



## MANUAL SCAVENGING IN INDIA

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### ABSTRACT

In India, there are constitutional and legislative prohibitions on “untouchability” 2 and manual scavenging. However, women and men continue to be engaged in manually cleaning human excrement from private and public dry toilets, open defecation sites, septic tanks, and open and closed gutters and sewers. They usually embark upon manual scavenging because of traditional caste-based roles that leave them few, if any, alternate employment options, a situation perpetuated by poor implementation of laws and policies prohibiting this practice. Historically, civil, social, and economic life in India has been regulated by the caste system—a system of social stratification that designates ranked groups defined by descent and confined to particular occupations. Caste-based social organization is governed by custom and is enforced socially and economically. Irrespective of the religion practiced by an individual, caste in India is hereditary in nature. A community’s caste designation has long had a significant impact on the ability of members of that community to control land and other productive resources, establishing broad congruence between caste and class.



Dalits are relegated to the bottom of the caste hierarchy. They have been traditionally limited to livelihoods viewed as deplorable or deemed too menial by higher caste groups— including as manual scavengers, leather workers, and cobblers, among others. Their caste designation also renders them socially “polluted” or “untouchable” and is used to justify discriminatory practices. As a result, in parts of India, Dalit communities are still denied access to community water sources, denied service by barbers, served tea in separate cups, barred from entering shops, excluded from temples, and prevented from taking part in 3 community religious and ceremonial functions.

**KEYWORDS:** constitutional and legislative prohibitions , civil, social, and economic life.

### INTRODUCTION:-

In several developing countries, a notorious proportion of the urban poor, known as scavengers or waste-pickers, are involved in waste collection and recycling as a means of income generation. This activity generates a positive

social externality as production costs in some sectors have been reduced and landfills’ lifetime has been lengthened. In addition, virgin materials are used less intensively, lengthening the availability of natural resources. The purpose of this research study is to show that scavengers in developing countries generate a

positive externality on society and therefore their activity should be encouraged through economic incentives that lead them to increase the amount of solid waste up to optimal levels. This study incorporates the role of waste-pickers in an integrated dynamic model of production, consumption and discard of

waste, subject to either disposal or recycling. Street sweepers play an important role in maintaining the health and hygiene in the cities. This job exposes street sweepers to a variety of risk factors such as dust, bioaerosols, volatile organic matter and mechanical stress, which make them susceptible to certain occupational diseases. The important morbid conditions detected in these workers include the diseases of the respiratory system and eye, accidents, injuries, cuts and wounds, skin infections, animal bites, etc. At present, the standards and norms for the management of municipal solid wastes in industrialized countries have substantially reduced the occupational health impacts. However, in developing countries, the health related underpinnings of solid waste management still need to be addressed. Workers manually collect the wastes. There is little, if any, protection to workers from direct contact and injury and virtually no dust control at the workplaces. Solid waste collectors are exposed to significantly large amount of dusts, microorganisms, toxins and diesel exhaust pollution than the recommended norms. In India, the traditional culture has stigmatized street sweeping as a filthy and lowly occupation. The medical problems of these workers are further compounded by various socioeconomic factors such as poverty, lack of education, poor housing conditions and poor diet. Similarly, very few studies have been carried out in India to study the morbidity profile of these workers. With this background, and fortified by the fact that no such study has been carried out in Southern India, the researcher decided to carry out the present research in a form of doctoral course to study the prevalence of various morbidities in this occupational group.

### DEFINITIONS

"Manual Scavenger" means a person engaged in or employed whether by an individual or an urban local body or any other public or private agency, for manually cleaning carrying or disposing or dealing in any manner with human excreta in a latrine, a tank, a drain or a sewer line or open spaces including railway tracks, and the expression "manual scavenging" shall be construed accordingly.

Manual scavenging" means carrying human excreta and dumping from one place to another. Thus, if a person manually cleaning carrying or disposing or dealing in any manner with human excreta in a latrine, a tank, a drain or a sewer line or open spaces including railway tracks.

### BENEFITS FROM SCAVENGERS ACTIVITY:

The role of waste pickers in developing country cities is essential for both environmental and economic reasons. It is difficult to quantify the total contribution of the informal sector to urban waste management. The informal nature of this sector inherently implies a lack of official statistical data. Quantification of informal recovery is, therefore, scarce and uncertain (Van Beukering and Gupta, 2000). Several authors show in their earlier studies how scavenging provides various social, economic and environment benefits: Recycling of solid wastes reduces air and water pollution, saves energy, reduces waste from industrial processes compared with the use of virgin materials, and in many cases reduces imports of raw materials (Medina, 1997).

### RELEASED MANUAL SCAVENGER"

means people or family members including mother, father, son daughter, daughter-in law and Grand parents who earlier engaged in manual scavenging defined under sec 2(a) and left doing so any point of time before enactment of this Act.

Scavengers often live either on or beside landfills in order to await the arrival of waste filled trucks. They sort the waste with their bare hands, sticks or simple hooks. Sometimes entire families work at a landfill in this way (Hogland and Marques, 2000). However, waste pickers are not always located at dumps. In some parts of the world, waste picking is done near the source, that is after collection has taken place at the generating sources but, before being transported to the dump or landfill (Ojeda-Benitez, et al., 2002). So, scavengers can be classified as itinerant waste pickers and landfill/ dump waste pickers. The existence of scavenging as a distinct occupation is based on: markets for recovered materials; waste in sufficient quantity and quality to meet industrial demands and people

who are willing or compelled to do work that is poorly paid, hazardous and of a low status (Hogland and Marques, 2000).

### CONCLUSION:

Historically, civil, social, and economic life in India has been regulated by the caste system—a system of social stratification that designates ranked groups defined by descent and confined to particular occupations. Caste-based social organization is governed by custom and is enforced socially and economically. Irrespective of the religion practiced by an individual, caste in India is hereditary in nature. A community's caste designation has long had a significant impact on the ability of members of that community to control land and other productive resources, establishing broad congruence between caste and class.

The physical characteristics of Third World cities, their rapid expansion, 5 and the lack of resources to provide for necessary infrastructure and urban services, translates into an insufficient collection of the waste generated, as well as its improper disposal on the streets, vacant lots and, at best, in municipal open dumps. Most Third World cities do not collect the utility of waste they generate. Despite spending 30 to 50% of their operational budgets on waste management, Third World cities only collect between 50 and 80% of the refuse generated (Bernstein, 1993). Sustainable approaches to waste management emphasize waste reduction from the generation point, recycling of materials and recovery of nutrients, chemicals, and energy values from the waste. These approaches substantially reduce the volume of the waste stream requiring final disposal in a sanitary landfill, which implies reduced waste-transport cost and a prolonging of the life span of the sanitary landfill site. Lower waste volume reaching disposal sites also means less resulting pollution.

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