
CRITICAL ANALYSIS ON MANUAL SCAVENGING IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

There are serious health and environmental hazards associated with manual scavenging, which is the process of cleaning and clearing waste excrement from drains and sewage systems by hand. Workers in the unorganized sector continue to perform this dangerous labour in spite of the existence of regulatory structures intended to eradicate such activities. In order to determine whether manual scavenging has become less common over time, this research will look at its current state. It will go into the negative consequences of this work as well as the social and economic forces that force people to take on these responsibilities. Even though the Indian Constitution and other laws have been put in place to stop manual scavenging and aid in the rehabilitation of people who engage in it, underprivileged populations frequently find themselves caught in a vicious cycle of prejudice and poverty. Many are used by private organizations and local government agencies to unclog drains and sewers that are choked with trash and plastic waste. This practice has significant human rights ramifications, posing significant queries on the livelihoods and dignity of these workers. To address their predicament and guarantee that their rights and welfare are given top priority in both policy and practice, a comprehensive strategy is required.

Keywords: Manual scavenging, Manual scavengers, Hazardous work, Drains, dry latrines, schemes, policies, illegal.

INTRODUCTION:

In India, manual scavenging has a long history and is strongly associated with caste and community-based labour practices. Due in significant part to people's caste and economic standing, this system still exists. Many members of underprivileged populations are forced to perform this dangerous labour, which feeds the cycle of prejudice and poverty. Although the practice was prohibited in 1993, making the employment of manual scavengers to clean dry toilets illegal, the 2013 legislation expanded the scope to include unsanitary latrines, pits, and ditches¹.

The historical causes, societal effects, and efficacy of legal initiatives to eradicate manual scavenging are all examined in this analysis of the complicated problem. It looks at how poverty and caste support the continuation of this risky profession, which frequently leaves people with few other options. The report also discusses the serious health hazards and violations of human rights that are a part of this exploitative practice. We can gain a better understanding of the ongoing issues and possible avenues for significant reform by placing manual scavenging within India's larger socioeconomic and political framework, including a review of current laws such as the Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act. The development of long-term solutions that not only end manual scavenging but also promote social justice and give impacted communities their dignity back depends on this investigation.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

The core objectives of the study are,

1. To determine how to stop manual scavenging and restore the impacted livelihoods.
2. To improve the application of specific laws meant to stop this kind of work.
3. To look into the reasons and reasons why manual scavengers still perform this labor at the ground level.

¹ Chirali sharma, Tracking The History Of Manual Scavenging In India And Its 2017 Existence (July.12,2017), Tracking The History Of Manual Scavenging In India And Its 2017 Existence

4. To evaluate the state's efforts to end manual scavenging and their results throughout the last ten years.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

The doctrinal component entails a careful analysis of current laws, regulations, and scholarly works pertaining to manual scavenging. This entails examining important laws like the Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and Their Rehabilitation Act, 2013, as well as pertinent court decisions and official documents. The objective is to evaluate how well these regulations handle the difficulties associated with manual scavenging and to pinpoint any areas where enforcement and implementation are lacking. A legal framework for comprehending the rights of manual scavengers and the obligations of different stakeholders will be established with the aid of this analysis.

The non-doctrinal component is centered on obtaining qualitative information by interviewing a small number of members of the general population. The purpose of the structured questions is to investigate how the general public views manual scavenging, their awareness of its societal ramifications, and their thoughts on government efforts to eradicate it. By capturing a range of opinions and societal attitudes, this method seeks to offer a grassroots perspective on the problem.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

Srivastava (2014) offers a perceptive viewpoint on the 1960s and 1970s sanitation habits of people living in old Delhi. He draws attention to the glaring purity-pollution gap between his family's dry latrines and his wealthy classmates' pour-flush latrines using a technique he refers to as "memory" ethnography. He also observes that the householders and male and female scavengers interact differently, with the latter being more friendly with women. According to Srivastava, calling scavenging "honorable" helps to defend and uphold the dominant classes' ideology, guaranteeing the survival of the current system.

Using a range of sources and perspectives, Drs. Kusum Chauhan and Lalit Dadwal (2021) give a thorough analysis of manual scavenging in India. The paper highlights the complex interactions between legal, social, and economic elements that support the practice. Its in-depth analysis of the legislative and regulatory framework and its recommendation for a

multifaceted strategy to address the problem are two of its main advantages. It would, however, profit from a more thorough examination of the results of governmental programs and non-governmental organization interventions. In the end, the paper does a good job of highlighting how widespread manual scavenging is in spite of legislative restrictions and how urgently thorough and ongoing efforts are needed to end this cruel activity.

A thorough technique for surveying manual scavengers is laid out in the Standard Operating Procedure Survey on Manual Scavengers in Statutory Towns (GOI, 2013), which places a strong emphasis on technology use, community interaction, and transparency. In order to achieve a thorough and precise identification process, its multi-phase methodology clearly defines roles and duties for different stakeholders. However, correct execution and the dedication of all stakeholders are critical to the document's efficacy. There are still issues like the possibility of underreporting and the dependence on self-declaration. It would be beneficial to have an updated version that takes into account the latest technical developments and best practices.

CAUSES OF MANUAL SCAVENGING IN INDIA:

In India, manual scavenging persists because of a combination of historical, social, economic, and infrastructure problems. Because of the stigma and hostility surrounding their occupation, manual scavengers have a hard time finding other jobs.

Manual scavenging occurs and goes unreported even in major cities like Bengaluru, Chennai, and Mumbai. Despite the establishment of helplines by several state governments to report instances of manual scavenging, the reaction has been insufficient. Septic tanks and open drains are still common in many latrines nationwide, requiring routine human cleaning. People nevertheless frequently opt to use human scavengers even though state governments are offering suction equipment to municipal corporations as a more efficient substitute.

Antiquated Sanitation Systems

Dry latrines and antiquated sewage systems that require human cleaning are still prevalent in many areas. This problem is particularly prevalent in rural and older urban areas.

Caste-Based Prejudice

Because of ingrained social structures, marginalized communities have historically been forced into manual scavenging, which has been linked to the caste system. The practice is still maintained by this discrimination.

Lack of alternatives and poverty

A large number of manual scavengers are from low-income families and lack access to education, skill development, and other employment options. Because they have few other options, manual scavenging frequently seems to be their sole option for survival.

Absence of Enforcement

Despite the fact that hand scavenging is illegal, enforcement of the law is usually insufficient. Due to a lack of understanding or as a cost-cutting strategy, local governments and contractors could keep using manual scavengers.

Stigma in Society

People who want to quit manual scavenging may find it difficult to find other jobs or reintegrate into society because of the stigma attached to this practice. This leads to a vicious loop that keeps people in this line of work.

Understanding how these causes are related to and support one another is crucial. To effectively combat manual scavenging, a thorough strategy that addresses each of these problems is needed.

CONSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORKS:

The Indian Constitution provides a framework for addressing this issue through several significant clauses. The following summarizes the connection between those articles and manual scavenging:

Underprivileged groups are often subjected to manual scavenging, which is a fundamental violation of **Article 14** (Equality before the law). Since Article 14 guarantees that everyone is treated equally under the law, regardless of caste or social background, the practice is unconstitutional.

Equal opportunity in situations pertaining to public employment is covered by Article 16: The risky and dehumanizing nature of manual scavenging contrasts sharply with the promise of equal opportunity in the workplace. **Article 16** aims to offer other sources of income to those who are involved in this activity.

Article 17 (Abolition of Untouchability) expressly forbids manual scavenging, which is an obvious manifestation of untouchability.

Social stigma and denial of basic human rights under **Article 19** (Protection of Certain Rights Regarding Freedom of Speech, etc.) are commonplace among manual scavengers. People can defend their rights and criticize the practice thanks to the freedom of speech and expression protected by Article 19.

Protection of Life and Personal Liberty (**Article 21**): (The hazardous conditions of manual scavenging pose a major threat to human life and liberty. Article 21's promise of a safe and healthy environment is flagrantly violated by this behavior.

Under **Article 23** (Prohibition of Trafficking in Human Beings and Forced Labor), manual scavenging frequently amounts to forced labor due to socioeconomic factors. Coercing someone into doing something is illegal since Article 23 forbids forced labor.

The right to labour, education, and public aid in specific situations is guaranteed under **Article 41**, which instructs the State to protect these rights. This essay is essential for giving people impacted by manual scavenging alternate sources of income and educational opportunities.

Article 42 (Provision for maternity leave and fair and decent working conditions): The conditions involved in manual scavenging are incredibly unsanitary and cruel. Manual scavenging obviously falls short of the equitable and humane working conditions required by Article 42.

The necessity to uplift underprivileged communities—from which manual scavengers are primarily recruited—is emphasized in **Article 46**, "Promotion of Educational and Economic Interests of Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and Other Weaker Sections." Breaking the cycle of this behavior requires both economic empowerment and education.

Article 47 (The State's obligation to improve public health, raise living standards, and improve nutrition): Scavenging by hand poses a major risk to public health. This practice must be stopped because Article 47 requires the State to enhance public health.

The National Commission for Scheduled Castes, which is established under **Article 338**, can be extremely helpful in keeping an eye on and resolving the problems that manual scavengers, who are mostly members of this community, experience.

LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK :

In recognition of the pressing need to combat this cruel practice, India has taken major legislative steps to ban manual scavenging. An overview of the major laws passed over the years is shown below:

1. The Civil Rights Protection Act of 1955 (Revised in 1977)

- Focus: Untouchability is addressed.
- Important attributes:

Untouchability-related offenses are punishable by law but not by compounding.

Low-cost sanitation programs were introduced to replace dry latrines with flush toilets.

2. The 1993 Act Prohibiting the Construction of Dry Latrines and the Employment of Manual Scavengers

- Focus: Prohibits manual scavenging specifically.
- Important attributes:

Using manual scavengers is a crime that can be prosecuted.

Assigns accountability for maintaining hygienic restrooms to the government, individuals, and institutions.

3. The 2013 Rehabilitation and Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers Act

- Overview: The most thorough law pertaining to manual scavenging.
- Important attributes:
 - A. Prohibitions: Manual scavenger employment is forbidden and punishable by law.
 - B. Rehabilitation Mandate: States are required to locate and rehabilitate manual scavengers by offering them shelter, financing, training, and help.
 - C. Unsanitary Latrines: Prohibits the establishment and upkeep of unsanitary, dry latrines and holds local governments accountable for their conversion or removal.

Specific Offenses and Penalties:

Section 5: Prohibits the use of manual scavengers and the building or upkeep of unsanitary latrines; Section 6: Nullifies any prior agreements for the use of manual scavengers and imposes no compensation.

Section 8:

First-time offenders: ₹50,000 in fines and/or a maximum sentence of one year in jail.

Repeat offenders face a fine of up to ₹1 lakh and/or two years in prison.

Section 7: Prohibits dangerous septic tank or sewer cleaning.

Section 9:

First-time offenders: ₹2 lakh in fines and/or up to 2 years in jail.

Repeat offenders face a fine of up to ₹5 lakh and/or a maximum sentence of five years in prison.

MANUAL SCAVENGING'S IMPACT FROM DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES:

1. HUMAN RIGHTS AND MANUAL SCAVENGING:

Inhumane treatment and a serious breach of human dignity are shown in manual scavenging. It poses a basic query: how is it possible for a human being to clean up someone

else's waste? It is crucial to comprehend the vulnerability and way of life of those doing this activity. In 2021, National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) of India advocated for the term to include other types of hazardous cleaning.²

Putting ourselves in their shoes—cleaning dry, hygienic restrooms—should force us to recognize the immense challenges these people encounter. It highlights how vital it is to promote their wellbeing. Regardless of economic condition, gender, color, caste, or class, everyone deserves protection. This includes the right to a life free from exploitation and dangerous labor, one that is both safe and dignified. It serves as a sobering reminder of the enormous divide between the rich and the underprivileged.

Even if human rights have been expanded and clarified on a worldwide scale, there is still a big enforcement vacuum in unorganized areas like manual scavenging. The act of manually cleaning pits and transporting waste over long distances constitutes a severe form of mistreatment that must be addressed. The work is regarded as a dehumanizing practice ³

The use of contemporary, secure, and respectable sanitation methods is essential to ending this reprehensible behavior. We must acknowledge that manual scavenging is a human rights disaster that demands immediate and thorough response, not just a sanitation problem.

2. RISK TO HEALTH FROM MANUAL SCAVENGING:

People who perform the dangerous and degrading task of manually cleaning human feces are known as manual scavengers. They come into intimate touch with human waste and other dangerous materials in this line of work, which exposes them to numerous serious health risks.

The possibility of catching infectious infections is one of the main risks they encounter. For example, cholera is a bacterial infection that, if left untreated, can cause severe dehydration and even death. Manual scavengers are regularly exposed to contaminated water sources, which are typically linked to it. In a similar vein, if treatment is not received, typhoid fever, which is brought on by the *Salmonella typhi* bacteria, can cause a protracted disease marked

² "NHRC recommends special Act against manual scavenging". Hindustan Times. 5 January 2021. Retrieved 31 January 2021

³ "Manual scavengers: Shit hits our head in manholes, our co-workers have died". The Probe. 29 November 2021. Retrieved 30 November 2021.

by a high temperature, stomach pain, and major consequences. Another risk is hepatitis, especially hepatitis A and E, which are viral illnesses that are spread by tainted food or water, both of which are prevalent in places where manual scavenging takes place. Additionally, working in poorly ventilated environments exposes manual scavengers to airborne pathogens and harmful chemicals, increasing their risk of respiratory infections, which can result in illnesses like chronic bronchitis and pneumonia.

These health risks are greatly increased when protective gear is not worn. Due to their lack of basic safety gear, such as boots, masks, and gloves, many manual scavengers are susceptible to illnesses and injuries. These hazards are increased by the lack of sanitation products, such as sanitizers and disinfectants, which makes it harder for them to maintain any semblance of hygiene.

Working conditions are frequently appalling, with inadequate infrastructure and poor sanitation. Manual scavengers are more likely to come into contact with hazardous waste and poisonous materials since they are often placed in settings without adequate waste management procedures. This increases their risk of both short-term health problems and long-term health problems brought on by repeated exposure to dangerous substances.

These health risks have serious repercussions. A higher frequency of infections is experienced by many manual scavengers, which with time may result in chronic health issues. Skin infections, lung conditions, and gastrointestinal problems are common complaints, all of which are made worse by the nature of their jobs. Manual scavengers are more likely to die young as a result of the combined consequences of these health hazards. Many of these workers do not receive early medical help for their ailments due to a lack of access to adequate healthcare services, which exacerbates their health crisis.

The health hazards that manual scavengers must deal with are numerous and quite worrisome. Their general well-being is impacted by a confluence of health risks brought on by their exposure to infectious diseases, lack of protective equipment, unfavorable working circumstances, and limited access to healthcare. Restoring dignity to a profession that has long been vilified and marginalized depends on addressing these challenges as well as improving their health results. To guarantee that their rights, safety, and health are given first priority, comprehensive measures are required.

3. PUBLIC ASPECTS AND SOCIAL DIFFICULTIES:

There is a significant societal stigma associated with manual scavenging. People who do this work frequently experience prejudice, rejection, and denial of chances, education, and basic necessities, which keeps them stuck in a cycle of poverty and exclusion. The work itself exposes people to a number of infectious infections, respiratory problems, and skin ailments, all of which pose serious health hazards. Accidents and fatalities are also possible due to the dangerous conditions found in septic tanks and sewers. Manual scavengers are one of the most socially and economically underprivileged communities in India⁴.

Key concerns include poverty and a lack of alternative sources of income. Many people are trapped in this circumstance because they lack the necessary education and skills, which leaves them with few options for surviving. Children of manual scavengers face limited possibilities, which feeds a cycle of poverty and social marginalization. This hardship often spans decades. Women are especially impacted, frequently experiencing more violence, discrimination, and limited access to healthcare due to their gender. Legal bans alone will not suffice to address this complex problem; comprehensive solutions are needed. Public awareness initiatives to lessen social stigma, educational and empowerment initiatives to offer substitute skills, social safety nets like healthcare and housing support, and sincere community involvement to encourage inclusivity and combat discriminatory behaviors should all be part of this. In the end, ending manual scavenging necessitates a fundamental change in public perceptions and a dedication to destroying the long-standing socioeconomic injustices that allow this cruel activity to continue.

ROLE OF JUDICIARY:

1. The Supreme Court's historic ruling in **Delhi Jal Board v. National Campaign for Dignity and Rights of Sewerage and Allied Workers**⁵ addresses the appalling working conditions faced by Delhi's sewage workers. A public interest lawsuit (PIL) was filed by the National Campaign for Dignity and Rights of Sewerage and Allied Workers to draw attention to the dangerous conditions these workers endure—often going down toxic manholes without

⁴ S P Sreya and Sigamani Panneer, Manual Scavengers and Sustainable Development, Decent Work and Economic Growth (p.671-683), (PDF) Manual Scavengers and Sustainable Development

⁵ [2011] 12 S.C.R. 34

protective gear, which frequently results in fatalities and health problems.

The Delhi High Court ordered the Delhi Jal Board (DJB) to improve worker safety after the PIL highlighted the hazardous working conditions faced by sewage workers. The High Court ordered the establishment of an oversight committee, the supply of safety gear, frequent medical examinations and free treatment for occupational illnesses, and compensation for the families of departed employee. DJB contested the High Court's rulings, arguing that contractors were ultimately responsible for safety and that the court had overreached its jurisdiction. The Supreme Court emphasized the state's constitutional obligation to protect worker safety and upheld the High Court's ruling. It made clear that even when work is outsourced, the state cannot avoid accountability. Noting that the state has a non-delegable duty to maintain safe working conditions and that the judiciary must safeguard vulnerable groups unable to vindicate their rights, the Court made important observations. It confirmed that sewage workers should be protected from exploitation by the law.

This case upholds the idea that the state bears responsibility for worker safety while also acknowledging the rights and dignity of sewage workers. It demonstrates how PILs protect underrepresented groups and reaffirms the judiciary's duty to protect everyone's fundamental rights. The Supreme Court's statement from the ruling highlights the importance of sewage workers' safety and dignity in dangerous employment, encapsulating the court's dedication to defending their rights.

2. An important turning point in the fight against the cruel practice of manual scavenging in India was the Supreme Court's 2014 ruling in **Safai Karamchari Andolan v. Union of India**⁶. This historic decision faced the unsettling fact that manual scavenging, which had its roots in the repressive caste system, continued to occur across the country in spite of previous legal attempts and constitutional promises of equality and dignity. The ruling called for revolutionary change and functioned as both a court ruling and a potent critique of society's indifference.

The ruling brought to light the harsh reality of manual scavenging—the practice of removing human waste by hand—and how it disproportionately affects the Dalit population. It recognized that systematic prejudice and economic desperation frequently prompted people to

⁶ 2014 (11) SCC 224

pursue this demeaning profession, hence sustaining social exclusion and marginalization. The Court acknowledged that manual scavenging infringes upon fundamental constitutional rights, such as the freedom from untouchability, the right to life, and the right to dignity.

The Court stressed that laws by themselves were insufficient, even though it hailed the 2013 Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act as a major accomplishment. The Court issued extensive orders to resolve the problem and urged strong enforcement and efficient implementation.

In addition to monetary compensation, it required a comprehensive rehabilitation program for manual scavengers that included education, safe housing, skill-building opportunities, and alternate sources of income. The goal was to enable people to break free from the shame and cycle of poverty connected to manual scavenging.

In recognition of the victims' severe loss and injustice, the Court additionally declared deaths brought on by manual scavenging in sewers to be a distinct, punishable offense and awarded the families hefty compensation (Rs. 10 lakhs). This was done in an effort to provide impacted families justice and discourage the risky behavior.

In recognition of the systemic failure to protect their lives, the Court also ordered the railways to take immediate action to end manual scavenging on railway tracks and ordered compensation (Rs. 10 lakhs) for the families of all people who have died while working on sewers since 1993.

The decision required strict measures against those using manual scavengers and held local authorities accountable, placing the burden of enforcing the 2013 Act on state governments and union territories. Additionally, it created easily accessible channels for redress, enabling people and groups to file complaints about the Act's execution with the appropriate authorities and High Courts.

Fundamentally, the Safai Karamchari Andolan ruling went beyond simple legality; it offered a thorough framework for ending manual scavenging, placing a strong emphasis on law enforcement, providing holistic rehabilitation, attending to past injustices, and guaranteeing accountability. This decision confirmed that the fight against manual scavenging is essentially a fight for human dignity, social fairness, and the fulfillment of the equality

guaranteed by the constitution.

3. The persistent problem of manual scavenging in India is discussed in **Dr. Balram Singh V. Union of India (2023)**, which also assesses the government's attempts to end the practice. Even though there are laws that forbid manual scavenging, such as the 1993 and 2013 Acts, the analysis shows that they are not being applied effectively. In addition to insufficient rehabilitation and compensation for manual scavengers and their families, the petitioner emphasized that this failure leads to ongoing infringement of fundamental rights, particularly Articles 15, 17, 21, 23, and 24 [15].

The Union of India responded by acknowledging certain initiatives, such as the building of restrooms and the payment of compensation, but also pointing out serious flaws in their strategy. The Union was instructed by the Supreme Court's ruling to enact more robust measures, create efficient procedures, and guarantee that current laws are appropriately enforced.

The Court also raised the compensation amount to Rs. 30 lakhs for fatalities that occur during sewer work. It emphasized how crucial it is for different committees to work together more effectively in order to eradicate manual scavenging completely and improve the welfare of those who are impacted. The decision emphasizes the necessity of an all-encompassing and successful plan to deal with the structural problems related to manual scavenging in India.

SCHEMES, THE REHABILITATION PROGRAM, AND ADDITIONAL ACTIONS MADE FOR MANUAL SCAVENGERS:

Self-Employment Program for Manual Scavenger Rehabilitation (SRMS): In January 2007, the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment created the Self Employment Scheme for Rehabilitation of Manual Scavengers (SRMS), a federal government program. By the end of the 2008–09 fiscal year, the intended goal was to rehabilitate recognized manual scavengers into alternative forms of income. The plan has changed since it was first introduced, most notably in November 2013 and again in 2020–21.

As identified manual scavengers and their families move into other professions, SRMS seeks to support them. To empower these people and help them escape the cycle of manual scavenging, the program includes a number of elements, such as cash aid, resource access, and

skill development. In addition to addressing the historical injustices connected to manual scavenging, SRMS aims to improve the dignity and standard of living for these individuals by encouraging self-employment and sustainable livelihoods.

Identification of Manual Scavengers:

The Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment identified 58,098 qualified manual scavengers through two nationwide surveys in 2013 and 2018. These surveys gathered information about caste in addition to identifying those who were involved in manual scavenging.

43,797 of the reported manual scavengers have caste-related information available. Because it illustrates the relationship between caste and the persistent practice of manual scavenging—which is frequently connected to systematic discrimination and social exclusion—this data is essential for comprehending the demographic and social components of manual scavenging in India. The information gathered from these surveys serves as a foundation for targeted interventions and policy formulations aimed at eradicating manual scavenging and rehabilitating affected individuals.⁷

These were the primary components of the SRMS as it was updated until 2020–21:

- One-time financial aid: Rs. 40,000 for manual scavengers who have been recognized.
- Financial aid: concessional loans for projects up to Rs. 15 lakh and credit-linked back-end capital subsidies up to Rs. 3.25 lakh.
- Skill development: a stipend of Rs. 3,000 per month for up to two years of training.
- Support for sanitation projects: Up to Rs. 15 lakh in loan subsidies are available for manual scavengers, sanitation workers, and their families for projects pertaining to sanitation.
- Health insurance: Ayushman Bharat (PM-JAY) Yojana coverage.

⁷ Press Information Bureau (Research Unit) Ministry Of Information and Broadcasting Government Of India <https://static.pib.gov.in/WriteReadData/specificdocs/documents/2022/may/doc202251656401.pdf>

- Behavioral training: Instruction in the development of skills, particularly in the area of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL).
- Health camps are one type of health program.
- Safety awareness: seminars about the risks associated with septic tank and sewer cleaning

With an emphasis on enhancing sanitation and offering assistance to those impacted, the Indian government has put in place a number of initiatives to combat and eradicate manual scavenging. Important projects consist of:

1. Improvements to Sanitation Infrastructure: Since October 2, 2014, the government has built 6.264 million sanitary toilets in urban areas and over 108.8 million in rural regions. The conversion of unhygienic toilets is another aspect of this endeavor that greatly lowers manual scavenging.

2. The "Swachhata Abhiyaan" mobile app was released in December 2020 and enables users to report the existence of manual scavengers and unhygienic restrooms. More than 6,000 reports had been filed as of February 2, 2022, but no unsanitary restrooms had been verified.

3. National Policy for the Ecosystem of Mechanized Sanitation: This strategy, which was developed in cooperation with multiple ministries, intends to set up sludge treatment facilities, train staff, construct Sanitation Response Units (SRUs) in municipalities for automated cleaning, establish responsible sanitation authorities in each district, and provide a round-the-clock helpline.

4. Mechanized Railway Track Cleaning: As part of the "Make in India" campaign, the cleaning of railway tracks has been automated with specially designed trucks, eliminating the need for physical intervention.

5. Compensation for Sewer/Septic Tank Deaths: Families of people who pass away while cleaning septic tanks or sewers are compensated Rs. 10 lakh as a result of a Supreme Court ruling. Additionally, these families are eligible for rehabilitation funds from the federal and state governments.

These measures reflect the government's commitment to eradicating manual scavenging, improving sanitation, and ensuring the welfare of affected individuals and communities.⁸

The Indian government has put in place a number of important measures to encourage mechanization in sanitation work and enhance the standard of living for sanitation workers, especially waste pickers and their families:

1. Financial Assistance for Equipment: To help sanitation workers, their dependents, and urban local governments buy sanitation-related machinery, vehicles, and equipment, the Swachhta Udyami Yojana (SUY) offers concessional loans of up to Rs. 50 lakh. Furthermore, the 2020–21 revision of the Self Employment Scheme for Rehabilitation of Manual Scavengers (SRMS) provides capital subsidies of up to Rs. 5 lakh for initiatives pertaining to sanitation that these individuals undertake.

2. Upskilling with RPL: Sanitation workers can receive free, brief upskilling training through the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) program. Mechanized cleaning methods and safety measures for septic tank and sewer cleaning are the main topics of this course.

3. Awareness and Training Workshops: Sanitation workers, engineers, managers, contractors, sanitary inspectors, and officials from urban local bodies attend workshops. The Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and Their Rehabilitation Act, 2013, associated regulations, and safe septic tank and sewer cleaning techniques are the topics of these workshops.

These steps are designed to enhance the skills and livelihoods of sanitation workers while promoting safer, more efficient sanitation practices through mechanization.⁹

RESEARCH LIMITATION:

Although thorough in its methodology, this study on manual scavenging in India has a number of significant limitations that should be noted. The use of interviews with a small number of members of the general public is one major drawback. The varied viewpoints of all parties involved in or impacted by manual scavenging may not be well represented by this

⁸ PIB Press Release REHABILITATION OF MANUAL SCAVENGERS dated February 2, 2022

⁹ Ibid

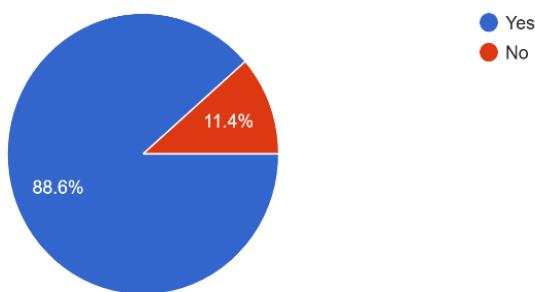
small sample size. The particular demographics of the participants may distort the insights obtained, possibly ignoring the viewpoints and experiences of underrepresented groups, such as actual manual scavengers or their families. Additionally, because broader cultural views and beliefs might not be sufficiently captured by the small sample size, the findings' generalizability is limited.

The extensive reliance on secondary data sources, such as court records, government and non-governmental organization reports, and previously published works, is another drawback. Although this information offers useful background and context, it might not capture the most recent changes or subtleties in the socio-legal environment surrounding manual scavenging. The thoroughness of the legal analysis may also be impacted by secondary data's occasional bias, incompleteness, or lack of depth. Any gaps in earlier research may also be carried over into this study due to its reliance on earlier research, which could affect its overall findings and conclusions. Last but not least, cultural norms, media representations, and individual prejudices may affect public perceptions acquired through interviews, causing participants to give socially acceptable answers rather than frank viewpoints. This restriction emphasizes how difficult it is to capture true sentiments regarding manual scavenging and the shame attached to it.

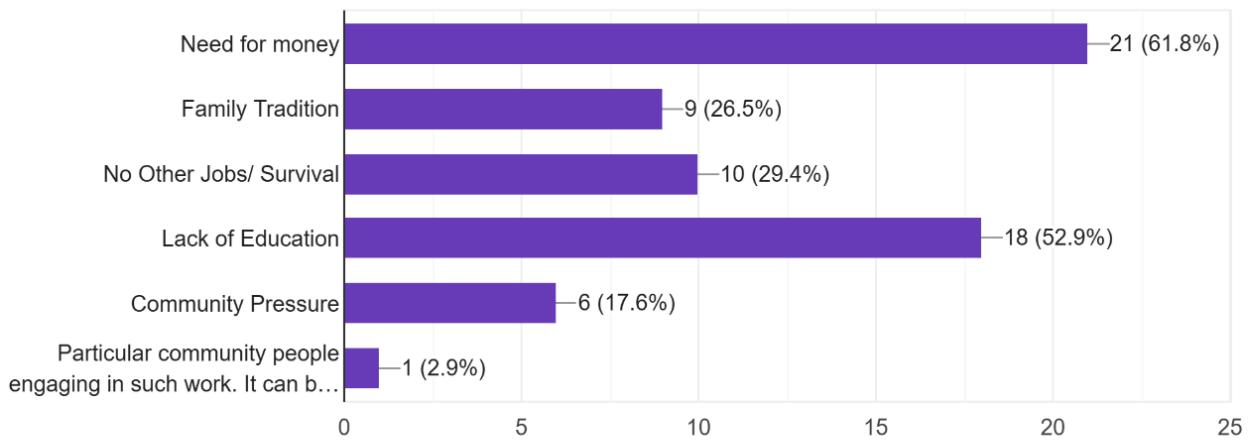
DIAGRAM

Assessment questions :

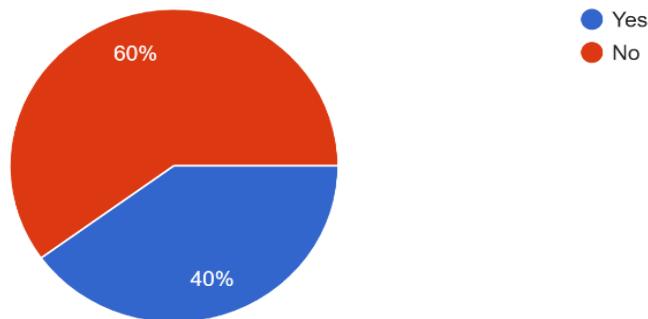
1. Do manual scavenging and manual scavengers still exist in India?



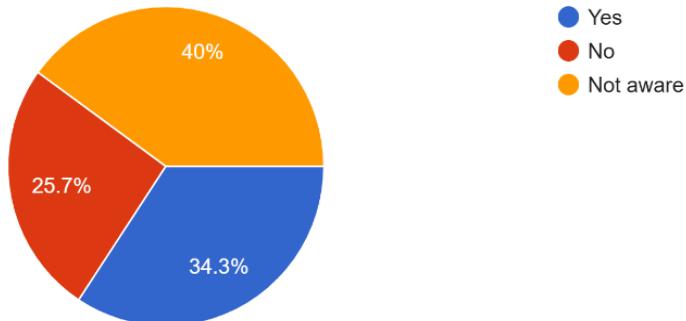
2. What causes someone to take up manual scavenging?



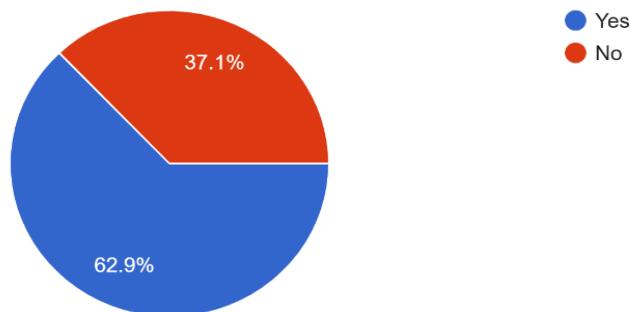
3. Are there any safety precautions provided for them?



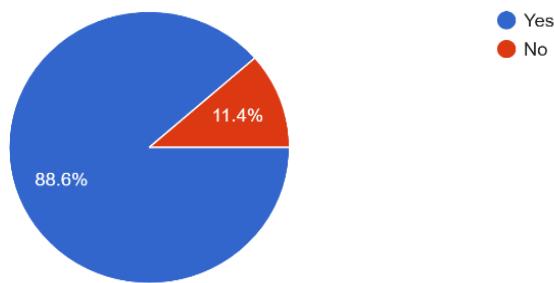
4. Are there any schemes, rehabilitation programs, or protections available for manual scavengers?



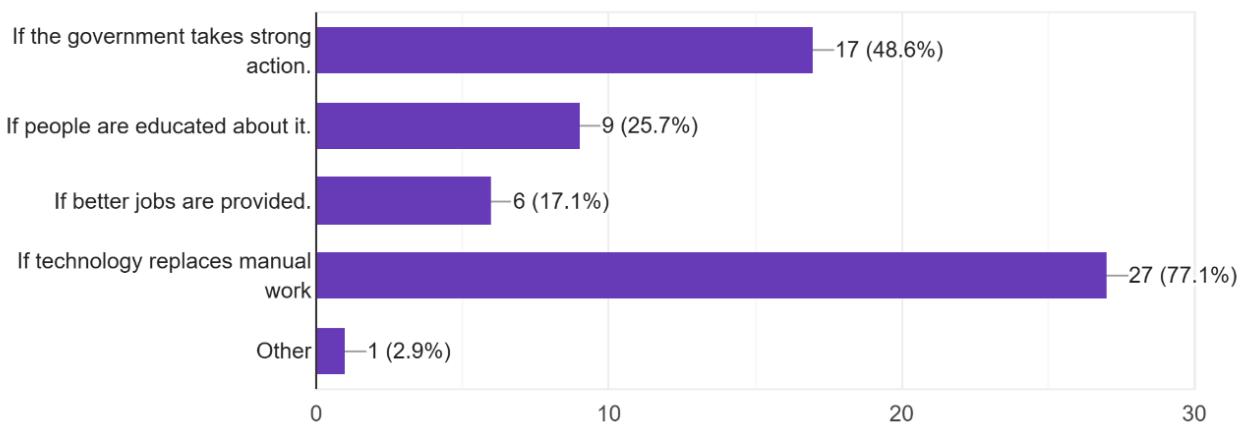
5. Are you aware of manual scavenging is banned in India?



6. Is it possible to eradicate manual scavenging?



7. If so, say the possible ways



CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS:

Economic hardship is the primary reason why manual scavenging persists today, since money continues to be the primary motivator for people to engage in this dehumanizing activity. People are compelled to work in these dangerous vocations due to economic pressures that permeate every part of human existence. By substituting machines for human work, technological advancements provide the best way to end manual scavenging. Although the government has made a number of steps to stop this behaviour, a significant disadvantage is that those who are impacted are often unaware of these programs and rehabilitation efforts. Laws that forbid manual scavenging have been put in place, although it is still unclear how effective they are in practice. Enforcing these rules and making sure they are implemented on the ground provide the true problem. In this case, education is essential to solving the problem. Education can assist people in moving away from manual scavenging by raising awareness of government programs and encouraging alternate sources of income. Even well-meaning policies are ineffective without the right information and training. Therefore, education is still crucial to ending this cycle and guaranteeing a future free from manual scavenging, even though legal and technological alternatives are required.