmcharis, those rare birds, were conspicuous by their presence. Extraordinary. I'm certain the neighbours were surprised as I was. Strange things were afoot.

I was thinking hard. Even Diwali had come and gone (these chaps do show up at least once during the festival season to claim their *inam*).

What could be so pressing as to necessitate the presence of dozens of *safai karamcharis*, *malis* and labourers. Is it possible that some VIP was slated to swoop down in our midst to attend a function? After all, this sudden spurt of activity couldn't be devoid of meaning?

Unable to bear the suspense anymore I ven-

## Cleanup Time



tured out to quell my curiosity. "Kyon bhai, kya baat hai," I inquired of a female labourer who was engaged in cutting wild grass which had sprouted a long time ago, much to our dismay.

"Memsahib, aap ko nahin pata? Advisor saab ka daura hona hai aap ke sector mein. Isi liye to hum sab lage huye hain," she replied.

So that was it! I saw all.

My persistent inquiries about her work

schedule emboldened her to ask me for a cup of tea.

There was something smug about her manner probably because she was a busy person and had worked in a number of other sectors before coming here.

I obliged her. But while she sipped her tea I was thinking.... So Chandigarh was being dolled up once again.

Here was a person *nee* administrator who believed in seeing things for himself, revelled in hard

work, and attended to the minutest details be they files or the city's back lanes.

That he must have extracted the approval of his seniors and the active cooperation of younger colleagues in this exercise is beyond doubt. May we have some more of his kind with the same initiative and drive to reach out to the corners of the city! ♦