



PROBLEMS AND CHALLENGES OF POURAKARMIKAS: A SAMPLE SURVEY OF BBMP, BENGALURU CITY

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ABSTRACT:

Pourakarmikas also called as civic workers, sanitation workers, scavengers, SafaiKarmacharis or sewage workers are facing many of the problems and challenges associated with their castes as well as their occupations in society. Hence, the present study has been made to explore the problems and challenges faced by Pourakarmikas working under Bruhat Bangalore MahanagarPalike (BBMP), Bengaluru. Total 125 Pourakarmikas were surveyed using interview schedules. It is found that, majority of them are suffering from different health problems. Even almost all of them are facing social problems such as alienation, discrimination, social exclusion and even untouchability. Hence, it is suggested to the people and society to under importance of their work which increase cleanliness and healthy environment and indirectly maintain public health and view them with social equality, adequate status and respect. Further, it is suggested to BBMP to provide healthcare facilities to Pourakarmikas along with safety tools and security measures.



KEYWORDS: BBMP, sanitation workers, scavengers, SafaiKarmacharis or sewage workers.

INTRODUCTION:

In the context of traditional Hindu society, Dalit status has often been historically associated with occupations regarded as ritually impure, such as any involving in leatherwork, butchering or removal of rubbish, animal carcasses and waste. Dalits work as manual labourers cleaning streets, latrines and sewers. Engaging in these activities was considered to be polluting to the individual and this pollution was considered contagious.

After independence, some scheduled castes have successfully integrated into urban Indian society, where caste origins are less obvious and less important in public life. In rural India, however, caste origins are more readily apparent and scheduled castes often remain excluded from local religious life, though some qualitative evidence suggests that its severity is fast diminishing. Still, few of the scheduled castes working as Pourakarmikas under Municipal Corporations are facing some of the problems associated with their castes and occupation such as social discrimination, alienation, exploitation and so on. In recent decades, urbanization has become a widespread trend in developing countries with rapid economic development. As a result of urbanization, the large population concentrated in cities has caused many sanitation problems, including a lot of garbage, dirty streets and

blocked drains, which greatly increase the sanitation workers' workload and working hours. Sanitation workers or Pourakarmikas (in Kannada) are responsible for cleanliness and maintenance of the environment. Sanitation workers or Pourakarmikas perform a valuable service to their communities collecting garbage and removing it to proper disposal areas such as dumps or landfills. They go by many names: garbage man, trash man, Pourakarmika. A Sanitation worker must be physically fit, so that he can quickly climb in and out of large trucks and lift heavy trash containers. The job is physically demanding. Sanitation workers routinely lift heavy objects and work in all weather conditions. There is also a significant injury risk associated with the job. Doing natural and manmade disasters, sanitation workers participate in emergency response and clean up (Sophia and Pavithra, 2017).

The obnoxious and inhuman occupation of manually removing night soil and filth using their hand is called "manual scavenging". The occupation has remained intact with the Dalit communities dictated and forced upon by the caste system. The forms of manual scavenging and cleaning of human excreta have changed over the period of time both in rural and urban areas. However, the practice of inhuman and derogatory occupation of manual scavenging continues under different forms and manner. " In order to operate and maintain the increased underground sewer systems, a new-breed of manual scavengers of Municipal Waste Water Workers or Sewere workers are begin to arising in Indian Municipalities" and other local bodies'. These sewer workers are being utilized in removal of clogged gutters, storm water drains, sewer manholes and septic tanks, etc. Owing to the urbanization in India, numerous manifolds of sewer workers are getting arising lively and their occupation is in doldrums (Meenakshi Sundaram, 2012).

As per the annual report of the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Government of India 2009, there are 7,70,338 manual scavengers and their dependents in India. In another estimate, 1.2 million Pourakarmikas are working in India, whose work is sanitation and cleaning of our environment. They include sanitary workers, scavengers, road cleaners, etc.

The Pourakarmikas are suffering occupational health problems. Chellamma, et al (2015) described that, Pourakarmikas suffer from skin diseases, respiratory and gastrointestinal problems, eye and ear infections and accidental injuries. Most of these diseases (water borne, air borne, contact) are found to have exposure pathways and most injuries have contact pathways (Hepatitis B virus- HBV), human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), tetanus. They are poor with lower irregular income and even many of them are facing social barriers such as social discrimination, alienation and even untouchability. Surprisingly, none of the studies were made to look into the socio-economic conditions, problems and challenges of Pourakarmikas and it is proposed to study the problems and challenges faced by Pourakarmikas in Bruhat Bangalore Municipal Corporation (BBMP), Bengaluru.

Objectives of the Study:

Primarily the study is aims to explore the problems and challenges faced by Pourakarmikas working under BBMP in Bengaluru city. As the Pourakarmikas due to their occupations, facing many of the health problems, it is aimed to look into the health conditions and problems of Pourakarmikas. As the Pourakarmikas belongs to weaker sections or lower castes and even they are engaged in occupations, which are treated as impure, they are facing problems such as discrimination, alienation, social exclusion, etc and it is aimed to intervene into the social problems faced by Pourakarmikas.

Methodology and Limitations:

Realizing the problems and challenges faced by Pourakarmikas as revealed from many of the studies that were made across different parts of India, the present study is made on the problems and challenges faced by Pourakarmikas working under Bruhat Bangalore Municipal Corporation (BBMP). There are 198 Wards under BBMP and to maintain the cleanliness of the city, there are 2500 Permanent Pourakarmikas and around 15000 Pourakarmikas are recruited on contract basis. A sample survey of 5% that is, 125 Pourakarmikas has been made to explore the problems and challenges faced by them using interview schedule. The collected primary data has been analysed, interpreted and discussed as under.

Analysis, Interpretation and Discussion:

The collected primary data on the problems and challenges of Pourakarmikas working under BBMP is analysed, interpreted and discussed as under. It is revealed that, some of the Pourakarmikas surveyed are facing many types of problems. Particularly, as stated by all the Pourakarmikas 85 (68.0%) are facing social discrimination or alienation from the people, 32 (25.6%) are facing restrictions to enter into public places, 18 (14.4%) of them are also facing untouchability, even though it is banned by law, 41 (32.8%) of the Pourakarmikas are facing inferior or lower treatment at religious, cultural and public functions, 11 (8.8%) are also facing atrocities from higher castes and only 14 (11.2%) are not facing any of such embarrassing situations in their life. It shows that, the occupation of Pourakarmikas has become menace for their personal and family respect, status, freedom and equality. Even though, untouchability has been banned by law, still few of the Pourakarmikas are facing such problem due to their occupation. In this context, it is suggested to the Government to intervene into the problems of Pourakarmikas and pass legislations to curb discrimination, alienation and exploitation of Pourakarmikas. Even it is suggested to the BBMP to frame rules against such problems faced by Pourakarmikas in society.

Suggestions from the Study:

From the above discussion, it is clear that, Pourakarmikas working in BBMP are facing many of the problems and challenges. Hence, it is suggested to BBMP to provide safety and security tools and measures for the protection of health of Pourakarmikas and such tools include face masks, sanitizers, hand gloves, fully cover shoes, helmets and so on. It is suggested to provide free healthcare facilities for Pourakarmikas and their family members along with paid leave and free medicines. The people and society have to understand that, Pourakarmikas are also human beings and their occupation is holy as they are cleaning the environment to provide clean and healthy life of all people in society. Realizing the same, it is suggested to people and society to give equal respect to Pourakarmikas. It is also suggested to the Government to strictly implement and pass legislations to curb social inequality, social discrimination, exclusion, untouchability, alienation and neglect of the Pourakarmikas in civil society.

CONCLUSION:

The work and job of Pourakarmikas is to be appreciated as they are making their best efforts to maintain environment clean and healthy. Even though, they are suffering from poor health conditions, irrespective of day or night, they are engaged in cleaning work. Even though, entire world has under lock down during Covid19 period and under work restrictions, the Pourakarmikas were active in their cleaning work so as to protect the people and society from spread of corona disease. Still, the people neglect the dedicated service and importance of the Pourakarmikas in forming clean and healthy environment. Hence, it is essential on the part of the people and society to give equal status and respect and appreciate the work of Pourakarmikas. Realizing their dedicated services for clean, healthy and disease-free environment, it is suggested to BBMP to provide job security, fair wages and attractive salary, leave, flexible working hours, medical and healthcare facilities, educational facilities for the children of Pourakarmikas and such other facilities. It is suggested to BBMP to organize free healthcare camps for the Pourakarmikas at least twice in a year, where there is need to provide free medical check-up, free medicine, free prescriptions and adequate medical leave for the healthcare of Pourakarmikas.

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