



## A STUDY ON PROBLEMS FACED BY MANUAL SCAVENGERS WORKING AS TEMPORARY CONTRACT LABOURER'S FOR REMOVAL OF SEWER OBSTRUCTIONS IN SEWER SYSTEM AND SLIT REMOVAL AT MANHOLES AND ALLIED WORKS IN CHENNAI METROPOLITAN WATER SUPPLY AND SEWERAGE BOARD, CHENNAI, TAMIL NADU

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### KEYWORDS :

#### INTRODUCTION:

India has made spectacular progress almost in all areas of life over the years since Independence in 1947. However, still large sections of our people have not got their share of development in their life. Atrocities, untouchability, involvement in obnoxious and inhuman practice of manual scavenging of night soil are still prevalent in the country. They are mainly the Scheduled Castes which includes safai karamcharis and manual scavengers. Manual scavenging refers to the removal of animal or human waste/excreta (night soil) using brooms, tin plates and baskets from dry latrine and carrying it to disposal grounds some distance away. The toilets often used a container that needed to be emptied daily. According to the 2011 Census, the Scheduled Castes population of our country is 15.82 crores which constitute 18.5% of the total population. Out of these the number of manual scavengers is estimated to be around 8.76 lakhs. Even after 58 years of Independence, the socio-economic conditions of this group are still far below the satisfactory level, and the scavengers are still handling night soil manually. This is undoubtedly a blot on our country. A number of efforts have been made to abolish the system of manual scavenging and to ameliorate the living and working conditions of manual scavengers as well as safai karamcharis. Legislation was passed in 1993 namely, The Employment of Manual Scavengers and Construction of Dry Latrines Prohibition Act, 1993 which inter-alia prohibits use of dry latrines and provides for imprisonment for one year and /or a fine up to Rs.2000/- on those who employ manual scavengers for cleaning dry latrines. The number of dry latrines in the country is estimated to be around 54 lakhs in urban areas and 24 lakhs in rural areas. To solve the problem of manual scavenging two specific schemes are under implementation. They are (i) Integrated Low Cost Sanitation Scheme (ILCS) and (ii) National Scheme for Liberation and Rehabilitation of Scavengers (NSLRS). The first scheme provides for conversion of existing dry latrines into low cost water borne latrines and construction of new sanitary latrines. The basic aim of the scheme is to liberate the manual scavengers from the obnoxious practice of carrying night soil manually. The NSLRS Scheme aims at rehabilitation of liberated manual scavengers in alternative and dignified occupations after giving them necessary training and financial assistance in the form of subsidy, margin money loan and bank loans.

Despite all these efforts the end result is not very encouraging. In view of this, Government of India has now set a target date of 31st December, 2007 by which the obnoxious and inhuman practice of manual scavenging will have to be eradicated totally. In order to achieve this target, the Planning Commission has formulated a National Action Plan for Total Eradication of Manual Scavenging by 2007. The Ministry of Urban Employment and Poverty Alleviation has been entrusted to implement the National Action Plan. It is hoped

that the obnoxious and inhuman practice of manual scavenging will be eradicated by 31 December 2007.

#### MAGNITUDE OF THE PROBLEM:

Nearly 80 per cent of the country's population still either defecate in open or use unsanitary bucket latrines or smelly public toilets as per one estimate. This is true even in urban areas where hardly 20 per cent of the population has access to water/flush toilets connected to a sewerage system and only 14 per cent enjoy water-borne toilets connected to septic tanks or leach pits. In rural areas a mere 3 per cent of the population has access to sanitary toilets. This lack of adequate sanitation is responsible for severe health problems. Cholera, dysentery, typhoid, Para-typhoid, infectious hepatitis and many other diseases can be traced to the unsanitary disposal of human excreta. Lack of sanitation also has grave social consequences, the need to have 'night soil' removed has given rise to the profession of 'scavenging' or collecting it from bucket latrines, the streets and other locations. Though, this practice has been banned and the Indian Constitution bans the segregation of those who service this profession, there are many pockets in the country where the practice continues unabated. The Indian Government had brought one legislation that would ensure abolishment of manual scavenging- The Employment of Manual Scavengers and Construction of Dry Latrines (Prohibition) Act, 1993. This Act has been in force for more than a decade but sadly has been ineffective because of the deeply rooted caste system and caste based discrimination.

#### STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Though this vile and inhumane practice was abolished by law in India in 1993, the practice is deeply entrenched in South Asian societies. The inhuman practice of manual scavenging still continuous in India. The Government in the past has missed the deadline for complete eradication of manual scavenging three times and the latest decline is March 31, 2010. The issue of manual scavengers has emerged in the Planning Commission documents since the 9th Five year plan but after two year plans gone by and the third one in this mid term, the cause of these people are yet to be addressed. There were approximately 3.47 lakh manual scavengers in India in 2006, according to Government records, which needed to be rehabilitated. In 1993, The Indian Parliament enacted a law prohibiting employment of manual scavengers and construction of Dry Latrines. Following it, the government introduced several schemes for rehabilitation of those who engaged in this work. Though it is illegal to employ or to indulge in manual scavenging, in practice, it very much exists across the country irrespective of states performance on social and economic development parameters. The National Human Rights Commission of India (NHRC) has termed manual scavenging as one of the worst violation of Human Rights and dignity. People employed in this profession suffer from acute health problems; subject to determination and are treated as

untouchables. Attempts to take them out of profession has not always met with success as it becomes difficult for them to become a part of the society and for the society at large to accept them. A large programme focusing on the upliftment and overall development of manual scavengers will only help to eradicate this blot on our society. The condition of Scavengers community in Tamilnadu is a matter of grave concern for the entire right thinking person world over. It is regrettably noted that the official attitude of the government has not changed towards these communities. Scavenger community has all along been living in the rural and urban areas serving the middle classes, upper elites, feudal lords, yet none of them ever bothered or cared for those who clean their shit, enter deep into the sewage pit to continue the sewage line. The condition of manual scavenging community is miserable. Since most of the people from the community are uneducated. Social evils are prevalent in the community. Poverty gives birth to different things including alcoholism, wife beating gambling.

### NEED OF THE STUDY:

The present study attempts to analyze the problems related to manual scavenging, impacting the marginalized sections of the society and the enabling role played by the Government of India. This is one of the caste based occupation in the country. The study is linked to Human rights from the perspective of night soil removers. It aimed to determine the work related issues in day to day life of manual scavenger's factors because their access towards the welfare measures is restricted in the corporation of Chennai. After the examination of those factors the research will be a tool to bring strategies to solve the inhuman practice. There is also need for intervention by Government for the rehabilitation of the affected manual scavengers (In particular Death victims). Without exemption, just adequate rehabilitation needs to be carried out in a participatory manner especially with the active involvement of the most marginalized groups including SCs and STs. For the rehabilitation of the manual scavengers there is a need of study in a systematic manner the social, economic and cultural conditions of the Manual Scavengers.

### GENERAL OBJECTIVES:

A Study on Problems Faced by Manual Scavengers Working as Temporary Contract Labourer's for Removal of Sewer Obstructions in Sewer System and Slit Removal at Manholes and Allied Works in Chennai Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board, Chennai, Tamil Nadu

### SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES:

- To study the socio- economic conditions of Manual Scavengers
- To examine the livelihood conditions and work related issues of the Manual Scavengers.
- To analyze the Government measures towards Manual Scavengers
- To determine the problems of Manual Scavengers in Physical and Mental Health perceptions.
- To elicit the rehabilitation opinion from the respondents.

### FIELD OF STUDY

This study was conducted in Corporation of Chennai in Tamil Nadu. The Corporation of Chennai (Previously Madras) is the oldest Municipal Institution in India established on the 29th September 1688. Chennai is located on the Coromandel Coast on the Northern end of the State of Tamil Nadu. The city stretches along the Coromandel Coast much of its superb sandy beach and extends inland. Its irregular shape covers about 426 Sq. Km. The estimated present population of Chennai is 6.5 Million. Chennai Corporation is removing 5000-5200 MT of solid waste per day through 966 conservancy vehicles and maintaining Kodungaiyur and Perungudi

dumping grounds for dumping the solid waste. The total birth reported in Chennai city is 400 per day and death is 180 per day. Chennai Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board (CMWSSB or Metrowater) was established in 1978 under an Act of Tamil Nadu (Act 28) as a statutory Body for exclusively attending to the growing needs of and for planned development and appropriate regulation of water supply and sewerage services in the Chennai Metropolitan Area with particular reference to the protection of public health and for all matters connected therewith or incidental thereto. From 1.8.1978, the water supply and sewerage services in Chennai City were taken over by the Board (CMWSSB) from the Corporation of Chennai with assets and liabilities connected with water supply and sewerage services. The assets and liabilities of Ground Water Division of PWD, responsible for water supply to industries in Manali belt were also taken over by the CMWSSB. Chennai Metropolitan Area (CMA), comprising of Chennai city and contiguous area around was notified in 1974. It extends over 1,189 sq. km. and includes Chennai City Corporation area, 16 Municipalities, 20 Town Panchayats, 1 Cantonment and 214 Village Panchayats spread over in 10 Panchayat Unions in Thiruvallur and Kanchipuram Districts. The present Chennai City Corporation Area is 176 sq. km. Chennai (earlier called as Madras) is the Fourth largest Metropolitan city in India situated on the shores of the Bay of Bengal and is the capital of Tamil Nadu State. Chennai Metropolis lies in the latitude between 12°50'49" and 13°17'24" and longitude between 79°59'53" and 80°20'12". The land is a Flat Coastal plain. The topography of Chennai city is extremely flat with average slope of less than 0.7m per km. Three rivers viz. Kosathalaiyar, Cooum and Adyar pass through Chennai Metropolitan Area and these rivers are placid and meander on their way to the sea (Bay of Bengal). Buckingham Canal, a man made canal is another large waterway which runs North-South through this Metropolis. As per the 2011 census, the population of Chennai city was 46.81 lakhs (4.681 million) and the total population in CMA was 70.41 lakhs (7.041 million). The present population of Chennai City as on Mar'2010 is estimated as 55 lakhs (5.5 million). Though the operation of CMWSSB is limited to City Corporation area in general, the Board is also extending its services to the surrounding urban local bodies (about 7.88 sq.km. in extension areas and Manali New Town) and has already initiated measures to provide services for the entire Chennai Metropolitan Area (CMA)

### SEWERAGE SERVICES:

In early 1890, surface drains in the City were connected to Pumping Stations and the wastewater conveyed for disposal away from inhabitation. The proposal for comprehensive drainage scheme to cater to the needs of a topographically flat, fast growing city was formulated in 1907 and works were initiated in 1910 and completed during 1914 in stages. The systems were designed for the population of 6.5 lakhs expected in 1961 at 114 lit. per capita per day of water supply. The system originally consisted of a network of force mains and brick gravity sewers served by 3 Pumping Stations at Royapuram, Purasaiwalkam and Napier Park and ultimately discharging wastewater into the sea at Kasimedu on the Northeastern boundary of the City. With the ultimate objective of improving the service delivery to the consumers, the C. M. W. S. S. Board is taking every step to create a motivating environment for its employees particularly Field Level Workers working in unhygienic conditions. The following safety equipments and accessories are provided to the workers.

### CHENNAI ZONE SEWERAGE FIELD WORKERS (I.E; MANUAL SCAVENGERS) DETAILS:

Chennai Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board providing 250 Monthly salaried and 288 Daily Wage Contract

Field Workers for working in Depots in CMWSSB for removal of sewer obstructions and silt removal at manholes by using mechanical equipments and allied for one year

S.No	Area	Name of the Zone	No. of Ward	Ward Numbers	No. of Monthly Salaried Manual Scavengers allotted
1	I	Thiruvottiyur	14	1-14	6
2	II	Manali	7	15-21	5
3	III	Madhavaram	12	22-33	-
4	IV	Tondiarpet	15	34-48	38
5	V	Royapuram	15	49-63	30
6	VI	Thiru-Vi-Ka Nagar	15	64-78	29
7	VII	Ambattur	15	79-93	10
8	VIII	Anna Nagar	15	94-108	25
9	IX	Teynampet	18	109-126	45
10	X	Kodambakkam	16	127-142	32
11	XI	Valasaravakkam	13	143-155	4
12	XII	Alandur	12	156-167	-
13	XIII	Adyar	13	170-182	26
14	XIV	Perungudi	11	168,169 183-191	-
15	XV	Solzhiganallur	9	192-200	-
TOTAL					250

**RESEARCH DESIGN:** This research is a Descriptive study is aimed to describe the social, economic and cultural conditions of the Manual Scavengers.

**UNIVERSE:** The researcher had chosen Chennai Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board (CMWSSB) Field Workers working in Depots for removal of sewer obstructions in sewer system & slit removal at manholes and allied works. The allotted sewer workers for Chennai Zones I – XV are 250 nos.

**Sampling method:** Proportionate Stratified Sampling. It enhanced the representatives of the sample by giving proper representation of manual scavengers in all XV areas of the Chennai Zone. Size of the sample refers to the number of items to be chosen from the universe to form a sample size. The size of the sample must be optimum. The sample size is determined by the parameters of size of the population. Considering all these facts the sample size is 50 in the total number of Sewer Worker allotted under Chennai Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board (CMWSSB) will be selected for the study.

**Tools of data collection:** The researcher used Structured Interview Schedules, Participative Observation Schedules as tools for primary data collection. Direct observation of Resources, infrastructure created, and other physical structures or otherwise known as participant observation.

**Triangulation:** Triangulation is the application and combination of Several Research Methodologies in the study of the same phenomenon.

**Sources of data:** The search for answers to research questions is called collection of data. Data are facts and other relevant materials, past and present, serving a bases for study and analysis. The researcher went to the field and collected the primary data by means of face-to-face interview with the respondents. The researcher also gone through reference materials and documented data from published secondary sources like books journals, periodicals, cover letters, reports websites etc. the researcher also spent sufficient time in interacting and discussing the topic of the study with different experts in the field.

Preparation of tools In consultation with the experts and professors and social workers in the particular field, the tools for this study are prepared.

**Pretesting:** In order to find out the applicability and validity of the tool a well prepared interview schedule was given to 4 respondents in Vandalur, Urupakkam, Nerkundram and Tiruverkadu areas. Based on the pre testing on 20th January 2013 the researcher added, deleted and edited some questions on these heads.

**Actual data collection:** The data collection was done at different stages in the month of 15th February – 5th March 2013. The researcher built rapport with manual scavengers and their family members and Meet the respondents directly in their field area the data is collected

### CONCEPTUAL DEFINITION

**Manual scavengers:** "The manual removal of human and animal excreta using brooms, small tin plates, and baskets carried on the head. The allocation of labour on the basis of caste is one of the fundamental tenets of the Hindu caste system. Within this system dalits have been assigned tasks and occupations which are deemed ritually polluting by other caste communities - such as sweeping, disposal of dead animals and leatherwork. By reason of their birth, dalits are considered to be "polluted", and the removal of human and animal waste by members of the "sweeper" community is allocated to them and strictly enforced." (United Nations Commission on Human Rights, Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights, Working Group on Contemporary Forms of Slavery, 27th Session, Geneva, 27-31 May 2002)

### OPERATIONAL DEFINITION

**MANUAL SCAVENGERS:** The manual removal of human and animal excreta using brooms, small tin plates, and baskets carried on the head. The allocation of labour on the basis of caste is one of the fundamental tenets of the Hindu caste system. Within this system Dalits have been assigned tasks and occupations which are deemed ritually polluting by other caste communities - such as sweeping, disposal of dead animals and leatherwork. By reason of their birth, Dalits are considered to be "polluted", and the removal of human and animal waste by Manual Scavengers Working as Temporary Contract Labourer's for Removal of Sewer Obstructions in Sewer System and Slit Removal at Manholes and Allied Works in Chennai Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board, Chennai, Tamil Nadu.

**LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY:** During the study the researcher found all of the respondents as scattered in different zones of Chennai.

### MAIN FINDINGS:

1. Thirty and above forty categories for comparison it is found that the predominance of productive age group is significant.
2. Majority 70 percent of the manual scavengers are illiterate.
3. The origin place of the respondents. Predominantly the Scavengers are from rural areas. Merely 40 percent of the respondents are from Tiruvannamalai District.
4. Each and every Night Soil workers are married.
5. All of them follow Hinduism as a religion and belonging to the Arunthathiyar/Malaikuravar/Adidraavidar Community they are so called Untouchables.
6. There is no proper housing for more than 60 percent of the manual scavengers in Chennai they were living in rented and leased house.
7. Mostly 80 percent responded were migrated from other district for manual scavenging work. The practice of

- manual scavenging continues in most states.
8. Predominately the manual scavenger was not participated in the social events.
  9. There is no toilet facility available at homes of manual scavengers. This poor housing facilities affecting the Children's social and Physical environment to study at home psychologically they are not conducive for their education and health.
  10. Majority of 66 percent of the respondents have debts. A great majority cases have no savings to rely upon in times of trouble.
  11. The manual scavengers borrow money from neighbors' and contractor mostly for the purpose of their Children education and considerable proportion of the Debt amount is spent on Medical Expenses. Merely a small amount of 30 percent is spent for construction of house.
  12. The severe health problems faced by manual scavengers are Cholera, dysentery, typhoid; Para-typhoid, infectious hepatitis and many other diseases can be traced to the unsanitary disposal of human excreta. Lack of sanitation also has grave social consequences, the need to have 'night soil' removed has given rise to the profession of 'scavenging' or collecting it from bucket latrines, the streets and other locations.
  13. All of them were involved in Manual Scavenging Working as Temporary Contract field workers for Removal of Sewer Obstructions in Sewer System and Slit Removal at Manholes and Allied Works in Chennai Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board (CMWSSB), Chennai, Tamil Nadu.
  14. Preponderance of the respondents perform their work in groups and also individuals.
  15. Predominantly 64 percent of the respondents think about the essentiality of alternative employment
  16. Predominantly it is clear that manual scavengers are not availed proper safety equipments Health problems faced by the manual scavengers are sometimes mistakenly identified to be because of their lack of awareness. Sanitary workers are unwilling to wear gloves as these gloves are either not meant for heavy work, or that these gloves are difficult to work with.
  17. Manual Scavengers itself used as a equipment to clean the big Chennai.
  18. Manual scavengers facing more physical, mental and social problems. This has severe repercussions for their health.
  19. Majority of them are faced head injury, Leg Injury, Suffocation, fainting, burning of eyes and nose burning or bleeding. Concomitant with the issue of manual scavenging, there is a view that "Right to Health" must be included in the Fundamental Rights of Indian citizens, without any discrimination. The workers are affected by cardiovascular degeneration, infections like hepatitis and leptospirosis, skin problems, prevalence of helicobacter, respiratory system problems and altered pulmonary function parameters. They may also be prone to psychological disorder. They are exposed to infections by hand-to-mouth contact. The manual scavengers are also highly affected by gastric cancer. Pre-placement treatment and periodic treatment for manual scavengers along with an insurance protection are some plausible solutions to the problem at hand.
  20. Compensation received by the respondents for their injuries and ill health due to working conditions. Forty five percent of the respondents not received any compensation. Thus very clearly explains about the work place discrimination.
  21. It reveal the work satisfaction of the respondents. Merely 5 percent of the respondents are not satisfied about their work. "In particular Manual Scavenging is a caste based occupation discriminating us in the society" from the own words of the respondents.
  22. Preponderance of 90 percent of the respondents is tried for alternative self employment for their livelihood options but they said it was failure due poor economic conditions.
  23. It is very clear in the above table that all of them were not much aware to rise their voices against the discrimination and lack of welfare measures. Almost 96 percent of them were not approached court for their rights.
  24. The Manual Scavengers working in Chennai Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board are totally ignorant about the Schemes/Polices/Programmes.

#### SUGGESTIONS & CONCLUSION

1. Executive/judicial power may be conferred on the commission on the lines of other commissions.
2. Additional posts to meet the legitimate requirements of the commission as already recommended to the government may be created without further delay. In addition, creation of group D post may reconsider.
3. It is reiterated that all post including of personal staff may be filled up on deputation basis
4. Ministry of welfare should write to all chief minister in continuation of prime minister's letter dated 20.09.1996 to extended all facilities and cooperation and find time to meet the commission.
5. Additional space for the office of the office of the commission may be allotted to accommodate chairperson, vice chairperson, member and officers as per their status and also the additional staff, if sanctioned.
6. In order to ensure timely payment of dues to Safai Karamcharies, the legal provision of relevant Acts is enforced strictly to ensure payment of provident fund and gratuity in time and defaulting employer be dealt with severely under the provision of law.
7. Adequate promotion avenues ensuring at least three vertical promotions be created based on experience, technical or other qualification of safai karamcharies. This can be ensured by reserving certain percentage of posts in clerical percentage of posts in clerical and other cadres and also introducing time scale promotions after a specified number of years in a particular scale of pay.
8. Handling of fifth, garbage etc be totally mechanized and safai karamcharis should be provided with all protective with all protective equipments and devices.
9. All local bodies should provide primary , secondary and tertiary medical facilities to there work and there should be in-built mechanism for quarterly check up of such karamcharies, Their families and adequate insurance cover ,wherever necessary, to meet secondary and tertiary level medical expenses for which premium should be paid by the employer .
10. Safai karamcharis should be provided additional allowances equal to 10% of the basic pay as risk allowances to compensate them for the risk they are constantly exposed to state government should take initiatives and have it uniformly made applicable in all local bodies. Risk allowance should also be paid to daily wage/part time workers.
11. Municipal bodies should construct new colonies for Safai Karamcharies with adequate facilities for roads, underground drains, and electricity, water supply, personal toilets, dispensaries and recreational facilities. Since by and large , the women folk of safai karamcharies are working ladies, each colony of safai karamcharies must be provide with a crèche.
12. The commission strongly recommends that the employment of manual scavengers' ad construction of dry latrines (prohibition) Act, 1993 should be adopted by Utter Pradesh and Rajasthan immediately and where the Act is applicable the state may apply the rules under its provision for speedy implementation of provisions of the Acts.
13. Although many states government have denied the

existence of dry latrines in their sates but the fact remains that dry latrines are still in existence in many states and scavengers also clean the night soil from open space, road and drains which indirectly amounts to removal of night soil. Their status is not different from those who are cleaning dry latrines. Therefore, the states should take cognizance of the fact and take immediate steps to liberate these scavengers.

14. The commission is gratified to know than awareness about disposal of soil waste is there in few Municipal corporations and accordingly taking steps to maintain the cleanliness of the cities. It is therefore, that other bodies should also come forward and take initiatives about disposal of solid waste and garbage.
15. The decline in allocating of funds for the scheme by ministry is coming in the way for smooth functioning the scheme. Therefore, it is suggested that adequate allotment of funds to state Government may be ensured.
16. The commission strongly suggest that the definition of scavengers should not only include all persons engaged in manual handling of night soil or human all persons engaged, sewage etc. The commission has brought this fact to the notice of ministry of social justice& empowerment but ministry has not considered the request favorably as perhaps the ministry's endeavors is for rehabilitation of people falling in the scope of the larger interest of safai karamcharis the matter may be reconsidered to revise the definition.
17. The survey conducted or being conducted by the state government of scavengers is not at all comprehensive. The commission feels that there is ample justification for conducting a fresh and comprehensive survey by reputed organization to ensure its efficiency within a stipulated time.
18. The commission reiterates that there should be flexibility in designing training courses particularly of technical nature and the duration of training period may be enhanced from six month to one year for securing gainful employment and as far as possible training should be giving in government run institution to ensure better qualities of training to safai karamcharis and better scope for rehabilitation.
19. The commission recommends that the project cost of Rs. 50,000 may be enhanced to Rs 5, 00,000 per beneficiary so that safai karamcharis may be property rehabilitated.
20. It is suggested, that state level and distt. Levels monitoring committees should meet once in three month to review the progress of schemes without fail as envisaged in the schemes without fail as envisaged in the scheme and the proceeding should be sent to this commission the purpose of evaluation.

#### CONCLUSION:

India has made spectacular progress almost in all areas of life over the years since Independence in 1947. However, still large sections of our people have not got their share of development in their life. Atrocities, untouchability, involvement in obnoxious and inhuman practice of manual scavenging of night soil are still prevalent in the country. Even after 58 years of Independence, the socio-economic conditions of this group are still far below the satisfactory level, and the scavengers are still handling night soil manually. This is undoubtedly a blot on our country. A number of efforts have been made to abolish the system of manual scavenging and to ameliorate the living and working conditions of manual scavengers as well as safai karamcharis. The National Commission for Safai Karamcharis was constituted on 12th August, 1994 for a period of 3 years under the provision of the National Commission for Safai Karamcharis Act, 1993 to promote and safeguard the interests and rights of Safai Karamcharis. The National Commission has, inter alia, been empowered to investigate

specific grievances as well as matters relating to implementation of programmes and scheme for welfare of Safai Karamcharis. The Commission is required to be consulted on all major policy matters affecting Safai Karamcharis. The term of the Commission was extended from time to time and the tenure of the present Commission has been extended through a Resolution of Govt. of India upto 31.12.2007. A Legislation was passed in 1993 namely, The Employment of Manual Scavengers and Construction of Dry Latrines Prohibition Act, 1993. To solve the problem of manual scavenging two specific schemes are under implementation. They are (i) Integrated Low Cost Sanitation Scheme (ILCS) and (ii) National Scheme for Liberation and Rehabilitation of Scavengers (NSLRS). The first scheme provides for conversion of existing dry latrines into low cost water borne latrines and construction of new sanitary latrines. The basic aim of the scheme is to liberate the manual scavengers from the obnoxious practice of carrying night soil manually. The NSLRS Scheme aims at rehabilitation of liberated manual scavengers in alternative and dignified occupations after giving them necessary training and financial assistance in the form of subsidy, margin money loan and bank loans. Despite all these efforts the end result is not very encouraging. In order to achieve this target, the Planning Commission has formulated a National Action Plan for Total Eradication of Manual Scavenging by 2007. The Ministry of Urban Employment and Poverty Alleviation has been entrusted to implement the National Action Plan. The continuation of the inhuman practice of manual scavenging is a profanity not only on those involved in this practice but on the country and putting an end to it is the responsibility of the country as a whole

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