Chapter 4

The Scavenging World: Narratives and Experiences

Introduction

As argued in the last chapter, _Caste and Scavenging in Telangana_, all scavengers in Telangana are Dalit. And, the very few non-Dalit communities who engaged in scavenging as a profession were also relegated to the status of Dalits. Dalits are condemned to scavenging because of the ideology of caste; they are forced into this slavery irrespective of the availability of modern technology that is able to perform some of the scavenging activities such as sewage clearing etc. As pointed in the previous chapter, Ambedkar’s views on scavengers that,

The untouchables are scavengers not because they do scavenging work, but because they are born in a scavenging community, whether they do scavenging or not. So In India one becomes a scavenger not because he does scavenging but because of his birth whether he does scavenging or not.

This chapter is devoted to an exploration of the world of scavengers, their migration to the city of Hyderabad, recruitment as scavengers, their work and day-to-day experiences, humiliations, ill-treatment, harassments on the roads, in the streets and how they are looked down by their employers, the civic bodies and by the public.

4.1. Migration of Dalits to Cities

Migration of Dalits cannot be considered migration for a prosperous life; it is forced migration due to attacks, discrimination and humiliation in the villages resulting out of Brahmanical feudal caste practices that are explained in the first chapter. It is a dual pattern of migration to the cities from the villages, where the dominant Brahmanical castes that have illegally occupied
the lands by breaking land reform laws and have become wealthy and prosperous with the surplus have been sending their children to the cities and foreign countries for education and employment. However, the Dalits have been migrating for different reasons. For Dalits, migration is for the purposes of making a livelihood, to be able to eat twice a day, to live life without harassment and atrocities. This phenomenon is prevalent in the entire country for decades.

A study on migration from villages by Biplab Dasgupta and Roy Laishley reveals the same, they say,

—The village with high rates of migration is characterised by a pattern of unequal resource distribution.... Land distribution between the village households would be particularly unequal, implying a concentration in the returns to agriculture to a few, well-endowed households. Such a diversified village structure produces a dualistic pattern of migration, consisting of both younger sons of prosperous farmers' relatively well educated and migrating to secure urban employment... from the labouring class moving to other rural areas, or to low-paid insecure marginal, urban employment".1

In the above quote the authors have referred to dominant castes as 'well-endowed households' and referred to Dalits as 'labouring classes'.

90 percent of scavengers, employed with GHMC are Dalit migrants from villages who moved due to atrocities and injustices in the villages. All of them are landless, and each one of them has a story of discrimination to tell. Out of the 100 scavengers interviewed, only six are native to Hyderabad, while the rest of the 94 said they had migrated from different districts in search of livelihood and to escape from the caste based discrimination and humiliations.

1Biplab Dasgupta and Roy Laishley, Migration from Villages, Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. 10, No. 42, 1975, pp. 1652-1662
in the villages. Majority of them are migrated to Hyderabad from Karimnagar, Nalgonda, Warangal, Medak and Mahaboobnagar.

4.2. Caste Forced Scavenging In Telangana

As mentioned in the previous chapters, the Malas and Madigas and other untouchable castes constitutes more than 90 percent of scavengers in Telangana, 5 percent of the scavengers from Mehtar, Bhangi, Halalkhor, etc are human excreta cleaners (Manual scavengers as defined by law). They are used by GHMC on specific occasions where there is a need to clean the human excreta from pits or to enter into the overflowing manholes to clear them. The other 5 percent of scavengers include Dalit Muslims, Dalit Christians and Lambadas, Chakalis and Mangalis, Goudas, Kurumas and other OBC caste individuals. There are no individuals in scavenging from the Brahmin, Reddy, and Komati, Kayastha and Velama and other dominant OBC castes.

A survey through the Right to Information Act 2005 was conducted from March to July, 2015 to know the caste background of the scavengers in Telangana, from GHMC, HMWSSB and South Central Railway (See Annexure VIII for the format of the application).

Not all the authorities have responded and those who have responded have provided limited information because there is no institutionalised system of maintaining data related to scavengers. The scavengers are not part of the human resources of the civic bodies as they are untouchables for them. This reveals the casteist Brahmanical nature and irony of such civic bodies. Below are the details of the replies received from the GHMC, HMWSSB and SCR

**Information received from (GHMC)**

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<td>1</td>
<td>Lr.No.14/H&amp;S/GHM C/2015, Dt 18&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; April 2015</td>
<td>Kamatees, Kamatons, Scavengers (Designated as Safai Karmacharis) and public health workers On available</td>
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information there are about 18345 outsourcing workers and 3368 regular workers are engaged in the sanitation work. The contract system has been dispensed from 1\textsuperscript{st} June 2012. The officer also supplied the copy of the application form that needs to be filled by the scavenger while his engagement with GHMC. There is no mention of caste background of the scavengers in the reply.

As mentioned in the above chapter all the regularised scavengers in the GHMC are SCs and STs only and now, those who have organized into SHGs and employed as contractual employees by the Urban Community Development Wing of GHMC are also SCs and STs only. The reply says that the total number of scavengers is 18345 but according to a statement given by the chief minister of Telangana, the total number would be 24000.

**Information received from HMWSSB**

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<td>1</td>
<td>SCR Secunderabad Lr. No: C/MD 100/RTI/2014</td>
<td>Only one line reply provided that — Cleaning contract work is awarded to contractors through tendering process”</td>
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<tr>
<td>S. No</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>HMWSSB SR Nagar Division Lr.No.EC1/GM(E)/O&amp;MD n.6/RTI/2014-15</td>
<td>Some of the outsourcing persons are being utilized for sewerage/water supply works through the following agencies M/s Kakani consultancy services Cell</td>
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Only 4 divisions of HMWSSB supplied the above information regarding the number and caste composition of the scavengers employed by them. Other divisions replied saying that the scavengers employed by the GHMC maintain scavenging works in those divisions.

**Information received from South Central Railways (SCR)**

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<tr>
<td>Lr. No: C/MD 100/RTI/2014</td>
<td>Only one line reply provided that — Cleaning contract work is awarded to contractors through tendering process</td>
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It is a well-known fact that the Indian railways are the biggest employers of manual scavengers; they employ Dalit scavengers through labour contractors, so that they would not become part of the human resources of the railways and as a result, they remain outsiders while maintaining the cleanliness of the railways. However, Indian Railways refuses to accept the fact that it is the biggest violator of human rights in making people clean shit off its tracks. Also the railway passengers throw their litter out of windows turning the entire stretch of the railway network into a gigantic garbage dump.

The Employment of Manual Scavengers and Construction of Dry Latrines (Prohibition) Act prohibited manual scavenging in 1993. Governments have always remained apathetic to the issue and have denied the reality of manual scavenging along with a background of painfully sluggish implementation of the 1993 Act. The Safai Karmachari Andolan filed one public interest litigation in the Supreme Court of India (SKA vs. Union of India) in 2003.

Wilson Bezwada says,

—Safai Karmachari Andolan (SKA) and six other organisations sought for strict implementation of the 1993 Act and stressed the enforcement of fundamental rights as enshrined in Articles 14, 17, 19 and 21 of the constitution of India. The Ministry of Railways (MoR) in its 2004 affidavit stated that ‘manual scavenging cannot be totally eradicated’. This was a silly attempt at damage control since he, in the same line, reasserted that the practice of manual scavenging did not exist in the railways at the beginning of the case. The ministry consistently and stubbornly stuck to this statement even in the face of the damning photographic evidence filed by the SKA. The
Supreme Court refused to take this as an answer. We filed a damning point-wise rebuttal in 2007. We affirmed that manual scavenging was continuing unabated and negated the railways’. In 2011, the Supreme Court transferred a part of the case concerning Indian Railways to the Delhi High Court. Since then, the railways have come up with a new chanting of bio-toilets”.

Irrespective of interventions from Dalit organisations and the Supreme Court, the Indian railway continues to practice caste based scavenging and refuses to own up.

Sathyanarayana, a coach attendant working in the Secunderabad division said there were around 5000 scavengers employed in the Telangana region, and the number would be higher if we look at the broader reach of the South Central Railways because the other smaller divisions, such as Vijayawada, Gunthakal, and Nanded etc. also come under the South Central Railways.

He further explained,

–Some of the scavengers working in the Secunderabad railways station come from long distances such as Warangal and Sangareddy. Most of them are Dalits and are employed through contractors. They are paid Rs 5000 per month and do not have any benefits, forget about PF, EPF or pension, they are even not provided with insurance, which is necessary because they are prone to the accidents while working in the premises of railways”.

Sathyanarayana described an incident to explain the pathetic situation of scavengers working in the railways,

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2Wilson Bezawada, National Convener Safai Karmachari Andolan, interviewed by Karthik Navayan in Hyderabad on 4th October 2015
3Sathyanarayana, coach attender in Secunderabad railways, interviewed by Karthik Navayan on 23rd November 2015 in Secunderabad
Once a woman scavenger getting off after sweeping a rail coach fell from a height of four feet. There was a fracture in her knee, and she was unable to stand and walk. The supervisor, after finding out, tried very hard to send her off from the station premises, since the incident might come to the notice of the public and railway staff. He gave her Rs 200 and asked her friends to take her home. He instructed her to go to a hospital near her home and asked them to not to disclose that this accident happened while working at the railways. He did not tell them to take her to a hospital in Hyderabad because that may reveal that she was employed in the railways and the contractor may be held responsible for the expenditure of her treatment. She could not claim any compensation because she was not a regular employee, and she could not file an accident claim because she was not a passenger travelling in the train with a valid ticket”.

Sathyanarayana gave her Rs 500/- and asked her friends to take her to nearby hospital immediately, instead of taking her to her house somewhere in Medak District. He further explained that this was not an exceptional story, but it was the situation of scavengers working in the railways everywhere. He concluded saying,

“The scavengers are not respected, not provided with a regular job and not compensated if they met with accidents because all scavengers are Dalits and there are no scavengers in the railways from Brahmin, Reddy, Velama, Komati and Kamma castes. Since all scavengers are Dalits, this pathetic situation is continuing until today”.

Sathyanarayana is the founder member of the SC/ST Employee’s association of South Central Railways.

Apart from the social activists and officials in the civic bodies, 100 scavengers were interviewed, (See Annexure IX for interview schedule) all the respondents said that it is only Dalits who are engaged in the scavenging

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4 Ibid
5 Ibid
profession and some of them tried to relate with this as a caste based slavery continuing in the modern era in their own language. One of the additional commissioners of GHMC got annoyed when referred to the arguments of Bindeshwar Pathak, who said that,

―Scavengers are not a caste but a class.‖ and he said, ―It is Dalits who have been doing scavenging from time immemorial. I have seen with my own eyes every day, in the village, in the towns/cities, I have seen it in my childhood and am also seeing it now as an officer in a civic body, and there is no need to consider any opinion against this ground reality that it is and was untouchable communities who are doing scavenging works‖.6

**Pie chart- Caste composition of scavengers working with GHMC**

![Pie chart showing caste composition](image)

The 100 scavengers, who were interviewed, said that it is only the ―SCs‖ who engaged in scavenging work, and when asked who were the more scavengers among the ―SCs‖, they said it was the Madigas. Similarly, the activists, who are engaged in working against manual scavenging such as Vidya Bhushan Rawat and Wilson Bezwada, have out rightly rejected the question of non-Dalits in scavenging. They in fact argued that the entry of non-Dalits into scavenging has been limited to the posts of supervisors, drivers etc. In fact, if they join as sweepers, it is very easy for them to be promoted in a short span of time to the level of supervisor. Moreover, the actual work of manual scavenging, i.e. cleaning of human excreta is not undertaken by non-Dalits, and even within Dalits, only certain Dalit castes engage in it, from

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6 L. Vandan Kumar, additional commissioner of GHMC, interviewed by Karthik Navayan on 9th October 2015 in Hyderabad
centuries such as Mehtars, Arundathiyars, Rellis, Pakis, Lalbegis, and Halalkhors etc.

As a random sample, 100 scavengers were interviewed from the period of November 2014 to March 2015, in the areas of Tarnaka, Chilakalaguda, Parsigutta, Seethaphalmandi, Nacharam, Vijaya Dairy, Mallapur, and Moulali. These areas fall under the 3 divisions of GHMC, Secunderabad, Kapra and ECIL.

**Caste composition of scavengers working with GHMC**

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<th>Madiga</th>
<th>Mala</th>
<th>Kuruma</th>
<th>Gouda</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>05</td>
<td>02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>13</td>
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**Madiga** 90 **Mala** 05 **Kuruma** 02 **Gouda** 02

Of the 100 scavengers, 77 are Madiga women and 13 are Madiga men; Madigas therefore constitute 90 per cent of the scavenging population in this case and there are five women from the Mala caste; there are no men from the Mala community found among this hundred. Two women and one man from the Kuruma caste and two women from the Gouda caste make up the given number.

According to the respondents, there are only one or two scavengers from the Chakali and Mangali castes. Most are Madigas and Malas. Out of the 100 respondents, only 6 are native to Hyderabad and the rest of the 94 people said that they had migrated from different districts in search of livelihood to escape caste based discrimination and humiliations in the villages. They were from Karimnagar, Nalgonda, Warangal, Medak and Mahaboobnagar districts.

**4.3. Recruitment as Scavengers**

Though there is no institutionalised system of recruitment of scavengers in the civic bodies, the existing recruitment process and eligibility
criteria indicate that the civic bodies want Dalits to do the scavenging work. The recruitment completely depends on the circumstances and need. Whenever there is a need to hire scavengers, the GHMC contractors come to Dalit slums and take the names of people who are willing to work. Whether it is sweeping or sewerage-cleaning jobs, it was the contractors who recruited until 3 years ago, but from 2012, GHMC eliminated the contractors system and implemented another policy of forming SHGs (Self Help Groups) and assigning scavenging works.

The New Indian Express reported the same on 14th January 2012; the GHMC was willing to give a sweeping contract to any group of seven women who would come together in an SHG. It would pay each sanitation worker 6,700 per month plus EPF and ESI contributions amounting to Rs1, 000 per month. This was part of the civic body's decision to do away with the contractors altogether and engage self-help groups for the purpose.\(^7\)

Now GHMC has a wing called urban community development (UCD); according to its project officer Vijaya Laxmi, the organisers of UCD form the SHGs of women and the criteria includes,

1) The SHG groups will be formed in slums
2) He/she should have been in the similar kind of works that of scavengers
3) Priority to the BPL families\(^8\)

When GHMC looks for people who have engaged in similar kind of work, it effectively seeks out Dalits who have engaged in scavenging slavery historically. The irony is that if we look at the criteria, GHMC is obliquely referring to Dalits because the majority of people living in slums are Dalits and the majority of Dalits have the BPL (Below Poverty Line – White ration

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\(^8\)Vijaya Laxmi, Project Officer, Urban Community Development wing of GHMC, interviewed by Karthik Navayan on 23\(^\text{rd}\) November 2015 in Hyderabad
cardholders) cards. The GHMC continues to subscribe to the historical practice of offering the scavenging job to only Dalits. They form a group of 10 people, comprising of seven to eight women and one or two men, after formation of the group; they name the group, open a bank account in the name of the group and assign work by allocating certain areas for sweeping and cleaning.

Four women respondents from the Madiga caste said they were approached by the contractors. Those women might be seniors who got into this work earlier in 2012. Three respondents from the Madiga community said that they got into this job through their fathers. One of the three was a man and he got his employment as a compassionate appointment. Three women and one male scavengers belonging to the Madiga caste reported that they were contacted by the GHMC UCD organisers for the work. One Madiga woman was employed as a scavenger through her mother.

Only four scavengers were appointed through contractors and four by GHMC organisers and the rest of the 92 scavengers got into the scavenging work through their caste networks such as neighbours, relative and parents; this shows how the mobility of the Dalit community is constrained to scavenging work.

49 scavengers said that they came to know about this scavenging work through their neighbours; 42 of them were Madigas, four of them are Madiga men and 38 are Madiga women; one Boya man, one Kuruma man, two Gouda women and three Mala women. 38 scavengers said they were introduced to scavenging by their relatives. Five were Madiga men, one Mala woman, one Kuruma woman and the rest of the 31 who were introduced to scavenging through relatives were Madiga women. Eight scavengers responded that they were asked about their caste during recruitment; all of them were Madigas and seven of them were women and one of them was a man.

39 scavengers said that they were not asked about caste; 37 of them were Madigas, six of them were men and 31 women. The other two
scavengers consisted of a Gouda woman and a Boya man. 52 scavengers said that they were asked to produce rations cards (ration cards reveal the caste because it is white ration caste which reveals the low economic status of that family and most Dalits own BPL cards i.e. white ration cards); and of the 52, 43 were Madigas; five men and 38 women and one Kuruma man.

Of the 100 scavengers, only one Madiga man was a regular employee of the GHMC. He received his salary from the state treasury; the other 99 scavengers were working on a contractual basis as members of SHGs. Of the 100 scavengers, 94 migrated to Hyderabad for their livelihood and to escape caste discrimination and humiliation in the villages. Only six scavengers were natives of Hyderabad city, three of them were women who migrated after their marriage, of which six belonged to the Madiga caste.

When asked whether they were happy to do scavenging work, all of the 100 scavengers responded that they do not like to do this work, but remain in humiliating conditions because there was no other option left for them to maintain their families.

4.4. Scavengers Live-in Unhealthy Environments

Scavengers clean the roads, streets, railway tracks and clear the sewage every day and they make the life of people in this society liveable. Without them, it is impossible for our cities to maintain the cleanliness that is now being preached everyday by the governments. However, the scavengers have been living in gutters; none of the scavenger families have proper housing and toilets. A majority of them live in single room accommodations and on rent
Six of the scavengers were living in huts; all of them were women. Five were Madiga and one is a Kuruma. 47 scavengers were living in houses they owned. These were built in an area of 40 – 60 yards with cement flakes and walls. Of the 47 scavengers, one was a Mala woman and 46 were Madigas, of which six were men and 40 were women.

47 scavengers were living in rented houses in one or two rooms. Four of them were Mala women, one Boya man, one Kumara man, two Gouda women and one Kuruma woman and 39 of them were Madigas, of which seven were men and 32 women.

4.4.1. Caste Discrimination in Hyderabad

95 scavengers said that they faced caste based discrimination in the villages from where they had migrated to Hyderabad. Only five respondents claimed that they had not faced caste discrimination; out of this five who said they did not face discrimination two were natives of Hyderabad and three had migrated; all five were Madigas.

When asked about the caste discrimination in the Hyderabad city, 74 scavengers responded that caste discrimination was very much prevalent in the city, and there was very little difference between the rural and the urban context and that in the city only the forms of discrimination were different. 66 of them were Madigas, of which 58 were women and six were men; the rest of the eight comprised of four Mala women, two Gouda women, one Kuruma man and one Kuruma woman. Fives scavengers replied that they do not face caste discrimination in Hyderabad; three of them were women and two were men, all of them were Madigas. 18 scavengers said that there was no caste discrimination in Hyderabad; 15 of them were Madigas, of which 13 were women and two were men.
4.4.2. Not Ancestral but Forced By the Present Conditions

On being asked whether their ancestors were also scavengers, 82 replied in the negative, 71 of who were Madigas and of which 62 were women and nine were men, one Boya man, and three Kurumas, of whom two were women and one man, two Gouda women, and five Mala women. 17 scavengers said that their ancestors were scavengers involved in sweeping village roads and removing dead cattle. One Madiga woman said she didn’t know.

When asked, “Which caste people are in high numbers involved in scavenging”, all 100 respondents said that it was the SC Madiga caste. On being asked whether scavenging was a caste based occupation, all the respondents replied in the negative and when asked to explain, they questioned back "why should we link a derogatory work to a particular community".

GHMC has been planning to employ compact heavy-duty vacuum sweepers for mechanised sweeping of main roads in the city limits and to hire at least one compact heavy-duty vacuum sweeper for each of the 18 circles within the GHMC limits. GHMC has already invited proposals from eligible bidders to provide road-sweeping services using compact heavy-duty vacuum sweepers with a single engine for a period of five years. Apart from mechanised sweeping of main roads, the contractors will have to undertake various cleaning works including mopping of specified roads, kerbs, sidewalks and side drains attached to the roads on a daily basis using vacuum sweepers. The collected garbage and dust should be transported to the specified point suggested by GHMC. Apart from operation and maintenance, the service provider would be asked to ensure standards for hygiene, operational
efficiency and innovative environment solutions.\textsuperscript{9} This is a recent (August 2015) proposal from GHMC. This attempt at mechanization of sweeping would lead to the removal of scavengers and non-allocation of sweeping work to the SHGs. At the time of conducting interviews during the months of February to April in the year 2015, all the respondents said that they would oppose introduction of machinery for sweeping works, and if GHMC does so they would resist and fight back against such attempts.

The above numbers explain a few interesting and sad social realities. It would appear that all the scavengers were Dalits; particularly 90 percent of them were Madigas and 90 percent of them were Madiga women. 95 percent of them had migrated from their native places to Hyderabad in search of livelihood and to escape caste-based discrimination and humiliations.

The city’s socio-economic and political conditions were similar to the villages that discourage development and self-respect of Dalits. Dalits are often yelled at by the roadside shops and the residents of colonies because they know that the sweepers are Dalits and can be shouted at. This reveals the continuity of caste based slavery of scavenging of Dalits in Hyderabad city.

The SRACO (Society for Rural Awakening and Community Organization) study report says, “Of the 90000 PH workers in the state, more than 90 percent are women; more than 99 percent are Dalits. Added to that with sanitation being the lowest of the menial jobs, synonymous with working in the dirt and filth of the city, the PH workers are thrice disadvantaged section in society, highly discriminated and stigmatized”.\textsuperscript{10}

Scavengers start their day at 4 in the morning because they have to reach their work site by 6; they do not have time to prepare their food and take

\textsuperscript{10}Study Report on extreme poverty and hunger status in SRACOs urban project area, published by SRACO, Secunderabad, 2011, p.6
care of kids. The report further says, “The public health workers (scavengers) start their day at 4am and finish at 3pm which leaves them with no time to prepare their food or for their family. Therefore, they end up going hungry until 3pm, after which they reach home and eat. This has a bearing on their nutritional status; as a result, 90 percent of scavengers suffer from anaemia”.

GHMC does not provide gloves, masks and shoes; they supply only radium jackets; since scavenging is intrinsically linked with dirt and unsanitary conditions, it often predisposes them to various types of respiratory diseases and allergic reactions. On the other hand, their habit of chewing tobacco and drinking cheap liquor to make scavenging work tolerable has an adverse impact on their health and also predisposes their children to these habits at an early age. In addition, the scavengers do not have any holidays on festivals nor they have leaves for personal reasons. Recently due to the interventions of some organisations give weekly offs.

4.5. Narratives of Scavengers

There are a few villages in Telangana where the Naxalite movement is very strong and influential. In such villages, Dalits somewhat feel safe and comfortable than in other villages. Kadavendi is one such village in which the Naxalite movement was strong.

Nirmala, a Madiga scavenging woman from the Kadavendi village of Nalgonda district said that there was no caste discrimination in her village, because of the village was the residence of Chakali Ilamma and other Naxalite leaders, and is the centre of revolutionary politics. However, when asked about the caste discrimination in Hyderabad, she said that in Hyderabad discriminations were prevalent on scavengers due to the work they were

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11 Ibid
12 Chakali Ilamma was an Indian revolutionary leader during the Telangana Rebellion.[1] She revolted against the feudal lord, Zamindar Ramachandra Reddy, known as Visnoor Deshnukhs, to save her four acres of land when he tried to occupy it. She became an inspiration for many during the rebellion against the feudal lords of the Telangana region.
involved in, and Nirmala was silent when she was asked why she became a scavenger in Hyderabad although their village was a centre for revolutionary politics. This is the tragedy of revolutionary politics in Telangana region; they have not recognised the caste forced scavenging as an issue that need their intervention to liberate Dalits from the age-old slavery that continues even today.

If scavengers ask for water in the hotels or nearby homes while working on the roads and streets, no one would give them water, and even if they give, they are visibly uncomfortable and unhappy. One of the scavengers, Nagamani said she was given water in a plastic cover instead of a glass, and she felt humiliated. Purchasing drinking water on the roads is a costly affair for scavengers. She said a bottle of drinking water costs Rs. 20, which equals the cost of one kilogram of rice, sufficient for an entire family.

Chinta Laxmi asked his employer the GHMC to provide at least brooms that are at least five feet long, with which the sweepers could stand and sweep the roads and street. The GHMC presently provides 2 ½ feet long brooms, as a result of which the sweepers have to bend at their waist continuously, causing chronic back pain. She also said scavengers should be provided with gloves, shoes, masks etc. Right now GHMC nothing but a shirt with radium marks on it.

Yadamma from the Marupadige village of Gundala Mandal in Warangal district shared her village experience. She said, "We were the tenants on a Reddy's land; we used to have tow bulls to cultivate the land. The Reddy refused to give us our share in the produce after harvesting. He gave us only grass. We asked him to take back the grass, and sold the bulls and came to Hyderabad 18 years ago. She added, "This happened to us because we don't have land, and, we don't have land because we are Madigas. If we would have had land, we would have cultivated and lived with self-respect"."
The daughter of Gunde Prameela, Vodlakonda village of Janagoan Mandal in Warangal district, was studying MBA, when the family visited village. The Reddys of the village ridiculed her saying you people get government jobs and you Dalits are son-in-laws of government. Prameela argued there were more government job-holders among Reddys. She asked "How can they call us, Madigas sons-in-laws of the government, while running the government from their homes?"

K.Srinu, Kancharapally village of Raghunathpally Mandal in Warangal district, used to work as a labourer in the agricultural fields of the Guntur feudal caste Reddy family. They used to pay him Rs 5000/- per year, a time's meal, that too spoiled food. Unable to bear the attitude of the feudal Reddys, he came to Hyderabad in 1996 and has since been working as a scavenger.

M. Jyothi, Suddala village, Gundala Mandal, Warangal district, migrated to Hyderabad in 2007. Her family was working as farm labourers (Jeetagallu) in fields owned by Reddys with an advance of money that they had taken as loan (it attracts bonded labour act 1976). After many years of working as bonded labour, they asked to increase their salary. The landholders refused to increase their salary and instead said that their loan was yet to be recovered and asked them to pay back the money. When they said that they did not have the money, the landholder abused them, saying that the Madigas had developed the arrogance to challenge the Reddys (madigollaku pogaru vachindi). Following this incident, they left the village and moved to Hyderabad for their livelihood.

Batta Yadamma, Gollapalli village, Devaruppala Mandal in Warangal district, shared her experiences of caste discrimination in villages. She said, in her village, a feudal Reddy caste man had an illicit affair with a Madiga
woman; her husband came to know of this and called for a Panchayat. Instead of questioning the Reddy man who was also part of the affair, the village Reddys along with other dominant castes stood by the Reddy man. They abused the husband of the Madiga woman and demanded (‘Patel nu anavasaranga Badnam Cheyyaddu) — ‘don’t defame Patel unnecessarily’ — and boycotted the Madiga man from the village. The Madiga man left his wife and the village. He can no longer be found and his wife has become a sex worker for livelihood. According to Yadamma a lovely family was ruined due to their caste. This specifically happened because they were Madigas; no Reddy family would face such threats from Madigas.

Itukapally Chandramma, Vasalamarri village, Thurkapally Mandal, Nalgonda district, belongs to the Kuruma caste. Being a non-Dalit, she agreed that there was caste discrimination against Dalits in their village. Madigas were discriminated against because they eat beef. Now non-Dalits allow Dalits to enter their homes, and whenever the dominant castes have to interact with Dalits, they stand very far and talk. Chandramma also followed the same practices because the entire village was expected to behave in the same manner. Moreover, when she started working as a scavenger, her brothers told her that if she continued in that occupation, which was actually undertaken by Madigas and Malas, she should not visit their homes. To which she replied to her brothers that she would never visit them in future, even for festivals, and has been continuing to do the scavenging work.

It is a very common practice in Telangana villages to not allow Dalits to enter into village temples. In some of the villages, Dalits were allowed to pray to gods from a distance of 50 feet, and in some villages the dominant castes do not even allow praying from a distance. Peddapati Yashoda, Siddinki village, Janagoan Mandal Nalgonda district, working as a scavenger in Hyderabad said that when her son passed the 10th class, he went to Anjaneya temple along with his classmates who belonged to the BC castes in the village. However, the Reddys and BCs together chased and abused him for trying to enter into the temple, saying that ‘madigollaku pogarochindi’ (Madigas have
gained arrogance by eating beef) and that is why they are trying to enter temples.

B. Shoba, Adavishakepally village, Hanwada Mandal of Mahaboobnagar district started working as a scavenger in 2010. She was not from the Dalit community but belonged to Gouda, a BC caste. She had taken up the work for livelihood. Her family was in bad financial condition and she did not want to take loans and survive on the mercies of others. Their family migrated to Hyderabad and her father started working as a security guard. Whenever men of her caste saw her sweeping roads, they ridiculed her that she had joined the Madigas and Malas for work. She often responded to such ridicules that, "sweeping is a work that I am doing to maintain my family; I am not stealing anybody's money, why I should be ashamed of doing work?" Though there are high numbers of Dalits in this work, she refused to accept that scavenging is a caste-based occupation of Dalits. She also said that she had experienced discrimination and humiliation as scavenger in Hyderabad.

G Suguna from the Thimmareddypally village in Kondapaka Mandal of Medak district was working as a scavenger in Hyderabad. She said that caste-based discrimination was very much prevalent in her village; Dalits get their head tonsured to pray to Anjaneya Swamy. They however have to stay at a distance of 50 feet from the temple. All the Dalits in the village are aware of this rule, and this rule has passed through the generations and continues even today.

G Vijay is from Odela village of Odela Mandal in Karimnagar District. He belongs to the Golla (OBC) caste. Having worked as a scavenger for 15 years, he explained how he became a scavenger. He had a love affair with a Madiga girl and without the agreement of his family and Golla caste elders, he married his lover. His family and members of his caste boycotted him and treated him like a Madiga man, and as a result he migrated to Hyderabad and found work as a scavenger. He further said that caste was a hidden fact in cities like Hyderabad. Since he was engaged in scavenging work, he was
considered a Madiga man by Madigas and others as well. He also faced the discrimination and humiliation that is attached with scavenging work.

T. Kamalamma, Gundlakanda village, Janagoan Mandal of Nalgonda district, from the Gouda caste, was working as a scavenger in Hyderabad at the time of this research. She spoke about her decision to take-up this work and about the situation of caste discrimination in her village. Her husband used to extract toddy from palm trees in the village. The earnings were sufficient to feed the family members but they had to spend more money to marry their daughters. They were forced to take loans. It became difficult to pay back those loans; her husband was old and weak and could not climb the trees for toddy. They then chose to migrate and work as scavengers. She agreed that when she was in the village she used to keep Madigas away and look down on them. She found such behaviour normal because all of her caste people treated Madigas in a similar fashion. After joining as scavenger, people from her own Gouda caste ridiculed her, saying that she had become a Madiga. In reply, she would say that 'I am not stealing; I am working and earning my livelihood; why should I be ashamed of working. I should be ashamed if I am stealing someone's belongings'. She further said that the majority of Madigas were in scavenging work, and that they were treating her well and not discriminating against her just because she was the only Gouda woman among all Madigas in her group. She was associated with the BMS (Bharathiya Mazdoor Sangh), a workers’ organisation in political association with BJP (Bharathiya Janatha Party). Interestingly, no Madiga scavenger was found to be associated with the BMS. It is intriguing as to why the BMS approached only a Gouda scavenging woman and none of the Madigas, who constituted the majority in this work.
G. Saroja had a different response to the question as to whether scavenging was the hereditary occupation of her family and of Dalits. She said, "it is not hereditary, but if you look around my family members most of them are scavengers, so it is may become hereditary in future" and she felt bad about it.

P. Balamani belonging to the Madiga community and native of Nagole village said that scavenging was hereditary to her family. She added, "I don't know but we were sweepers in the villages. We used to sweep Vakili (Driveway) of Doras and now we are sweeping the roads in Hyderabad."

E. Yashoda, Gayilapuram village, Cheryala Mandal of Warangal District said, "There is no link between castes and scavenging. Why this degrading work should be linked to our community. She further added, by looking at the present scenario, it is only Dalits who have been doing this work. So, it may be hereditary”.

CH Yadaiah, Gudur Village, Palakurthy Mandal of Warangal district said that he worked as Jeethagadu (Bonded Labour) with Kapulu and Gollas in his village. He used to begin work at 5 am in the morning; work began with removing the cow dung in the cattle sheds and ended in the night at 9pm. The landholder family offered him food but on a separate plate, and his plate had to be washed and kept in a cattle shed. He used to get a very small amount of Rs 5000 per year (Rs. 416 per month and Rs. 13 per day), and was often given spoiled food, was looked down upon, burdened with additional work, and was not allowed to speak out, was shouted at and humiliated. Therefore, he decided to leave the work and decided to move to Hyderabad. Now he is living in Hyderabad as a scavenger. He said that the caste-based humiliation was not there in Hyderabad city, but scavengers were looked down upon for doing the scavenging work.

Chunchu Vijaya, Dharmareddy Pally, Gajwel Mandal of Medak district said that caste discrimination was very much prevalent in her village. 10 years ago, they decided to celebrate Bathukamma, but Reddys opposed the
celebration saying that, "If Madigas celebrate Bathukamma, it would lead to disasters. There would be no rains, no crops and people would die of hunger". The Madigas of the village then questioned the Reddys. They asked, "Why should that happen? Are Madigas not human beings? Are only Reddys human beings or what?" In response, Reddys abused Madigas saying that they were not following village traditions and were becoming pogarubothulu (arrogant); Vijaya asks, the Reddys dominate Madigas, suppress Madigas and call them pogarubothulu. She asked who the pogarubothulu here are.

All the respondents agreed that Hyderabad was better than their villages when it came to caste based discrimination and humiliations. Some of the scavengers were asked their caste by the contractors and GHMC employees while recruiting them, and forming them into SHGs. Where caste was not enquired about, they showed their ration card; and we know ration card also reveals the caste. There is no caste column in the ration card but Dalits usually have a white ration card that indicates that they belong to the BPL category. Hence, looking at one's rations card, it is easy to guess their caste and decide whether they are Dalits or not. Now GHMC is asking for Aadhar card, ration card, family photo, and electricity bill for the purpose of health insurance, Provident Fund etc.

4.6. Harassments and Accidents on the Roads

Some of the scavengers have to work in the night because there are three shifts of duty in some busy areas such as railway stations such as Secunderabad, Nampally, Kacheguda; bus stands such as MGBS (Mahatma Gandhi Bus station) CBS (Central Bus station) and (JBS) Jubilee bus stand; business areas such as Charminar, Ajjalgunj, Koti, Abids, and other busy areas such as Panjagutta, Khairathabad. While working in the night, scavengers face many problems, especially the women who are harassed by auto drivers and night riders.

Some of the drunkards who ride the vehicles in the midnight hit the scavengers while they are engaged in sweeping, although GHMC has provided
radium jackets for the scavengers to be visible in the dark. In most cases, these deaths due to road accidents are not reported in the mainstream media.

In 2011, two scavenging women were killed that was reported in the news as, –Two GHMC contract workers, who were cleaning roads in the wee hours of Tuesday, were mowed down by a speeding Innova near Vengalrao Park on Road No. 1, Banjara Hills. According to the Banjara Hills police, the victims were identified as Potiraju Eswaramma, 35, a resident of Gowrishankar Colony, Road No. 10 Banjara Hills and C Naga Laxmi, 40, a resident of NBT Nagar Road No. 12, Banjara Hills. The victims were sweeping the road near GVK Mall in Banjara Hills. "At around 3 am, as the two workers were sweeping the road, a speeding Innova car (AP 28 DF 1015), moving from GVK Mall to Panjagutta, hit them near Vengalrao Park and they died on the spot." Police arrested car driver S V Rajesh, 24, a resident of Langer Houz, who was reportedly in an inebriated state. Police have registered a case under section 304-A (Causing death by rash or negligent act) of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and arrested him.\(^1\)

Since scavenging women are vulnerable and easily accessible they are prone to rapes; a widow Dalit woman with two kids migrated to Hyderabad for her livelihood from Warangal district. She reached Hyderabad and started staying with her relatives. She made all attempts to get a small job to take care of her kids but failed. Finally, she agreed to work as a scavenger. However, getting a scavenging job has also become difficult for migrants due to the brokers in between and the supervisors, even though there is a requirement for scavengers, those supervisors will take bribes and provide opportunity. A supervisor of GHMC promised her that he would make her a member of one

of the SHG and asked for Rs 5000/- as bribe. She managed to mobilise Rs 5000/- from her relatives, promising to repay the money after joining the scavenging job. The supervisor asked her to bring the money to Buvanagiri, a town nearby to Hyderabad. On the fateful day, she reached Buvanagiri bus stand in the evening and called the supervisor that she had brought the money. He made her wait for 3 hours and finally came on a two wheeler and took her to a room saying that they were both going to meet an officer of the GHMC. However, there was no officer. She was made to drink adulterated toddy and was raped by two people. The supervisor along with his friends took Rs. 5000/ and they threatened to kill her if she disclosed this incident to anyone. This was the first time she was talking about the incident. Narasimha, a social activist gave moral support to her and encouraged her to file a complaint at the Osmania university police station. The police registered an FIR and arrested the accused and GHMC removed him from the job.

Shiva, also a scavenger described another incident in which the staff members of a hotel in Vidyanagar attacked him. The hotel staff used to throw away the food waste on the road without segregating and packing it properly. It became difficult for scavengers to pick the waste; it took more time for the scavengers to collect all the wasted food on the roadside, so they asked the hotel staff to pack it and dump it in the garbage bin meant for it. Scavengers repeatedly requested the hotel staff and management to follow a method instead of throwing food waste on the road. However, the hotel staff and management did not pay heed to the advice of the scavengers and continued throwing the waste on the road. After several attempts, the scavengers told the hotel staff and management that they would not pick the waste if they threw it in such a manner. One day, the scavengers refused to clean the waste on the road. The hotel staff picked up a fight with the scavengers and beat up Shiva, and threatened to break his hands and legs, one of the staff came forward to attack him with a beer bottle. They forcefully made the scavengers clean the road with threats.

This is not a single incident. This represents the mind-set of the people towards scavenging communities, and how society and people look down on
scavengers. Shiva said, they threaten and yell not only because of the work they do, but also because they are Dalits. Everyone knows that only Dalits are engaged in the scavenging work. The caste Hindus did not do the required segregation of waste that was necessary for the safe disposal and recycling of the waste. Because the Hindu Brahmanical notion of caste and people who believe in this ideology think that the segregation of waste is not their job, they think that it is the job of Dalits.

It is in this context, the Swachh Bharat Mission is a fraudulent project, because, people are not ready to sustain cleanliness by playing their role in the process of waste management that is by segregating the waste right at the beginning. Ravichandran argues the same in his essay. He says, “Cleanliness is about keeping oneself clean and disposing of one's waste safely. After disposal, municipal workers are usually engaged to process and recycle the waste. In India, sanitary workers are required for all three stages — disposal, processing and recycling. This is embedded within the idea that waste in India should be left to one particular caste. Even government agencies, while recruiting sanitary workers in municipalities, search for the “traditional” castes associated with sanitation for cleaning.”

4.7. Corruption In The Name Of Scavengers

From 2012 onwards, GHMC removed the contractors’ system to hire scavengers and decided to form SHGs. The same was also reported in the news, —GHMC is willing to give a sweeping contract to any group of seven women who come together in an SHG. It will pay each sanitation

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worker 6,700 per month plus EPF and ESI contributions amounting to Rs. 1,000 per month. Civic body's decision to do away with the contractors altogether and engage self-help groups for the purpose”¹⁵.

The contractual system had produced some corrupt practices. The contractors never paid the specified salaries to the scavengers on time but they collected money from GHMC in the name of the scavengers. Such corrupt practices are still continuing. One such practice was to include the names of people who were not really working. The fate of the scavengers was then left to the contractors, officials and leaders engaged in making money through corrupt means. Another news article says, “There could be at least two fictitious members in each of the 2,600 seven-member self-help groups (SHGs), which are assigned the task of sweeping the city's roads, suspect senior officials of the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation”.¹⁶

One of the officers explains, “We think the erstwhile contractors have managed to infiltrate SHGs by inserting names of their wives and others during the groups’ formation itself. They never attend to work, yet salaries are promptly credited into individual bank accounts, leading to funds embezzlement”.¹⁷ It has been exactly a year since the GHMC bid goodbye to the scam-ridden contractor system where 18-member units functioned instead of the current seven-member SHGs. Nearly 18,000 contract labourers are involved in the sweeping of roads, with each drawing a salary of Rs.6,700. These SHGs have been employed in 18 circles of the city.

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¹⁶Ibid

¹⁷Ibid
It further said that,

“Hand-in-glove shocked by the Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) raid on the Qutbullapur municipal circle office where unaccounted money of Rs.1.99 lakh was found in the possession of some municipal staff, GHMC officials firmly believe in the connivance of local public representatives and staff in the affair. That there are leaks in the system despite crediting salaries into individual accounts without the group leader having any say is unfortunate.”

Such corrupt means of making money in the name of scavengers reminds one of the situations that existed a few decades ago in Telangana. The feudal landholders forced Dalits as their bonded labourers. When the government introduced the Bonded Labour (Prohibition) Act in 1976, the feudal landholders produced their bonded labourer before the Thahsildar and applied for their rehabilitation packages. They then took away that money and kept those bonded labourers in similar conditions of bondage.

The salaries of the workers are paid at the end of the month. The SHG leader submits the bill to the municipality at the end of the month for the work done. These bills can be cleared in 2-3 days if they are processed properly, but the payments are done a month after the submission of bills. Scavenging women have to bribe several people in between. The sanitary women workers have to clean the dirt and are forced to pay bribes to sanitary jawans to accountants to sanitary inspectors; therefore everybody has to be bribed to release their salaries. Due to the delay in payment of salaries, the scavenging women have to take loans on high interest rates to meet the expenses of their daily food, house rent and other needs.

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The sanitary jawans and inspectors demand sexual favours from these women and also expect them to do the domestic chores in their homes. If these demands are rejected by sanitary women, they are posted for duty in faraway places or they are refused extension of the contract for the next month.

The public also tease sanitary workers while passing by on their vehicles in a drunken resort. The latter often face verbal abuse. In some instances they have also thrown empty bottles at the women. They look down on them and use filthy language. The shop owners don’t spare the workers until even the smallest bit of paper is removed from in front of their shop. But they never care to give even a glass of water to them.

Some of the political leaders use sanitary workers as their bonded labourers during occasions such as marriages or birthday functions. The entire cleaning is expected to be done by sanitary workers. Sometimes, those political leaders send sanitary workers to their relatives’ functions, and if the workers refuse to attend to them, they are threatened with removal from work and complaints to GHMC officials.

4.8. It Is Not Sanskritisation

Sanskritisation was coined and defined by M N. Srinivas in the 1950s as a social process in which the lower castes looked for upward mobility by adopting the habits, rituals and practices of the upper or dominant castes. He argued that,

"The caste system is far from a rigid system in which the position of each component caste is fixed for all time. Movement has always been possible, and especially in the middle regions of the hierarchy. A caste was able, in a generation or two, to rise to a higher position in the hierarchy by adopting vegetarianism and teetotalism, and by Sanskritizing its ritual and pantheon. In short, it took over, as far as possible, the customs, rites, and beliefs of the Brahmins, and adoption of the Brahmanic way of life by a low caste seems to
have been frequent, though theoretically forbidden. This process has been called 'Sanskritisation' in this book.\footnote{AP Barnabas, \textit{Sanskritisation}, Economic Weekly April 15, 1961, p 613, available at - http://www.epw.in/system/files/pdf/1961_13/15/sanskritisation.pdf?0=ip_logi
n_no_cache%3Da987ed89d766095a989f6fe0d1a81058, viewed on 3\textsuperscript{rd} Jan 2016}

The above concept of Sanskritisation among the lower castes was rejected by the Dalit scholars who have criticised that it is the Indian state which has been promoting the brahmanization of lower caste groups and that it is the process which is an unavoidable onslaught on the lower caste groups.

Here is an example about how three Dalit women have stopped eating non-vegetarian food. Three women scavengers responded to the interview that they stopped eating non-vegetarian food. They were asked to remove the decomposed dead body of a dog on the road, and while they were trying to shift the dead body, the body parts disintegrated. They had to do the work with their bare hands, without gloves, shoes or masks, as the protective gear that the GHMC should provide, but does not. Since then wherever they see meat, they remember the dead dog and avoid eating meat. Some academicians may argue that those three Dalit women stopped eating non-vegetarian food because of their aspiration to be sanskritised.

It is not out of context to see what Dalit activists have to say about the concept of Sanskritisation. Anoop Kumar, a Dalit activist and teacher rejects the entire concept of Sanskritisation. According to him,

\textit{...the process, that is being called as Sanskritisation by academicians had nothing to do with lower castes 'aping' to become 'mainstream' or 'respectable'. Dalits were mere victims of 'Indian' nation state. Like every colonial enterprise...}
in the history, the Brahmanical Indian nation demanded the acceptance of its cultural codes before handing down few doles to all those it colonized. This was the price to be paid to become an 'Indian' citizen. For a generation of Dalits that had a long history of deprivation and servitude; this was their only chance. With every government institution in their control, they promoted, propagated every Brahmanical ideology that was possible in the 20th century. It was literally a cakewalk for them. Why I feel the theory of 'Sanskritisation' is hot air is because it absolves the Indian nation state of all its Brahmanical hegemonic mischief and put the entire onus on lower castes, giving them the entire agency of this 'change' ... the only time these scholars are willing to give lower caste that 'respect'.”

He further says,

—once asked my mother how these changes occurred in our family. How did Hindu gods, goddesses and their rituals entered in our homes. This was just after reading Professor Kancha Illaiah's 'Why I am not Hindu' in 2001. Reading that book provoked me to ask such questions as I could relate to a large extent to what was being written. My mother told me all this started just after my father got a government job in the early 1960s and started living in different cities in 'government colonies' and the images of Hindu gods and goddesses came via New Year diaries that the government circulated and local shop keepers' calendars and rituals by 'aping' upper caste families. However, I know my family and thousands of other first generation literate Dalit families stood no chance against this Brahmanical onslaught then. Brahmin sociologist Prof M.N. Srinivas called this process 'Sanskritisation' and reasoned it as an aspiration of lower castes for upward mobility. Like any 'upper' caste scholar, he was wrong.”

4.9. Scavengers die before their retirement age

Given the situation of misunderstandings around the rampant prevalence of casteism and discrimination against Dalits, that is forcing Dalits

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20 Anoop Kumar, Dalit Activist and teacher, interviewed by Karthik Navayan in Nagpur on 24th October 2015
into the modern slavery of scavenging and other menial jobs, it is difficult to address the problem of caste and achieve cleanliness. The mainstream caste oriented understanding of civic bodies regarding scavenging has resulted not only in dragging Dalits into scavenging, but also in not providing the required equipment for scavenging leading to the unnatural deaths of scavengers.

While cleaning the dust and garbage on the roads, the sanitary workers have to inhale the same and it reaches their lungs directly. The same continues not for a day or two but every day. As a result, kilos of dust accumulate into their lungs and lead to cold, cough lung problems, sinus, asthma etc. and while cleaning the drainages they face the stench which leads to headaches and vomiting. As there is no protection for their body, they often contract malaria, diarrhoea, cholera, etc. The dead bodies of the accident-hit animals have to be removed by the sanitation workers, and if there is a death of any orphan or unidentified person, the women sanitary workers have to get the post-mortem done and also perform the last rites. This is the life of sanitary workers. An old scavenging woman puts it thus, “There is no drinking water on the one hand and on the other hand, there are no toilet facilities”. This results in unhealthy conditions.

The officers abuse sanitation workers if they are found taking rest somewhere in the shadows of the trees or walls. But when it comes to providing equipment, they never provide the proper tools that are required for maintaining cleanliness. The brooms are too short and the sweepers have to clean two kilometres of roads in the big colonies. As a result, many suffer spinal cord related problems.

As pointed out by Barbara Harris-White, “Most work involving waste products is hard, dangerous and oppressive. A 2014 Human Rights Watch report stated that 90 per cent of India’s sanitation
workers die before they reach retirement age”. She further says, “India’s waste management economy is clearly and uniquely impregnated with caste. Research suggests that to break this down modern jobs that are caste-neutral are needed, along with opportunities for education and migration. The workers I spoke to agreed and added that there was a need to provide opportunities for self-employment, which they felt gave them some much-desired independence. They also expressed the need for greater state intervention.”

GHMC advertises all kinds of positive aspects in their brochures, booklets and hoardings. They provide the contact numbers of sanitation workers to the local people. They display scavengers name and contact numbers on the street walls for people to contact them, especially if they have failed to attend work on a given day. There are instances when men call the women sanitary workers and harass them resulting in further problems on the domestic front of the latter.

The handbook of civic body says,

“MCH has strived hard in giving its citizens a clean and green city. It is the winner of the national “Clean City Award” for three consecutive years. A clean city involves services in different areas like sanitation, greenery and public health. The Health & Sanitation Department of the Corporation is entrusted with the responsibility of making Hyderabad a clean city and is headed by Additional Commissioner, Health & Sanitation [AC (H&S)], duly assisted by the Chief Medical Officer of Health (CMOH), Chief Entomologist, Chief Veterinary Officer and Assistant Medical Officer of Health (Head Office) [AMOH(HO)] at the Head Office level and Assistant Medical Officers of Health at the Circle level and Medical Officer of Health (MOH) in Secunderabad Division”.

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21 Barbara Harris white, *the politics of waste management*, The Hindu daily newspaper, dated 7 October 2015
22 Ibid
23 GHMC Handbook, p.67
The people in the above list are commissioners, managers and doctors who are also important for maintenance of the cleanliness of the city, but without sanitation workers, it is impossible for GHMC to get a “clean city” award. However, the civic body never mentions the sanitation workers who are doing the actual act of maintaining the cleanliness of Hyderabad city. It is an irony that institutions such as municipalities and Gram Panchayats are known as “civic bodies”.

4.10. Modern Day Caste Forced Slavery

As observed in the above chapters, the Brahmanical feudal caste system in Telangana with its ugly and evil social practices has forced the Madigas, Malas and other untouchable castes to migrate and to adopt this modern day slavery of scavenging. A few decades ago the same communities were engaged in Vetti (free labour), bonded labour, and the women of those untouchable castes were forced to become Joginis to satisfy the sexual lust of those upper castes men in the villages, and these untouchable castes have lost everything including lands to the dominant castes for the attacks on them in the name of witch-hunting (Banamathi). In Hyderabad, in secular modern state institutions, the untouchable scavengers are treated the same way that they were treated in villages a few decades ago. As put forward by the Garima Abhiyan who argues that scavenging in India, is not a “work”, “job” “profession” or “occupation” but is a caste forced slavery of untouchable communities that is still continuing in modern forms in all modern institutions.

The present conditions that scavengers are living in are not different from that of bonded labour, or Vetti that was practiced on them only a few decades ago. The GHMC rules on book are completely different from their daily practices. The officials in the GHMC always look for listed holidays,
optional and other available leaves to avail of to enjoy their life. However, there is no single holiday for the sanitation workers throughout the year. According to official records, they should receive weekly offs, and they should get a monthly salary for working 26 days in a month. But in reality, and unless they work for the entire month without weekly offs they are not paid the entire month's salary.

Officially, every scavenger is required to sweep a distance of 0.75 kilometers of road or colony. However, in reality they are forced to sweep 2 kilometers. This clearly amounts to exploitation. They work twice for the payment that they get. Even when the scavenging women are pregnant they are expected to come to duty and sweep the same length; otherwise, they would be removed from duty. They are also not given any maternity benefits. If a pregnant woman is absent for a month for childbirth, her place would be filled by another woman and there is no guarantee of her getting back her place at work. When those women comeback after childbirth and ask for work, the officials demand bribes ranging from Rs.20000 to Rs. 100000/- . Also, due to the lack of nutritious food, the children born to them are unhealthy and often suffer from pneumonia; the women also donot get proper nutritional food after their delivery because they are unable to work.

Some of the scavenging women take loans from beggars at 5 percent interest rates for their survival. The average rate for unskilled labour in Hyderabad is now about Rs. 500, and if a coolie work all days of the month, he makes up to Rs. 15000/- per month. However, the scavengers were paid Rs. 6700/- until June 2015, and now it has been increased to Rs. 12000/- after a strike was conducted for two months in July and August 2015.
Conclusion

Anand Teltumbde argues that without annihilation of caste no cleanliness is possible in India. He says, “While the world over people have imbibed –eivic sense” and primarily bear the responsibility to maintain cleanliness, only secondarily relying upon sanitary workers, in India, people derive a sense of(upper-caste) superiority in littering the place, expecting it to be cleaned by the lower-caste scavenger. If a small community of these scavengers, treated worse than shit and exploited to the hilt, is vested with the responsibility of clearing the filth generated by 1,250 million people with impunity, the country is destined to remain unclean”.24 As pointed out by Anand the issue of cleanliness is directly linked with the annihilation of the caste system. People have to believe that they should engage in the segregation of waste produced by them by keeping their religious notions aside.

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