

A STUDY ON THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS OF MANUAL SCAVENGERS IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT:

This paper specifically deals with the socio-economic status of manual scavengers those people clean the dry latrines manually. This practice was sought to be abolished and thus many acts was brought forth to absolve this problem. The most recent Act which was brought to solve this issue in India was the ‘prohibition of employment of manual scavengers and their rehabilitation Act, 2013’, This paper aims to study the socio-economic status of manual scavengers after the enactment of the act.

KEYWORDS: Socio-economic, manual Scavengers, Social discrimination, Respiratory, Occupation.

INTRODUCTION:

Manual scavenging is a caste based and hereditary occupation for dalits(Baruah, 2014). Manual scavenging in India is mostly done by people considered as lower castes or untouchables. Social exclusion is the main cause why some sect of the people are pushed into manual scavenging. Despite a number of retrograding welfare measures as well as legal provisions nothing significant has happened(Katiyar, 2017). Manual scavengers are all socially exploited people, they face social discrimination in political and economical spheres. They are also seriously affected by health problems. Workers are commonly exposed to gases like hydrogen disulfide, methene, ammonia and carbon monoxide(Tiwari, 2008) which are all very injurious to the respiratory system, and health on the whole.

Reformism turns a blind eye towards caste(Ravichandran, 2011) manual scavengers are victims of grave discrimination owing it to their low caste and disgusting job(Vanisree and Alphonsa, 2010). Not enough is done to target this group and socially

reform the conditions which are affecting them. Despite the fact that their out caste position and work combine to reinforce social ostracism, their livelihoods are being phased out along with dry latrines(Deepa Joshi and Suzanne Ferron, 2007); they are shunned from the society and forced to live as an outcaste for the rest of their lives(UN Development Programme, 2012). Despite living in a country whose rich civil history has inspired freedom movements around the world/ Dalits suffer egregious cast discrimination(Hanchinami, Bind B, 2001). India has long tried to eradicate/face this problem of manual scavenging. Indian central government since independence in 1947 has adopted legislative and policy efforts to end manual scavenging(Human Rights Watch, 2014). This task cannot be achieved that easily, as India is a large and diverse country, progressive steps have to be taken. Progressive steps have to be taken for bringing the scavenging community into the mainstream of our country and make a contribution to its development(Abishek Gupta, 2016). Even though it is banned, it prevails in Indian community under various names(Rajeev Kumar Singh,2009). Despite all this, there has been blantant denial of the existence of the practise in recent years(Amit Gupta, 2014).

Manual scavenging is a sort of forced labour. The extreme form of exploitation inherited in the caste system has made a mockery of the modern Indian Labour Laws and International Conventions on the rights of workers(Siddaramu.B, 2013). Only if Law had been implemented in the right spirit we might have seen an end to the practice of manual scavenging(Saptarishi Mandal, 2008). Audacity and deliberate dereliction of duty by the state machinery that bluntly denies the existence of inhuman practice of manual scavenging(Mohd. Shihd, 2015).

The workers are also paid so very less that they are not able to even take care of their own family. Those working privately are paid very less for each house they clean(Mr. Rajesh Pant and others, 2014). The means to improve their present conditions of work is to fix their minimum wages(B.N Srivastava, 1997).

The 'prohibition of employment of manual scavengers and their rehabilitation Act, 2013' was the latest Act brought to face this issue. While this has focused on sanitation requirements, it paid little or no attention to the(Dr.Lakshmi T and Rajeshkumar S) deep rooted social problem of the degradation of human dignity and thus was unable to come up with long term sustainable measures to eradicate the practice(Gayatri Loomba, 2013).

Despite a number of retrograding welfare measures as well as legal provisions nothing significant has happened (Shiv Prakash Katiyar, 2017). The aim of this paper are To discuss the effectiveness of 'prohibition of employment of manual scavengers and their rehabilitation Act, 2013' in improving the standard of living of manual scavengers in India.

To analyse the socio- economic conditions of manual scavengers in India.

HYPOTHESIS:

H0: There is no significant impact on the socio-economic status of manual scavengers in india after the implementation of the 'prohibition of employment as manual scavengers and their rehabilitation Act, 2013'.

H1: There is significant impact on the socio-economic status of manual scavengers in India after the Implementation of the 'prohibition of employment as manual scavengers and their rehabilitation Act, 2013'.

MATERIALS AND METHODS:

This study used both primary and secondary data. The primary was collected through an interview schedule with simple random sampling method from 300 respondents. By asking questions such as their personal information such as name age etc, and questions on their view on manual scavenging, and questions about their monetary needs and on the Act (prohibition of employment of manual scavengers and their rehabilitation Act, 2013). The secondary data was collected from various sources such as books, research papers and articles.

RESULTS:

The study revealed that majority that is about 65 percent of the respondents are working as manual scavengers for more than 15 years and the remaining 35 percent are working as manual scavengers for less than 15 years. It can also be noted that 55 percent of the sample respondents are entered into manual scavengers at the age of 18 years and rest of 45 percent are entered as manual scavengers at above 18 years of age. The reason why they entered into manual scavenging for about 55 percent of the respondents were caste discrimination and the other 45 percent entered into manual scavenging as they were not qualified enough and had no job. About 90 percent of the respondents are educated below 10th standard and 10% were educated above 10th standard For about 85 percent a minimum of 3 members of their family are dependent on their earnings and for 15 percent of the respondents less than 3 persons of none are dependent on them. Among the sample respondents 87 percent say salary is not enough to run their family. The minimum wages they

received was Rs.70 and the maximum was Rs.300. While the monthly expenditure was around Rs.1000 for 65 percent of the sample respondents. Among the sample respondents 85 percent of their children are being educated/are educated.95 percent of the sample respondents find that manual scavenging is degrading and does not give enough pay, while 5 percent did not feel that way. 95 percent of these manual scavengers health are affected in some way or the other.(Trishala A , Lakshmi T and Rajeshkumar S, 2018) 95 percent of the sample respondents chose to answer yes to the question whether they found manual scavenging humiliating and degrading,and made them feel deprived of their basic human rights. 60 percent of the sample respondents are aware of the ‘prohibition of employment as manual scavengers and their rehabilitation Act, 2013’, while 40 percent are not aware of this particular Act. 85 percent of the sample respondents are still working as manual scavengers, while 15 percent are not working manual scavengers now. 60 percent of the total sample population do not have any job right now and the other 40 percent have some job or the other fo the moment.

Only 40 percent of the respondents have sought help from the government while 60 percent have not. Among this 40 percent , 85 percent were helped by the government while 15 percent were not satisfied with the actions they received. 65 percent of the respondents answered yes when asked whether their current employment meets their monthly needs and the rest 35 percent responded No. 65 percent of the sample respondents said that they would get into manual scavenging again if it becomes necessary and 35 percent said they would not and will rather find some other job. When asked how many other manual scavengers did the respondent know the median value was 12 each respondent.

DISCUSSION:

Most of these people had gotten into manual scavenging before the were even 18 years of age and have also been working as one for more than 15 years, some even as long as 40 years. None of these people are able to support their family or their own life with manual scavenging as their only source of income. But the fascinating thing is that most of their children are being educated. This show’s how these people value education. Majority of the people find this work as humiliating and disgusting. And that they started this job only due to social pressure on caste discrimination and force, and others because they were not educated as they were low in caste, and eventually did not get any other job. 90 percent of these people are poorly educated of have no education at all.Only about 60 percent of the sample respondents are aware of this ‘prohibition of employment of manual scavengers and their rehabilitation Act,2013’, this show that this has not reached far into the community and that

to even for the community they have targeted, the manual scavengers. This on its own does not contribute much to the personal development of the manual scavenger in particular nor does it improve the economic or social status of the manual scavenger. The government turns a blind eye on the caste based side of the problem of the manual scavengers. 65 percent of the sample population are still minded that they would get into manual scavenging if needed again, this shows that they have not be psychologically helped / rehabilitated.

CONCLUSION:

The mindset of the manual scavengers have not changed and they are still facing problems of social exclusion in the society. Even still there are many people who are still working as manual scavengers. This all by itself has defeated the purpose of the ‘prohibition of employment of manual scavengers and their rehabilitation Act,2013’. Thus here the null hypothesis is proved. It can be concluded that, ‘there is no significant impact on the socio-economic status of manual scavengers in India after the Implementation of the ‘prohibition of employment as manual scavengers and their rehabilitation Act, 2013’

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