



## CHALLENGES OF SAFAI KARMACHARIS IN INDIA: A SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY

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### ABSTRACT :

*The concept safai karmachari refers to the workers normally who carried out the work of all types. Normally the safai karmacharis are found in the municipalities and the corporations and most of them involved in the cleaning work. The cleaning work involves wet waste and sweeping the streets, collecting garbage, cleaning drains, septic tanks and such other dirty full works are involve in the safai karmachari work. Among the works this work is of lower status. Normally lower caste and women are involved in this work. Traditionally these caste people were constrained to do this kind of cleaning the streets and the community (Shaha G 2004).*



**KEYWORD :** *collecting garbage, cleaning drains, septic tanks.*

### INTRODUCTION:

Adding to this the work group safai karmacharis are coming to this work not because of economic reason, it is a complex issue, it involves the social issues like caste status. Normally the safai karmacharis come from the lower caste strata they are expected to practice the system of untouchability , they are socially not allowed to touch the forward caste people in the society(Khurana, I., & Ojha, T. 2009 ).

The studies conducted on the safai karmacharis and the municipal workers those who clean the city indicates that most of the studies found that the labours are female.

In the modern days the waste in the family life and in the other open road side the waste is increasing day by day. Even after applying the modern technologies and machineries to maintain clean of the city the need for safai karmachari has become inevitable to maintain the cities clean. At the one side on rule the government has banned the manual scavengers in making clean as such the government has stopped appointing the manual scavengers and at the same time the other private agencies those who have taken contract of cleaning are appointing the manual scavengers on contract or daily wages basis. In the other way the manual cleaning has not stopped. This evil practice is prevailing in other way. In another way the cleaning of the streets and such other cleaning of the city also has taken up by the contractors and those contractors are appointing the manual labours for cleaning on contract or daily wages basis. The work of safai karmacharis is filthy one. It does not have any cleanliness and as such this work is considered as most lower one in the society. For instance Sabde Y D and Zodpey S P (2008) , Chellamma et.al (2015) in their study found that a majority of the workers in the municipalities are women. In the other studies the authors found that the workers are women

and at the same time they belongs to scheduled caste buddist , Kodlak et, al.(2019), Noronha et al (2019). These studies indicates that the work is unclean and with low status is majority are from lower strata of the society

### **METHODOLOGY:**

The present study was carried out in Gulbarga city, Karnataka. The respondents are the safai karmacharis of city corporation of Gulbarga City Corporation. In some of the wards of the Gulbarga city corporation the respondents were interviewed on purposeful method. The researcher when entered the field the workers to whom can be contacted or who are on the field are randomly interviewed and the data are tabulated in the table form and are presented in the following paragraphs.

### **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION:**

The present study includes in all 70 female respondents working as sweepers, safai karmacharis in the city corporation of Gulbarga. The findings of the study indicate that nearly half of the respondents are from middle aged group, that is (33)47.14 percent of the respondents come from the age group of 31 to 45 years of age. Further, the data on the age group of the respondents indicates that nearly one fourth of the respondents that is about (17)24.28 percent of them from the age group of 41 to 50 years of age. At the same time (16) 22.86 percentage and (4) 5.71 percent of the respondents respectively comes from the age group of 51 years of age and above. The study also indicates that a majority of the respondents come from rural background. All are having with very low educational grades or educational achievements. They all are that is more than 93 percent of them come from nuclear families. All of them are that is 92 percent of them are married.

Coming to the habits of the safai karmacharis a majority of the respondents that is 91 percent of the women safai karmacharis are not having alcoholic habits. Whereas about one fourth of the respondents that is 23 percent of them are having tobacco chewing habits. It is significant to note that all the safai karmacharis are dalits by caste.

The findings of the study indicate that none of the respondents have given the safety apparatus to protect themselves from the infections and to protect themselves from such other communicable diseases. It's mandatory in the manual of the safai karmacharis that the women safai karmacharis have to provide sarees at the work place like uniform, they will have to provide hand gloves , masks, cap to cover the head, shoes, raincoats during rainy season, sweater during winter and cotton cloths during summer, and soaps to wash the hands and soaps for bathing. These are the some of the minimum facilities that the women safai karmacharis have to provide. All the local self governments those who appoints these workers must provide all these minimum facilities. The study identifies that in spite of involving them in the risky works in most of the cases the safai karmachari workers are not provided with the safety measures and the minimum facilities that they must be provided as per the norms.

### **CHALLENGES OF THE SAFAI KARMACHARIS**

During covid 19 pandemic period the safai karmacharis worked hard putting their own life under risk. As the most of the safai karmacharis are undereducated a majority of the workers were not received proper instructions to handle the waste during the pandemic period. The risk of their life was the challenge for the safai karmacharis during this period.

During this period there is not only risk of the safai karmacharis but also the risk of spreading covid to the family members as these safai karmacharis were not given proper instructions of medical checkup during that period.

During covid period they were having the risk of handling the unmarked , unsafe medical waste from the hospitals and even in the colonies where the covid patients were quarantined . They were having the risk of infection and the same rate of risk to their family members also.

While cleaning the wards and the other area most of the time they were not provided with the safety tools and even proper uniforms also.

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These are the some of the key challenges of the safai karmacharis during covid time and even other than covid time also they are facing lot of challenges pertaining to their safety and health.

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