

Eradication of Manual Scavenging: Policy and Perspective

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Abstract

The manual scavenging is inhuman task of cleaning human excrement from roads and dry latrines. It is practiced in many countries until water flush toilet system was introduced. In India it is done by sub-castes of Dalits castes, who are traditionally involved in scavenging, they are called in different names in states like Bhangi, Balmiki, Chuhra, Mehtar, Mazhabi, Lalbegi, Halalkhor etc. in northern India; Hari, Hela, Dom, Senei etc. in eastern India; Mukhiyar, Thoti, Chachati, Paki, Relli, etc. in southern India and Mehtar, Bhangi, Halalkhor, Ghasi, Olangna, Zadmalli, Barvashia, Metariya, Jamphoda, Mela, etc in western and central India. Some of them started returning as AdiDravida, AdiDharni, Adi Karnataka and Adi Andhra. These communities are invariably placed at the bottom of the caste hierarchy as well as Dalit sub-caste hierarchy.

The Parliament in India enacted two separate laws to eliminate manual scavenging, in which one eradicates the employing scavengers (The Employment of Manual Scavengers and Construction of Dry Latrines (Prohibition) Act, 1993) and another provides prohibition on employment and rehabilitation to those left the occupation (Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavenger and their Rehabilitation Act, 2013). However the laws are made but the practice of scavenging is continues, the Socio-Economic Caste Census 2011 reveals that there are 1, 80,657 household engage in manual scavenging. There are several reasons to persist manual scavenging even today, Caste is definitely a major reason and negligence of the state in implementing the laws passed by the Parliament is another.

This paper will be focus on two areas one, dealing with those policies of the state to eradicate manual scavenging by commissioned the several committees by the government of India under the chairmanship of VN Barve (1949), NR Malkani (1957), B Pandya (1967) and IPD Salappa (1976, Govt of Karnataka) and the two acts mentioned earlier. These committees recommended on several measures to uplift the life of the scavengers and two, the perspective on manual scavenging by the Indian society. The caste-ridden society is still compelling untouchables to carry the work in rural areas and open new methods of scavenging in urban areas. My paper will be elaborately present those rural-urban scavenging and provides theoretical foundation based on Gandhi-Ambedkar views on manual scavenging.

References

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