



A Comparative Study Of Manual Scavenging - Prevalence And Eradication Efforts In India And In Other Countries

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1. Introduction:

Manual scavenging, the hazardous practice of manually cleaning human waste and sewage, is a deeply entrenched social issue that persists in many countries and regions across the globe. While some nations have made substantial progress in eradicating this inhumane practice, others continue to struggle with its prevalence. Manual scavenging, the dehumanizing practice of manually cleaning human waste and sewage remains a pressing issue in several countries, posing significant health and dignity challenges for the individuals involved. Various nations have recognized the need to eradicate this practice through legal frameworks. Awareness and education play a pivotal role in addressing the deeply entrenched issue of manual scavenging, a hazardous and dehumanizing practice that persists in many countries. Educational campaigns, especially targeting vulnerable communities, can help change mind-sets and promote alternative livelihoods. Rehabilitation and skill development programs are crucial initiatives aimed at rescuing manual scavengers from this exploitative practice, providing them with alternative livelihoods, and restoring their dignity. It continues to be a pressing issue in India despite legal prohibitions. Recognizing the gravity of this problem, international collaboration has played a significant role in addressing and improving the conditions of manual scavengers in India.

Keywords – hazardous, manual scavengers, dehumanizing, rehabilitation , eradication.

Objectives

1. To Study the prevalence of manual scavenging in India and in other countries.
2. To study the eradication efforts, rehabilitation and investment on manual scavenging in India and in other countries

Methodology

The present study is based on the theoretical results. For the purpose of the study, data was collected from the secondary sources. The secondary data have been collected from books, journals, news papers and reports from internet.

II. Prevalence of Manual Scavenging in India and other countries:

India stands out as one of the countries with the highest prevalence of manual scavenging. This practice is primarily fuelled by the existence of insanitary latrines and out-dated sewage systems. Despite legal prohibitions and government initiatives, thousands of individuals, predominantly from marginalized communities, are still engaged in this degrading work.

Several countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, including Nigeria, Ghana, and Kenya, grapple with significant challenges related to manual scavenging. This problem is often linked to inadequate sanitation infrastructure in urban areas and informal settlements. Poverty and a lack of awareness further exacerbate the issue. Some Middle Eastern countries report instances of manual scavenging, primarily among migrant labourers working in low-paying and dangerous conditions. These workers often have limited legal protections, making it difficult to eradicate the practice. But, the developed nations have largely succeeded in eliminating manual scavenging due to improved sanitation infrastructure and strict labour laws. However, isolated instances may still occur in older or neglected systems.

III. Eradication, Rehabilitation, Investment and skill development for Manual Scavengers in India

Eradication Efforts taken by India

Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act was introduced in 2013, this is the primary legislation aimed at eliminating manual scavenging and providing rehabilitation for those involved. It defines manual scavenging, prohibits its employment, and outlines measures for rehabilitation. In 1993, the Employment of Manual Scavengers and Construction of Dry Latrines (Prohibition) Act was introduced, this was the earlier legislation addressing manual scavenging. The 2013 Act has largely superseded this, but it's still relevant in certain contexts. Besides these acts various articles in the Constitution of India also provide for the prohibition of un-touchability in article 17 and the right to dignity in article 21, which are closely related to the issue of manual scavenging. Besides these acts various State Rules and Policies are also introduced. Under the ministry of social justice and empowerment in 24th January 1997 National Safai Karamcharis Finance and Development Corporation (NSKFDC) was set up for all round socio-economic upliftment of the safai karmacharies, scavengers and their dependents thought out India through various loan and non-loan based schemes

Rehabilitation and Alternative Livelihoods

The Indian government, along with state governments, has launched several awareness campaigns to highlight the hazards of manual scavenging and the legal prohibitions against it. These campaigns often include advertisements, pamphlets, and public service announcements to inform the public about the consequences of engaging in or supporting manual scavenging.

Various non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in India, such as Safai Karmachari Andolan, Bezwada Wilson Foundation, and Jan Sahas, are actively involved in raising awareness about manual scavenging. They conduct workshops, seminars, and community outreach programs to educate affected communities and the general public.

The media plays a significant role in highlighting the issue of manual scavenging through investigative reporting, documentaries, and news coverage. - Media exposes the harsh realities faced by manual scavengers, shedding light on their struggles and advocating for change.

Investment in Sanitation Infrastructure

Swachh Bharat Abhiyan (Clean India Campaign) was Launched in 2014, this nationwide campaign aims to make India open defecation-free and improve sanitation facilities. The campaign includes the construction of millions of toilets in rural and urban areas to eliminate open defecation, a common cause of manual scavenging. From 2014 to 2022 more than 10.88 crore sanitary toilets have been constructed in rural areas and 62.64 lakh in urban areas and insanitary toilets have been converted into sanitary toilets under Swachh Bharat Mission

Underground Sewerage Systems in Indian municipalities are increasingly investing in underground sewerage systems to replace open drains and septic tanks. These systems reduce manual scavenging by replacing manual cleaning with mechanical methods. By adoption of Modern sanitation technology, such as sewage treatment plants and sewer-cleaning robots, is being adopted to reduce manual interventions in cleaning sewage systems.

The Swachhta Udyami Yojana (SUY) reflect commendable efforts in addressing the challenges faced by sanitation workers. Under SUY, concessional loans up to Rs. 50 lakh empower workers and urban local bodies to procure necessary equipment. The Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) program's free up skilling training enhances safety and efficiency in mechanized cleaning. Workshops further raise awareness among stakeholders about legal provisions, fostering a collective commitment to eradicate manual scavenging. These initiatives mark significant strides towards ensuring dignity and well-being for sanitation workers.

Rehabilitation and Skill Development:

Rehabilitation measures include providing financial assistance, alternative livelihood options, and skill development training. Self-Employment Scheme for Rehabilitation of Manual Scavengers (SRMS), Under this scheme, manual scavengers are eligible for financial assistance and skill development training to help them transition to alternative occupations. The program focuses on building skills in various sectors like manufacturing, agriculture, and services.

- The one time cash assistance of Rs. 40000 was provided to the 58098 scavengers upto Dec 2021
- Skill development training upto two years with stipend of Rs. 3000/- per month to the manual scavengers/dependent who opt for such training. This scheme covered 18199 scavengers upto December 2021
- The maximum amount of capital subsidy per beneficiary has been revised from Rs. 3.25 lakh to Rs. 5.00 lakh in April 2021 and it was covered 1562 beneficiaries till December 2021.
- The revised Self Employment Scheme for Rehabilitation of Manual Scavengers (SRMS), offering a capital subsidy of Rs. 5 lakh, promotes sanitation-related projects.

National Safai Karamcharis Finance and Development Corporation (NSKFDC), provides financial support and skill development training to manual scavengers and their dependents through various schemes and programs.

IV. Eradication, Rehabilitation, Investment and skill development for Manual Scavengers in Other Countries

South Africa

The legal framework in South Africa relevant to the abolition of manual scavenging encompasses various statutes and acts. The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, serves as the highest law, potentially containing provisions related to human rights, dignity, and equality applicable to the issue of manual scavenging. The Labour Relations Act, 1995, governs labor relations and includes provisions related to fair labor practices, working conditions, and workers' rights. The Occupational Health and Safety Act, 1993, focuses on workplace health and safety standards, potentially impacting the conditions under which manual scavengers work.

Since the 1994 political transition from apartheid, new labor laws have been established to safeguard individuals from inhuman treatments. Three main regulations governing sanitation work attribute responsibilities to both the employer and the employee. The Basic Conditions of Employment Act (1997) offers protections to workers. The National Occupational Health and Safety Act (1993) puts employers in charge of protecting worker health and safety by minimizing and mitigating risks in the working environment, as well as providing training and precautionary measures to protect the health and safety of their workers. The 2001 Regulations for Hazardous Biological Agents mandate that any person who may be exposed to a

biohazard must comply with the employer's instructions, such as wearing personal protective equipment, reporting accidents, and completing training or medical examinations.

The South Africa's government, in collaboration with NGOs like the Environmental Health Directorate, conducts awareness campaigns to educate citizens about sanitation and hygiene. These campaigns aim to reduce the demand for manual scavenging and promote safe sanitation practices. The government has invested in building flush toilets in informal settlements and rural areas to eliminate pit latrines, a source of manual scavenging. Efforts are made to upgrade sanitation infrastructure in urban areas to reduce reliance on manual scavengers.

In South African government, along with NGOs, offers rehabilitation and skills development programs for former manual scavengers. These programs aim to reintegrate them into the workforce, often in the sanitation sector with improved conditions.

Pakistan

Islamic Republic of Pakistan is a developing nation which has not enacted any law to regulate this practice. Manual Scavenging persists in Pakistan it is almost encouraged by the State, according to New York Times citing an example where the Pakistani military, had placed newspaper advertisements for sewer sweepers with the caveat that only Christians should apply". It has been stated "that the descendants of lower-caste Hindus who converted to Christianity centuries ago still find themselves marginalized and subjected to menial labor, including manual scavenging in Pakistan". Due to limited employment options for Christians and other communities, many individuals are reluctant to engage in gutter cleaning. Consequently, some Christians are compelled to resort to manual scavenging as a means of earning their livelihood. According to one estimate by the rights group, even though Christians constitute 1.6% of the population, they account for 80% sanitation workers". The constitution of Pakistan has provisions for equality before the law and equal protection under the law and equal opportunity. Article 11 prohibits forced labour. However, unlike India, Pakistan has not enacted any specific law to prohibit the employment of manual sanitation work and to protect sanitation workers against stigma and discrimination. However, the country laid down the Standard Operating Procedure for Management of Sanitation Services in 2008.

Pakistani NGOs, like the Pakistan Institute of Labour Education and Research (PILER), engage in awareness and advocacy efforts. They work to inform communities about the dangers of manual scavenging and lobby for policy changes to eradicate the practice. The Pakistan's government and international organizations invest in improving sanitation facilities, especially in slums and informal settlements. The goal is to provide access to safe sanitation and reduce the need for manual scavenging. The country has initiated rehabilitation programs, including vocational training, for manual scavengers to help them acquire skills for alternative livelihoods. Various NGOs work to provide education and healthcare services to their families.

Bangladesh

The Bangladesh Labour Act, 2006 & 2015 have rules and regulations applicable on manual scavengers. Section 46& 47(2) of 2015 Act laid down that “a worker should use a mask when he/she working in dust and in case the inspector finds it necessary, then inspector can take up a supplementary step for disposal of solid garbage or liquid faecal, respectively”. Section 67(2) of the same law affirms that “to ensure personal safety, protective gear should be provided like shoes, hand gloves, mask, goggles, apron, earplugs etc.” “The National Occupational Health and Safety Policy 2013 and the Dhaka Institutional and Regulatory Framework for Faecal Sludge Management 2017 includes guidelines about occupational health and safety for pit emptying service but that is not satisfactory enough to eradicate the practice.

Article 27 in the constitution of Bangladesh has a provision against discrimination. Similarly, Article 28 prohibits discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, or place of birth. In 2017, Bangladesh formulated the Institutional and Regulatory Framework for Faecal Sludge Management (IRF-FSM). Occupational safety and health guidelines for pit emptying exist and can be found in the Bangladesh Labor Act, 2006. Standard Operating Procedures for sanitation work exist in many cities such as Dhaka, Khulna, etc. in Bangladesh.

The Bangladesh government, with support from organizations like Water Aid, conducts awareness campaigns focused on improving sanitation practices. These campaigns aim to eliminate manual scavenging by encouraging the use of modern sanitation facilities. The country has made Investment in sanitation infrastructure includes the construction of public toilets and the expansion of sewerage networks. These initiatives aim to improve public sanitation and reduce manual scavenging. It has also introduced skill development and livelihood programs for manual scavengers and their families. Initiatives focus on income generation and social inclusion, aiming to break the cycle of poverty.

V. Key Initiatives and Collaborative Efforts:

World Bank Support: The World Bank has partnered with the Indian government and other governments of developing countries to finance sanitation and sewage management projects. These projects aim to improve sanitation infrastructure and reduce the need for manual scavenging.

UNICEF Programs: - UNICEF supports sanitation and hygiene programs in India and in developing countries, focusing on behavior change communication, access to clean toilets, and safe waste disposal. These initiatives help reduce open defecation, a common cause of manual scavenging.

NGO Collaborations: Several international and national NGOs collaborate with developing nations organizations to raise awareness, rehabilitate manual scavengers, and advocate for policy change. Such partnerships leverage global networks and resources for local impact.

Global Conventions and Agreements: India is a signatory to international conventions, such as the International Labour Organization's Convention 111, which aims to eliminate discrimination in employment and occupation, including manual scavenging.

VI. Suggestions

Addressing and eradicating manual scavenging in developing countries requires a comprehensive and multifaceted approach. Here are several suggestions to tackle this deeply entrenched issue:

- Strengthen and enforce existing laws against manual scavenging, ensuring strict penalties for violators.
- Develop and implement comprehensive anti-manual scavenging legislation with clear definitions and provisions for rehabilitation and compensation.
- Conduct widespread awareness campaigns to educate the public about the inhumanity and illegality of manual scavenging.
- Implement skill development programs to empower manual scavengers with alternative livelihood skills.
- Facilitate job placement and entrepreneurship opportunities for former manual scavengers.
- Develop comprehensive rehabilitation programs that include housing, education, healthcare, and psychological support for former manual scavengers.
- Explore innovative technologies like robotics and drones for sanitation work to reduce human intervention.
- Invest in research and development for cost-effective and sustainable technological solutions.
- Collaborate with international organizations and neighboring countries to share best practices and strategies for eradicating manual scavenging.
- Adopt a zero-tolerance policy towards manual scavenging, supported by strict enforcement and monitoring mechanisms.

VII. Summary:

This paper underscores the vital role of international collaboration in tackling India's pervasive issue of manual scavenging. It advocates learning from global experiences, accessing technical expertise, and securing financial resources for a comprehensive approach. Partnerships with international entities signify a collective commitment to dignity and safety. The review acknowledges legal frameworks' importance, highlighting India's 2013 Prohibition Act. It emphasizes awareness, education, sanitation infrastructure investment, and rehabilitation programs as crucial. The paper concludes that global collaboration, informed by shared successes and challenges, is key to consigning manual scavenging to history, promoting safe and dignified sanitation practices worldwide.

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