

Callous Neglect towards Manual Scavengers: A Study through Basha Singh's Unseen: The Truth about India's Manual Scavenges

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Abstract

Why manual scavengers are not treated as other citizens of the nation, this paper torches in to the problems faced by manual scavenges through the work's of Basha Singh Unseen ; The truth about India's Manual Scavenges . The development of nation mainly depends up on the immaculate surroundings and clean atmosphere, so that every government in India is giving importance to the cleanliness, as it is the present government also chanting the slogan "Swachh Bharat "but the real heroes of this mission is scavengers, who are working hard for preserving our nation clean and tidy, in fact most disappointed think is that they are callously neglected by the government as well as the entire nation.

KEYWORDS: Callous, Negligence, Swachh Bharat, Mission, Manual scavengers

They are treated as lower section of society and destined to lead life without dignity. Manual Scavenging in India is officially (by Asian Human Rights Commission) "defined as lifting and removal of human excreta manually". In a nut shell the practice makes them to clean human excreta from individual or community dry latrines with bare hands, brooms or metal scrapers in to woven baskets or bukets. For a genuine human being it is really heartbroken to think the deplorable condition of these people, apart from afore said works they are impetuously assigned to collect, carry and dispose excreta from sewers, septic tanks, drains and railway tracks.

As per the Indian constitution Manual Scavenging work is strictly banned in the Nation, in fact the practice is widely followed. The job of Manual Scavengers and construction of Dry Latrines (prohibition) act was passed in 1993 and it defines 'Manual Scavenger as a person engaged in or employed for manually carrying human excreta. It is an irony that after decades of independence, it was in the year 1993 and latest in 2013 that the Government of India has passed a dedicated legislation to ban the inhuman and degrading practice of manual Scavengers and their rehabilitation act, 2013 gives a detailed definition of Manual scavenger

A person engaged or employed, at the commencement of this act or at any time thereafter , by an individual or local authority or an agency or a contractor , for manually cleaning , carrying , disposing of, or otherwise handing in any manner , human excreta in an insanitary latrine or in an open drain or pit into which the human excreta form the insanitary latrines is disposed of, or on railway track or in such other spaces or premises ,as the central government or sate government may notify, before the excreta fully decompose in such manner as may be prescribed.....

In fact after the implementation of this law there is no much change in the attitude of people towards them , the irony is that largest violated of this law is the people who

implement it , the Indian railway who using these people to clean the passengers excreta during the time of train running

Through the words of Gandhi one can understand the hardship of manual scavengers

I may not be born again if it happens,

I will like to be born into a family of Manual scavengers

So that ,I may relieve them of the inhuman unhealthy and hateful practice of carrying night soil.

Through the above quote one can understand how disgraceful job is doing by the manual scavenges, when the nation has made tremendous progress in human development in India there exist a community which make its living by carrying human excreta and servicing the nation with baggage of their caste identity. The most astonishing thing is the people who are working without considering their health issues for making our nation as clean and immaculate are assaulted and greeted with communally abusive words and making derogatory remarks as untouchables.

The reasons behind they remained as manual scavengers are their birth and hereditary , most of the time the upper class people ignoring the fact that they are also human being with flush and all human instinct and treating them as like animals. Even the government is not taking any necessary steps to resist this inhuman activity against Manual scavenges.

Manual scavenging is a profession which has been in existence since the human civilization and its compartmentalization into Varna system in India. Theories about the origins of scavenger cast may vary. The practice of manual scavenging in India dates back to ancient time. According to Rig Veda each and every person is classified in to different classes primarily according to their occupation. The four Varna Brahmins (the priestly and intellectual class society), Kshatriyas (the warriors), Vaisyas (the bureaucrats and merchants), and Shudras (the downtrodden class) formed the caste hierarchy. The Shudras or these downtrodden societies were called “Bhangi” and in Hindi means “trash” being imposed as untouchable, they were forced to do most heinous jobs of that society by handling the human shift.

Caste system entailed life degradation for Dalits. It is deeply unfortunate that we still have that practice in existence even though three thousand years have passed since manual scavenging was introduced. Manual scavengers victimize most discriminatory practices and they experience lifestyles that are hard to fathom to citizens of a first world nation. However during the olden times, especially three thousand years back, when we did not have the modern facilities of today, then it made a sense to certain extent. This was time when life morality was high and death was always around the corner. And there were no separate sewer system, bathrooms no systematic collection of waste and it causes chance for disease. In way , as it prevented the spread of disease and bacteria , segregating the people who would take out the waste was not entirely illogical. But as we live this sophisticated era it may not make any sense to see still people like manual scavengers

There are those who don't wish to see Bhasha Singh, the author of *Unseen : The Truth about India's Manual Scavengers* an eye opening book shares some horrifying truth about the Manual Scavengers and Manual Scavenging India . since he has written extensively on the issue of manual scavenging and famers suicide in north India , her book is way of showing that even after more than sixty years of independence , the illegal and I inhuman practice of manual scavenging remains a dark spot of shame in the sphere of social governance . Even the plain black cover of the book with a little engraved in a big red font is sign of protest, a sign of the plight of the manual scavengers of India in fact still there are some social movements India who vehemently raising their voice to resist this heinous and degrading practice

The depiction of Manual Scavengers in the book of Basha Singh clearly helps one to understand the hardships and struggling of Manual Scavengers to keep body and soul alive. The people who are living in urban area doesn't know the heinous works adverse impact in Manual Scavengers and if they come to know it might be a shock that how widespread the practice of manual scavengers is taking place on daily basis across India today. As this job confined them in the prison of caste system and firmly maintained by an uninteresting, unseeing democratic society. The author herself often mentions the terrific nature of the experience while she journeyed across eleven sates meeting manual scavengers different in languages, dress, customs, and their attitude to the hope of the liberation, but united by the dehumanizing nature of their work and the caste enforced blight on the entire community.

Sing gives a vivid picture of their struggle and emphasizes the need to wipe out manual scavenging as earliest as possible. She sketches lives of manual scavengers with utmost sensitivity. The wholesome treatment given to the book is one of highlights of this book

The health hazard of this occupation is beyond ones imagination. One examines the causes behind the deplorable condition of the Manual Scavengers are lack of hygienic standards unsafe environments in many regions of this country, especially in rural areas. These workers set inside storm water drains and sewer lines to clean them and mostly without any safety gear. Despite several court directives to equip the standard of living as well as job of Manual scavenger's government still ignoring all these directives. The people are keen to discriminate others on the basis of the caste, creed, color, the money which one owes rather than humanity elements one posses.

The death rate of manual scavengers increasing day by day due this hazards working conditions. As per the union ministry of social justice and empowerment, five manual scavengers died in the capital between 2014 and 2016. In 2017 may , between march and May 15 , about forty such deaths have been reported from various parts of the country.

Life of manual scavengers is at risk at every stage. Apart from the social atrocities that these workers face, they are exposed to certain health problems based on their occupation. Getting exposed to deadly disease such Hydrogen Sulphide and Methone. Scavengers were exposed to certain health Hazards like Cardiovascular degeneration , infections like hepatists, leptospirors and helicobactor , skin problems , respiratory system problems and altered pulmonary function parameters. Chronic skin disease and

long disease very common among women Manual Scavengers. Their working conditions have got virtually unchanged all over the century.

Evolved with evolution of caste system, scavengers have only one opportunity now and then to clean the filth of other. and now it is continuing in our county from Kashmir to Kanyakumari, it passes from generation to generation and continue to exist in India, despite being unacceptable and hazards as method of disposal of human waste, despite technological and scientific advancement on various fronts that saves Manual labor, and despite the availability of simple and low cost alternatives which can eradicate the twin problems of Manual Scavengers and safe disposal of human excreta. Manual Scavenging is not only a violation of human rights but also disgrace to human dignity and humanity at large.

Unseen torches into the bitter stories of thousands of people who are living across the nation. These people are destined to do this heinous task and confined by the walls of human crap , it also bring into light social and legal aspects regarding the issues.

Singh,s Unseen gives an head over heels details of Manual scavenging and deals with the everyday life of those involved in this practice.

More than ninety five percentage of those employed as Manual Scavengers are Dalit , especially Dalit women . Singh began her search in 2003 and continued it for ten years to find unlucky Manual Scavengers who neither heard of the law nor has the rehabilitation reached them. While going through the lives of manual scavengers in India, one can feel and understand the horrible condition of Manual Scavengers. The author gives a heart rending account of their struggle and also brings forth the need to abolish Manual Scavenging at the earliest . his book's all single pages giving us a shocking revelation.

The author met Shiela from one of the precise localities of Patna, the capital city of Bihar. Shila was four months pregnant and her distressing words certainly makes our eyes welled up with tears.

Pulling her pallu over her head, shila said in a dull voice.

My husband does not have any work too. Where things get tight, I hve to go and pic the steaming the tears in her eyes, Shiela said, who wishes to do this disgusting work but your belly makes you do everything since I have come of age I have been doing this work. I am pregnant now. Doing this work in this condition makes one horribly nauseous. There is also the fear that something may go wrong . but what to do I did not get any other work . I left this work a year ago, but the stench has not left me

If one reads the book of Singh can understand there are so many Manual Scavengers as like shiela. To rescue scavengers from the tyranny of the social system in which one man's excreta is another man's head loads. Many initiatives have been taken by government in fact the issue of the manual scavengers has not been eradicated effectively. Whatever the steps has been taken to enhance the living condition of Manual Scavengers the violence and abuse against Dalits, particularly Manual Scavengers is endemic and unceasing. Before raising developmental propaganda, its high time government should implement fast track actions to completely wipe off these stain, which

have affected the backward classes of society. Singh's unseen is really an eye opener of people who callously neglecting the manual scavengers.

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