

“MANUAL SCAVENGING”- THE MOST OBNOXIOUS UNDEREMPLOYMENT

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Abstract

Unemployment is the perennial problem for many decades in India. So far, the nation had experienced Twelve Five year plans, still unemployment persists. Some vulnerable sections, particularly manual scavenger's life and employment structure is very pathetic. In India, 1,82,505 number of people are manual scavengers. In Tamil Nadu, there are 334 number of people are doing this work and the ratio is very high in Erode district. Both Central and State Governments are taking many initiatives to rehabilitate the manual scavengers, with alternative employment but still manual scavenging is prevalent in and around the nation. The NDA Government headed by Narendra Modi has introduced a novel scheme "Swachh Bharat". According to this scheme, open defecation should be completely wiped out. For that, every house should have toilet facility. The Government can train the manual scavengers in the toilet construction works, so that, they can get redeemed from the obnoxious work. India is looking for Clean India and Super Power, but if there are manual scavengers that would be a Black Mark to any nation. Hence, this paper focuses on the eradication of manual scavenging work in India.

Keywords: Swachh Bharat, Manual Scavenging, Revolutionary

Introduction

"I do not want to attain Moksha, I do not want to be reborn, But if I have to be reborn, I should be born an untouchable, so that I may share their sorrows, sufferings and the affronts leveled at them, in order that I may endeavour to free myself and them from that miserable condition. I therefore, pray that I should be born again, I should do so not as a Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya or Shudra but as an Atishudra a Bhangi"....

- Mahatma Gandhi

Manual Scavenging is a term used in Indian English for the removal of untreated human excreta from bucket toilets or pit latrines. It involves moving the excreta, using brooms and tin plates into baskets in which the workers carry to disposal locations, sometimes even several kilometers away. These workers are called scavengers, rarely have any personal protective equipment.

The scavenging castes which were known by different names in different States like Bhangji, Balmiki, Chuhra, Mehtar, Mazhabi, Lal Begi, Halalkhor etc. in northern India; Har, Hadi, Hela, Dom and Sanei etc. in eastern India; Mukhiyar, Thoti, Chachati, Pakay, Relli etc. in Southern India; and Mehtar, Bhangias, Halalkhor, Ghasi, Olgana, Zadmalli, Barvashia, Metariya, Jamphoda and Mela etc. in Western and Central India, also made an effort to get united and have a common name. In 1911 census, some of them started returning as Adi Dharmi, Adi Dravida, Adi Karnataka and Adi Andhra (Srivastava, 1997).

In India largely two communities continue this inhuman practice – the 'Valmikis' (Hindus) and the 'Haila' (Muslims). While the Hailas come under the OBC category the Valmikis belong to the scheduled caste and the both are placed in the lowest rung of the Indian society, and therefore – untouchable within the untouchables (Jnanmitra Bhimasha et. al, 2015 & Rashtriya Garima Abhiyan, 2013).

As per the House listing and Housing Census 2011, there were 7.94 lakh latrines in the country from which night soil was removed by humans. However, the number of persons still engaged in manual scavenging is not available. The ongoing Socio Economic Caste Census (SECC), 2011, in rural India is, inter alia, capturing the data about the manual scavengers in rural areas, including the non-statutory towns. The process of a fresh survey of the manual scavengers in the statutory towns has been initiated. During implementation of the National Scheme for Liberation and Rehabilitation of Scavengers, from 1992 to 2005, 7.70 lakh manual scavengers and their dependents were identified by States/UTs. Subsequently, the Self Employment Scheme for Rehabilitation of Manual Scavengers was launched in January 2007. For covering the remaining manual scavengers and their dependents, under which the States/ Union Territories (UTs) had identified 1.18 lakh manual scavengers and their dependents, out of which all 79,454 eligible and willing beneficiaries were provided assistance.

According to Socio Economic Caste Census (SECC-2011), 182,505 households are encased in manual scavenging for a livelihood. The state of Maharashtra with 65,181 tops the list with the largest number of households working as manual scavengers, followed by the states of Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Tripura and Karnataka.

Many researchers had done researcher on manual scavenging and its problems related to Indian context. Siddaramu (2013) had discussed scavengers and sweepers still carry out the basic sanitary services in cities and towns. This author focused about the plight of manual scavengers in India society. It also critically analyses the policies and programs of manual scavengers. Jnanmitra Bhimasha et.al (2015) has studied manual scavenging as social issues have received national policy attention since India's independence. The study reveals result that only 38.2 percentage of the respondent earn income between Rs.4,500 to 6,500 per month. 61.8 percentage of the respondent were not having nutritional food. (44.6 per cent) were facing the stigma

and discrimination from the society. (54.5 per cent) feel that the society had a bad opinion about their occupation. (72.73 per cent) were getting debt from different finance agencies. Tulika Tripathi (2012) conducted a study in Uttar Pradesh above the Government; scheme to appoint rural sanitation workers. Open to all castes as Government jobs are, this was intended to break the link between caste and occupation, especially in sanitation and manual scavenging works. Ravichandran (2011) has emphasized that recent incident where some people belonging to the “Bhangi” community smeared human excreta to protest the Karnataka Government’s plan to evict them from their homes brings out in stark relief the failure of reformist initiatives to end the manual clearing of human excreta. This article argues that part of the reason for these failures has been the inability to imbue the “Bhangi” with political agency, while our ideological and literary imaginations have only tried to see this issue in terms of caste or class.

Like these studies, many studies had highlighted about the manual scavenging and its social problem.

Manual Scavengers in India

In India, still there are many manual scavengers. The following table (1) shows the Manual Scavengers in India States/Union Territories.

Table 1 Top Ten States/U.T (Manual Scavengers)

Sl. No.	Top Ten States Having Manual Scavengers	Number of Manual Scavengers	%
1	Maharashtra	65,181	36
2	Madhya Pradesh	23,105	13
3	Uttar Pradesh	17,388	10
4	Tripura	17,333	10
5	Karnataka	15,375	08
6	Punjab	11,951	06
7	Bihar	7,268	04
8	Daman & Diu	6,277	03
9	Jharkhand	4,153	02
10	Rajasthan	3,498	02
11	All other States	10,976	06
	Total	1,82,505	100

Source: Socio Economic and Caste Census, 2011

Among the States and Union Territories in India, Maharashtra has the highest with 65,181 manual scavengers (36 per cent), followed by Madhya Pradesh 23,105 (13 per cent). Uttar Pradesh and Tripura comes third with 17300 (10 per cent), in having the manual scavengers. The nine States namely Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Tripura, Karnataka, Punjab, Bihar, Jharkhand, Rajasthan and the

Union Territory of Daman & Diu are having 94 per cent of manual scavengers. The remaining 20 states and other Union Territories are having only 6 per cent. In Tamil Nadu, there are only 334 manual scavengers (0.02 per cent)

The following table (2) explains the least Manual Scavengers in Indian States/ Union Territories,

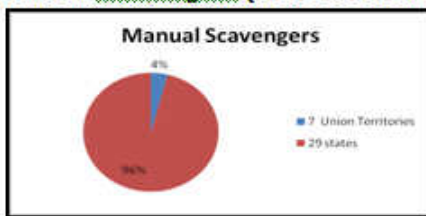
Table 2 The States Having Very Less No. of Scavengers

Sl. No.	The States Having Manual Scavengers (Below 100)	Number of Manual Scavengers
1	Chandigarh (UT)	0
2	Goa	0
3	Assam	0
4	Himachal Pradesh	1
5	Manipur	1
6	Lakshadweep (UT)	1
7	Gujarat	2
8	NCT of Delhi (UT)	6
9	Sikkim	51
10	Andaman & Nicobar Islands (UT)	62
11	Puducherry (UT)	66
	Total	190

Source: Socio Economic and Caste Census, 2011

The above table (2) clearly indicates the least number of manual scavengers in India. There is no even single scavenger in Chandigarh (U.T), Goa, Assam, Himachal Pradesh, Manipur and Lakshadweep (U.T) are having one each, and Gujarat State is having only two manual scavengers. In total, the eleven States/Union Territories together are having only 190 manual scavengers.

The pie chart shows that, 29 states are having 94 per cent and 7 Union Territories are having 6 per cent of manual scavengers in India. As per the latest information available, 12,226 manual scavengers have been identified in 12 States. State-wise detail is given in the table (3).

Figure 1 Manual Scavengers (State & Union Territories)**Table 3 State-Wise Details of Identified Manual Scavengers**

Sl. No.	State	Identified Manual Scavengers	%
1	Andhra Pradesh	121	1
2	Bihar	137	1
3	Chhattisgarh	03	0
4	Karnataka	302	2
5	Madhya Pradesh	36	0
6	Odisha	237	2
7	Punjab	91	1
8	Rajasthan	577	5
9	Tamil Nadu	462	4
10	Uttar Pradesh	10,016	82
11	Uttarakhand	137	1
12	West Bengal	104	1
	Total	12,226	100

Source: Socio Economic and Caste Census, 2011

The table (3) indicates that only 12,226 manual scavengers were identified though there are 1, 82,505 scavengers.

Three aspects are essential to understand and address the plight of manual scavengers. These include their identification, liberation and rehabilitation. Many initiatives have been taken by civil society organization as well as the Government, but the issues of manual scavenging have not been tackled effectively. If the past efforts have failed to get the maximum results then there is a need to have new

strategies to accelerate the process of change. The per cent of women engaged in Manual Scavenging is more than men; around 95 per cent engaged in Manual

Scavenging are said to be women. They face social, economic and political discrimination. There is no proper census on number of manual scavengers in India (Social Inclusion of Manual Scavengers, 2012).

A 2013 report submitted to the UN by Rashtriya Garima Abhiyan notes that the direct handling of human excreta involved in manual scavenging can have severe health consequences, including constant nausea and headaches, respiratory and skin diseases, anemia, diarrhea, vomiting, jaundice, trachoma, and carbon monoxide poisoning. These conditions are exacerbated by widespread malnutrition and inability to access health services. (Human Rights, 2014)

The average age of workers is approximately 41.2 years. This shows that people who are working as scavengers mostly belong to middle aged group. Also it reveals that 66.6 per cent respondents belong to 35-45 years age group. The mean of working experience is 20.4 years. This shows that people who are working presently are indulged in this area for a long time. Either they are bonded to work in this menial job or they do not have any other opportunity. Further, an average respondent works in 11 houses for her/his earnings. It also reveals that her/his earning from this work is meager (Rajeev Kumar and Ziyaudeein, 2009).

Handling human excreta is not voluntary employment, but a form of slavery sanctioned and imposed through an exploitative and inhuman caste system. The following are some other reasons why we consider manual scavenging a form of slavery: i) It is a Compulsion, ii) It is Hereditary, iii) It is an Indefensible Custom, iv) It is Based on Caste-Based Division of Labour, v) Compulsion of Performing Other Tasks (Siddaramu , 2013).

Current Laws on Manual Scavenging

The current laws had not proved adequate in eliminating the twin evils of insanitary latrines and manual scavenging. The Parliament has enacted the 'Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and Their Rehabilitation Act, 2013'. The law has come into force on Dec 6th 2013 in whole of country, except Jammu & Kashmir. The act intends to eliminate the insanitary latrines, Prohibit, Employment as Manual Scavengers, Hazardous manual cleaning of sewers and septic tanks, Survey of Manual Scavengers and their rehabilitation.

The act also has provisions for the following measures for the rehabilitation of the identified manual scavengers: An initial one-time cash assistance, Scholarship to the children of manual scavenger, Allotment of residential plot and financial assistance for house construction of a ready built house, Training in a livelihood skill with payment of stipend of at least Rs 3000 per month, Provision for subsidy, along with concessional loans, to at least one adult member of the family (ENVIS, 2005).

Redemption Work for Manual Scavengers

Manual scavengers should be given suitable measures to eradicate that job. The following are the rehabilitation Schemes for the Manual Scavengers i) Total Sanitation Campaign (T.S.C), ii) National Scheme of Liberation and Rehabilitation of Scavengers (N.S.L.R.S), iii) Integrated Low Cost Sanitation Scheme (I.L.C.S), iv) National Safai Karamcharis Finance and Development Corporation (N.S.K.F.D.C) v) Self Employment Scheme for Rehabilitation of Manual Scavengers, vi) Valmiki Malin Basti Awas Yojana (V.M.B.A.Y), vii) Nirmal Gram Puraskar Yojna (N.G.P.Y).

In addition to that, a few more measures can be adopted to the manual scavengers to get redeemed i) In toilet construction works ii) Sanitary workers in Panchayat bodies iii) Toilet cleaning vehicles with subsidy iv) Toilet cleaning with safety measures v) Agricultural coolie vi) Cottage Industries/co-operative society and micro loans vii) Self Help Group for Manual Scavengers to switch over better job.

Construction of sanitary toilets in every house is the best way to eradicate the manual scavengers. In India, Nirmal Bharat Abhiyan (N.B.A) was implemented from 1999 to 2014, the main objective was Total Sanitary Campaign (T.S.C) through out the country. The NBA was relaunched as Swachh Bharat Mission in 2014. Under this Swachh Bharat Scheme, the households which are not having toilets could avail the financial assistance from the Government, and it is given below

Table 4 Financial Assistance for the Construction of a Toilet

Sl. No.	Statement	Amount (in Rs)
1	Contribution by Central Government	4,000
2	Contribution by State Governments	2,000
3	Contribution by Local bodies	2,000
4	Contribution by Beneficiaries	4,000
	Total Amount	12,000

Source: Swachh Bharat Mission, 2014

To get financial assistance for the toilet construction under Swachh Bharat Scheme two aspects are very much necessary, they are: i) the house should not have toilet ii) the house should have space to construct toilet. If all the

houses have the sanitary toilets, then automatically the manual scavenging will be eradicated. At that time, they should be given alternative arrangement for getting other jobs.

According to the House Listing and Housing Census 2011, States such as Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Jammu and Kashmir, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal account for more than 72 per cent of the insanitary latrines in India. Hence, those insanitary toilets must be converted into sanitary toilets. This will pave the way to eradicate manual scavengers (Shikha Garg, 2016).

Swachh Bharat Mission for Urban Areas

The mission aims to cover 1.04 crore households, provide 2.5 lakh community toilets, 2.6 lakh public toilets, and a solid waste management facility in each town. Under the

programme, community toilets will be built in residential areas where it is difficult to construct individual household toilets. Public toilets will also be constructed in designated locations such as tourist places, markets, bus stations, railway stations, etc. The programme will be implemented over a five-year period in 4,401 towns.

Action Plan to Eliminate Manual Scavenging

The Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and Their Rehabilitation Bill, proposed to be introduced in the Parliament is once again a renewed attempt in the year 1993 to prevent employment of people in the cleaning, handling or carrying of human excreta. In order to remove any kind of doubt about the political will, Governments' concern and commitment and law enforcing authority's ability, transparency and accountability to end this dehumanizing activity once and for all Action Plan must be formulated which include, inter alia: (i) It is necessary to identify manual scavengers and dry latrines jointly by designated teams of Government officials and community members so that the Governments cannot deny the fact which often is the case (ii) Central, State and local Governments by mandate must invest in developing and using technologies [available in developed countries] that can render the occupation humane, dignified and safe without any direct human contact with excreta are prerequisites to liberate manual scavengers (iii) The new law should make the village panchayat and urban local body as well as the district magistrate of the district concerned responsible to ensure that no household constructs or maintains an insanitary latrine or employs a manual scavenger (iv) The poor sanitation in rural India where dry latrines remain in use must be improved to eliminate manual scavenging. In the absence of networked sewerage facilities, even urban local bodies engage workers to manually clean septic tanks. Manual scavenging can, therefore, be eliminated by significantly improving overall sanitation in the countryside (v) In case scavengers are employees of municipalities, Government, semi-Government or private companies, the law should specifically provide for a clause/section "no termination from the jobs but should be confirmed in regular employment in a task not at all connected with scavenging" (vi) Government program for promotion of flush latrines in place of dry latrines; livelihood rehabilitation including health of freed manual scavengers; and education of their children can effectively be implemented by local bodies and NGOs in which case administrative officials and elected representatives should be made accountable for targeted outcomes. Their children of existing and freed scavengers should be guaranteed Government-funded free school education up to college or vocational training to transfer technical skills necessary to seek employment. Women too should be adequately financially incentivized and provided housing facilities (vii) Manual Scavengers must be empowered to fight collectively to change this centuries-old practice (viii) Legislators must demonstrate their political will to pass the new Bill assigning top priority during the ensuing session and the Government must show concern and commitment to make it a law within three months and direct all concerned authorities to enforce without delay (ix) At Block level, monitoring committee chaired by the Block Development

Officer should review the performance village & urban center-wise every month (x) At district level monitoring committee chaired by the District Magistrate/Collector must review the performance Block-wise quarterly. District Magistrate must be accountable to ensure that targeted numbers are genuinely liberated and rehabilitated. (xi) At State level monitoring committee chaired by the Chief Minister should review the performance district-wise half-yearly. (xii) At national level committee chaired by the Home Minister should review the performance annually and present to the parliament (Amrit Patel, 2016).

Revolutionary Women Demanding Toilets

In recent years, many women have the awareness to use the toilets. A newly-wed young Priyanka Bharti (Uttar Pradesh) brought about a social revolution by standing up to her husband's family when they asked her to defecate in the open. And with this, she started a movement to ensure proper sanitation facilities for women in her village and all nearby villages. Anita Narre (Madhya Pradesh) left husband Shivram's home two days after her marriage in May 2011 because the house had no toilet. Ramdas Ramsing Mane, the chairman of Pune based Mane Group has gifted a portable toilet to his village's girl Sheetal Namdev Chapade (Pune) in her marriage recently. Ramdas has announced that he will be providing a free gift of readymade RCC toilet at Mane Group of Companies to newly married girl to support the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan announced by Govt of India. A woman Neha (Kanpur) refuses to tie knot because there was toilet in groom's house.

Obstacles to Ending Manual Scavenging

Though the Government has been implementing many schemes to completely wipe out the manual scavenging, but there are certain obstacles in it. The following are the main obstacles;

(i) M.G.N.R.E.G.S are not functioning effectively. If manual scavengers would like to shift to other jobs particularly M.G.N.R.E.G.S they should get adequate income through out the year. But, M.G.N.R.E.G.S provides employment of maximum 100-150 days only (ii) In recent years, agriculture is not favorable due to many reasons. So, the manual scavengers may find difficulty to get job in agriculture (iii) Though the manual scavengers would like to work as cooli or any other work, they cannot get job because they are treated as fun un touchables (iv) Almost all the manual scavengers are illiterate. Illiteracy is the main obstacles to them, (v) Most of the manual scavengers are addicted with alcohol (vi) Many manual scavengers do not like any other job except the habituated expect the rehabilitated job of manual scavenging (vii) Manual scavengers do not migrate to other areas for the better job opportunities (viii) Though there are many Government Schemes like micro-credit, cottage and Small Scale Industries to the manual scavengers, but they do not like such schemes (ix) Corruption and bribery are the main obstacles to the manual scavengers while they want to avail the rehabilitation schemes (x) Identification of manual scavenging is the main problem to the Government, because many manual scavengers would like to continue as manual scavengers, because of that they do not want to give particulars to the Government.

Conclusion

Manual Scavenging works are terrible and horrible. The manual scavengers are treated like untouchables and suppressed society. One side, India is creating a world record in launching many Rockets (space technology), but in other side, manual scavengers are under penury. Hence, they should get redeemed from the obnoxious job of manual scavenging. If every house has a sanitary toilet facility, manual scavengers will be shifted to other jobs. Government of India has launched a novel scheme of Swachh Bharat Mission in 2014. The main objective of Swachh Bharat is to have 'Clean India', for that, construction of toilets and removing the open defecation completely are the important targets. All the States and Union Territories can implement the Swachh Bharat schemes very effectively, through that, manual scavenging can be wiped out completely.

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