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**ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT
THROUGH SWACHH BHARAT MISSION**

Volume I

Editor

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A STUDY ON SOCIO ECONOMIC STATUS OF THE MANUAL SCAVENGERS IN SIVAGANGAI DISTRICT

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INTRODUCTION

Manual scavenging, a dehumanizing practice, those engaged in this occupation often belong to scheduled caste communities. Specifically, the scheduled caste communities, who are identified in the lowest ladder of the social order, are frequently dragged on to do manual scavenging. Manual scavenging could simply be defined as manual removal of excreta (night soil) from "dry toilets", i.e., toilet without the modern flush system, especially without the water seal (KashtriyaGarimaAbhiyan2011, cited in Siddaramu, 2013).

The existing laws have provisioned for closure of dry latrines but there are various forms of manual scavenging practices that are not exposed in the Acts as occupationally hazardous and putting an end to such practices. Despite Government rehabilitation schemes, millions of Dalits, most of them are women are forced to continue the intolerable manual scavenging. This practice observed from Kashmir to Kanyakumari. Those involved in manual scavenging due to the prevailing of dry latrines not only suffer from the inhuman pain of scavenging human faeces but also go through the agonizing pain and humiliation of discrimination, occupational health hazards of peril, untouchability and social exclusion. (Meenakshisundaram, 2012)

The caste system is historically maintained by the caste structure in India—a structure in which Dalits are kept at the bottom of the social order and with the nature of no climbing of the ladder is possible (Irudayam, Aloysius, Mangubhai, & Lee, 2006). The distribution of caste based work is still linked with intersectional identities of caste, class, dirt work and gender in the age of technology; women of these subDalit castes are mostly engaged in cleaning dry latrines while their male counterparts are employed in government offices like Municipality Councils or hospitals to perform menial jobs such as cleaning toilets, collecting hospital wastes and collecting manure extract from manholes. (Pachouri, 2008)

Without significant changes in mindset of villagers from all of the various castes, demand for the kinds of sanitation initiatives that would eliminate the practice of manual scavenging will remain low. In number of villages people are used to defecating in the open. While this poses many problems in terms of health, privacy and safety, particularly for women, people controlling the resources, typically men, do not understand the importance of sanitation and hygiene and are therefore not willing to invest in improvements (Arpels & et al., 2011).

Bezwarda Wilson, the National Convenor of the SafaiKaramchariAndolan, an organisation working for eradication of manual scavenging, pointed out that the Supreme Court sponsored his organisation's case dozens of times over many years; IAS officers declared that there was no manual scavenging in their districts, ignoring evidence to the contrary (Narayanan, 2013). Manual scavenging, the obnoxious and degrading occupation, have made the manual scavengers themselves despise but feel hapless and entrenched into doing (Sankaran, 2008, p. 1). The manual scavengers who have not tasted the educational benefits feel that it is their destiny to do manual scavenging. On the otherside, the community at large, who look after their family life, have a stereotype image that the oppressed communities are destined to do manual scavenging.

This study attempted to observe the socio-economic condition of the manual scavengers. Briefly, the study focuses on the various types of manual scavenging practices the manual

scavengers are engaged and analyses on the working conditions, behaviour patterns, attitude of the society towards the manual scavengers and the level of awareness among the manual scavengers on the entitled laws. A quite number of literature sources on manual scavenging were carried out by the organisations working for the eradication of the manual scavenging. Observing the gap, this study tries to fill up it by exposing the life pattern of the manual scavengers and how they are being affected in various forms. This research work has been carried out in broader discipline of social work with collection and compendium of varied range of reviews from interrelated disciplines.

The critical theory emphasizes on human emancipation from domination and oppression. In the case of manual scavengers, they are in a forced state of engaging in caste-based occupational manual scavenging practices and have a better employment in an alternative sector with better salary, self-esteem and dignity. The researcher would like to find out the socio-economic status of the manual scavengers of Sivaganaagi District, the various forms of manual scavenging they are engaged, the working conditions of the manual scavengers, health condition, behaviour pattern, attitude of the society, forced labour practices and social discrimination in the living area.

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To study the socioeconomic status of the manual scavengers.
2. To find out the attitude of the society toward manual scavengers
3. To determine the level of social discrimination in the living areas of the manual scavengers.
4. To enumerate viable strategies for enabling the manual scavengers to have better life standards with economy, better health and dignity.

Methodology

Descriptive research design was employed in this study to describe the socially stratified communities in the lowest ladder being forcibly engaged in manual scavenging practices. Using snowball sampling, the manual scavengers in various occupations i.e more than 9 manual scavenging practices were identified.

There are eight taluks in Sivagangai District. 50 sample respondeents were selected from each taluk. Thus the size of the sample constitute 400. Interview schedule was used to collect primary data from the manual scavengers in Sivagangai District district.

Sampling Technique

Since the exact size of universe engaged in manual scavenging is unknown in Sivagangai district, the researcher employed snowball sampling technique. In Government records, the number of manual scavengers mustered is comparatively lesser than those actually engaged, since most of them are engaged in contract occupation without entry in the muster roll. Using snowball sampling, the manual scavengers in various occupations i.e more than 9 manual scavenging practices were identified from one respondent after another respondent. The total samples selected were 400

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Table I Type of Occupations the Respondents Engaged

S.No.	Type of Occupation	Engaged (%)	Not Engaged (%)	Total
1	Cleaning the septic tank	92 (8.5)	308 (91.5)	400 (100)
2	Cleaning the toilets (common, schools, hostels)	229 (21.1)	171 (78.9)	400 (100)
3	Cleaning the human excreta in the streets	185 (17.0)	215 (83.0)	400 (100)
4	Removing the human and animal	123 (11.3)	277 (88.7)	400 (100)

	carcass			
5	Disposing the bio-medical wastages	28 (2.6)	372 (97.4)	400(100)
6	Cleaning the drainage	268(24.7)	132 (75.3)	400(100)
7	Dumping the wastages in the lorries	117(10.8)	283 (89.2)	400(100)
8	Removing the excreta from the railway tracks	14(1.3)	386 (98.7)	400(100)
9	Cleaning the train toilets	4 (0.4)	396 (99.6)	400(100)
10	Other types	26 (2.4)	374 (97.6)	400(100)

Source: Primary data

Of the 400 respondents, 24.7% of the respondents had engaged in cleaning the drainage. More than one fifth of the respondents (21.1 %) were cleaning the toilets that were common or school or hostel toilets. About 17 per cent of the respondents were engaged in cleaning the human excreta in the streets. More than one tenth of the respondents were engaged in removing the human and animal carcass. Nearly one tenth of the respondents were dumping the wastages in the lorries. It could be insinuated from the above analysed data that most of the respondents were engaged in more than one scavenging practice. A considerable proportion of them were engaged in more than 4 types of scavenging practices. The analysed data showed that there are various forms of manual scavenging practices that the manual scavengers engaged on. Nine types of manual scavenging practices were observed and listed in the statement and four other types of manual scavenging practices were also identified, where 26 respondents were engaged on.

Generations the Families Engaged in Scavenging Occupation

Generations the Families Engaged in Scavenging Occupation Manual scavenging practice is a caste based one and generations many families belonging to scheduled caste communities are forced to do the same scavenging occupation. The generations the families engaged in scavenging occupation is shown in the following table. Nearly three fifth of the respondents expressed that they are first generation workers engaged in manual scavenging. The remaining two fifth of the respondents were second and third or previous generation engaged in the scavenging practice. A considerable proportion of the respondents (35.5%) were the second and third generation engaged in manual scavenging. It could be inferred that based on the caste, particularly those who belong to lowest social order of the schedule caste communities are forced to engage in manual scavenging practices.

Generations the Families Engaged in Scavenging Occupation

Table 2

S.No.	Generation	Frequency	Percent
1	First generation	239	59.8
2	Second generation	86	21.5
3	Third generation	56	14.0
4	Fourth generation & previous generatio	19	4.8
5	Total	400	400

Source: Primary

Educational Status of the Children of the Respondents

Education is a changing tool in lives of the children. Whether the children avail the essential school education is the quest of this section. Table 4.8 shows educational status of the children of the respondents

Educational Status of the Children of the Respondents
Table 3

Particulars	Number of Households	Minimum persons in the household	Maximum persons in the household	Total Members	Average size of members
Male children studying in government school	76	1	3	114	0.29
Female children studying in government school	69	1	4	102	0.66
Total No. of children studying in government school	108	1	5	216	0.54
Male children studying in private school	53	1	4	88	0.22
Female children studying in private school	43	1	3	61	0.15
Total No. of children studying in private school	79	1	4	149	0.37

Source: Primary

total number of male children studying in government school was 114. The total number of female children studying in government school was 102. The total number of children studying in government school was 216. The mean children studying in government school was 0.54. The total number of male children studying in private school was 88. The total number of female children studying in private school was 61. The total number of children studying in private school was 149. The mean children studying in private school was 0.37.

Period of Payment received by the Respondents

The following table displays period of payment received by the respondents. A good majority of the respondents (84.5%) had monthly payment, 12.5 percent had daily wages and just 3 percent had weekly wages.

Period of Payment received by the Respondents
Table 4

S.NO.	Period of Payment	Frequency	Percent
1	Monthly income	338	84.5
2	Weekly wages	12	3.0
3	Daily wages	50	12.5
4	Total	400	100

Source: Primary

Land Holdings of the Respondents

Land is an asset for agricultural production in pastoral life. In this section, the dry and wet land holding of the respondents are observed. Table 4.15 shows land holdings of the respondents.

Land Holdings of the Respondents
Table 5

S.NO.	Type of Land	Having Land Holdings	No Land Holdings	Total
1	Wet Lands	45(11.3%)	355 (88.8%)	400(100%)
2	Dry Lands	5(1.3%)	395 (98.8%)	400(100%)

Source: Primary

A large majority of the respondents (88.8%) had no possession of wetland and 11.3 percent had wetlands. A large majority of the respondents (98.8%) had no dry lands and just 1.3 percent had dry land. It could be inferred from the land holding data that the majority of the respondents were landless.

Major Findings

The major outcomes of the study are listed below.

- Most manual scavengers (57.8%) are in the early middle age group of 33 years to 45 years. A significant proportion of the manual scavengers (58%) have not crossed the middle school education. A large majority of the manual scavengers (89.8%) are married.
- It is found that early three fifth of the manual scavengers are first generation workers. The remaining two fifth of the manual scavengers are second and third or previous generation engaged in the scavenging practice shows their less human life.
- Many scavengers (32%) feel that engaging in scavenging occupation is their fate. More than half of the interviewed manual scavengers (53.5%) are not provided with safety equipments. A greater majority of the manual scavengers (90.5%) are not provided separate room for changing the dresses implies the least importance given to these workers.
- Most of them (83.2%) have health problems due to scavenging practice. About 7 percent of the manual scavengers expose that the co-workers died during scavenging work. Most respondents (52%) are facing ill-treatment in the hands of their employers shows an irony that life risk on one side and abuse on the other for the ill - fated group.
- A large majority of the scavengers (99.8%) have no respect for their scavenging occupation from other caste communities. This statement agrees in line with the outcome projected by

Prasad (2005) that the scavengers had no status in society because of the nature of work and their belonging to scheduled caste groups.

- Most manual scavengers (59.8%) express that they or their family members performed funeral rites of the deceased body of the upper castes. Of the 400 manual scavengers, 36.5% of them state that they or their family members cleaned the graveyard path of the upper castes. A majority of the manual scavengers (67.8%) articulate that they or their family members cleaned the streets of the upper castes during festival times.
- Of the 400 manual scavengers, 96 manual scavengers convey that they or their family members mended the slippers. More than half of the respondents state that they or their family members cleaned the animal carcass.
- A sizeable proportion of the manual scavengers (47.8%) are not aware on Employment of Manual Scavenging and Abolition of Dry Latrines Act, 1993. A quite number of the manual scavengers (23.8%) are not aware about the SC/ST Prevention of Atrocities Act.
- Of the 400 respondents, 64% of them have worse working condition in their manual scavenging employment, 22.3% of them have worst working condition. Most of them (64%) have experienced higher level of forced and menial labour practices. A majority of the respondents (68%) are discriminated in public places to a higher level. Of the 400 respondents, 273 respondents (58%) have disrespect by the upper castes to a higher extent.
- There is a significant mean difference between the extent of awareness among the respondents on entitled laws and the marital status of the respondents.

III. SUGGESTIONS

The Government has to take effective measures in the implementation of the Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act 2013. Eradicating the complete practice of manual scavenging along with demolition/conversion of all dry toilets, construction of dry latrines and individual dry latrines need to be one of the utmost priorities of the Government. Technology and mechanization need to be in place for cleaning the underground drainages and railway train toilets. The Civil Society Organisations or Community Based Organisations need to mobilise and organise the manual scavengers across the State to ensure strict implementation of all the legal provisions.

IV. CONCLUSION

Manual scavenging practices exist in many forms and the people belonging to scheduled caste communities are engaged in such practices. The Arunthathiyars who are engaged in manual scavenging, do not have alternative employment to renounce the scavenging practices. Though in the modern times, the occupational mobility has increased for the rural caste suppressed masses to find out alternative employment to have dignified life. But less education, controlled occupation mobility and restricted association of the focused manual scavengers and the poor inertia of law to abolish the manual scavenging have pushed them to continue in the manual scavenging practices. On the other side, based on their caste identity, the manual scavengers are forced to do other menial jobs in their locality. They face various social discriminations primarily due to their birth in lowered castes. The Civil Societies need to strengthen the organisation of the manual scavengers to emancipate themselves from domination and oppression of the manual scavenging practices. There is an encouraging note that 2015 is declared as the year 'Free from open defecation' by the Government of Tamilnadu. This declaration need to be done in full vigor and trigger so that it could pave way for eliminating and / or reducing manual scavenging practice in various parts of the State Since June 2014. (The Hindu 29* July 2014) curtailing the menace of open defecation. The only concern is that these type programme and schemes must be

implemented in letter and spirit to achieve the objectives. Hence, the Government's benevolent role is more essential for the emancipation of manual scavengers.

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