Chapter-4.

Pune Municipal Corporation Employees Union and Safai Labour
A Case Study across Generations

Having referred to multiple sources of literature to understand the historical consolidation of scavenging strongholds and subsequently the institutional inclusion of scavengers under colonial administrative processes, the present study explores different forms of existing scavenging labour practices in PMC to which the Scheduled Castes are predominantly tied up. In the colonial period, there were reproduced structural and occupational hierarchies within the scavengers by British municipality manuals. The situation in many large civic local bodies even after post-independence and globalized institutional makeover is unchanged or in some cases intensified. Due to the fact that these administrative inadequacies have drawn Safai labour into insecure, unclean working cultures despite of constitutional protective laws; Safai Commissions for their improvements in living and working conditions; and adequate sanitary technological reforms made by the Pune Municipal Corporation itself. By giving historical premise, this chapter on the PMC Employees Union draws upon the importance of case study method outlined in the methodological framework of the study. While writing the case method, in the first section, I illustrate the significance of the PMC Union history highlighting its negotiations on past and present resistances and struggles against unlawful resolutions of labour policies and community and health security by PMC and State authorities against Safai-Kamgar. The second section would depict the resistance and struggle for coalition politics of union, thus, my effort would be to organize detailed archives in accordance with first-handed information obtained through published pamphlets and manuals by the PMC union itself. The third section of chapter reflects decisive suggestions, recommendations on several issues brought forth by PMC union comrades themselves into community political domains; the role of new middle class among the lower strata; organizational pressure groups to bring about long-term changes into the mental and political framework of lower Safai sections to have their own liberation. This section also refers to entry of Dalits in Safai labour, economic reforms; challenge against new labour contracts (Thekedari) and sub-contracts settings; and lengthy procedures in exercising the customary law for Vashila-Karar. The fourth section
sheds light on the non-fulfillment of municipal laws and minimum wage act for workers since their formations. In the fifth section, I review multiple consensus and debates regarding achievements of PMC Union which emerged from interviews with PMC union officials vis-à-vis comrades; Union Secretary, Joint Secretary (Karyadhyakshya) and the other community social activists. In addition, it also incorporates the existing State municipal and factory labour laws, legislations, present key recommendations by government for strong implementations. And the last and sixth section tries to explore the individual case studies of the Safai workers represented across caste, gender and occupational job categories by underlining different forms of insecurities and relative social exclusions from inter-generation mobility point of view.

**Relevance of the case study method**

An exploratory case study method is employed in the present chapter in order to illustrate overall collective mobilization and resistance of formal but peripheral working classes by interviewing distinguished union personalities, institutional documents of the trade union, narratives of individual Safai workers by gender, caste and their occupational labour typologies.* These allow us to see confluence of lives, institutions, historical processes, technological convergence of labour and so on and so forth. According to one prominent sociologist, the case deals with a social unit that a person, a group, a social institution, district or a community (Young: 1966). Case studies are usually characterized as thorough examinations of specific social settings or particular aspects of social settings including a varying detail a psychological distribution of persons in those settings (James and Dean: 1976). Moreover, a case can be individual; it can be group-such as a family, or class, or an office, or a hospital ward; it can be an institution - such as school or a children’s home, or a factory; it can be a large-scale community- a town, an industry, a profession. All of these are single cases; but someone can also study multiple cases: a number of single parents; several schools; two different professions. It all depends what you want to find out- which leads us on. As part of a *multi-method* approach, this is at the heart of the case study method (although multi-methods do not just apply to case studies). This is the notion of *convergence*: different kinds of evidence, gathered in a different ways, but bearing on the same point. Case study is main method, within it difficult sub-methods are used: interviews, observations, documents and record analysis, work samples, and so
The primary way of formulating a case study report is a narrative following the logic and chronology of our investigations and reasoning. But the case study researcher seeks to recreate the context and sequences of evidence in a way that enables the reader to see and understand the meaning of what is recounted, and thus has to use a more overtly narratives format (Gillham: 2000). A case study is in which researcher investigates to answer specific research questions (that may be fairly loose to begin with) and which seeks a range of different kinds of evidence, evidence which is there in the case setting, and which has to be abstracted and collated to get the best possible answers to the research questions. It should be noted here that case study research has only recently come into its own, not being part of natural sciences style ‘positivistic philosophy’ which in dilute form has dominated the human sciences for so long. In its extreme, original form, positivistic philosophers asserted that only observable, and verifiable, phenomena could be the subject matter of science; this excluded subjective phenomena or ‘unverifiable theories’. It can be argued the naturalistic style of case study research makes it particularly appropriate to study human phenomena, and what it means to be human in the real world `as it happens`. Natural sciences research is aimed at generalizable findings (which may have general implications for theory). But in human behaviour, generalization from one group of people to others, or one institution to another is often suspects-because there are too many elements that are specific to that group or institution. Case study research with subjectivity; focuses on phenomenological meaning. This does not mean that you ignore the objective (what people do; what records show and so on) but that you are after the qualitative elements: how people understand themselves, or their setting-what lies behind the more objective evidence. Nor does it mean that you ignore `results`. However, before one go is further down this road it needs to be emphasized that case study research is not exclusively concerned with qualitative methods: all evidence is pulled into the case study researcher’s data collection. However, qualitative methods (and what they enable you to do) are primary.

While using the case study method in any research, data is collected from the respondents through personal interviews, key informants, and participatory and non-participatory observation. The importance of the case study lies in giving proper evidence and the usages of case study method become more significant through qualitative data rather than quantitative. Similarly, case study research does not equate
qualitative (descriptive, interpretative) methods and data only. They are predominant, but quantitative data and its analysis can add to the overall picture. Providing they are not too complex, there is something distinctively clarifying about numbers. Seductively so in that they can carry an air of precision that is spurious. But statistics only lie to those who do not understand them. Quantitative data has a special place in case study research in so far as it extends the range of evidence on the topics under investigation and qualifies what we have learnt from other sources. This kind of cross-referencing is part of the internal validity of a case study; it all has to fit together- and theorizing (explanation) has to account for all of it. Reviewing and summarizing is essential to the discipline of case study research: a kind of intellectual stocktaking. It needs to be done regularly and systematically-only in that way will you maintain the necessary level of control over the process. Case study research can easily `lose shape` because of the complexity of the material. In other words, it is said that case study research is very much like detective work. Nothing is disregarded: everything is weighed and sifted; and checked or corroborated.

Drawing upon distinct sort of definitions and general canons by mentioned above, I use of case study method to PMC Employees Union for the following:

1. To explore the critical standpoint of `Leninist-Marxist ideology` of PMC Employee Union on contemporary Indian political economy and induced flexible or informal labour policies in government public sector.

2. To assess the constituted aims and objectives of the PMC union.

3. To take a general overview on numbers of labour agreements between PMC and PMC Union based on suggested recommendations by appointed Safai Commissions and Committees, acts, provisions under State and Central Government (e.g., Barve, Malkani, Pandya, Lad Commissions etc.) for improvement of living and working conditions of Safai kamgars.

4. To understand the inclusionary strategies of PMC union to eliminate the social and educational deprivations while providing moral training by giving informal education, political awareness programmes, and crime control remedies to youth generation.

5. To propose the rehabilitation plan for slum ghettos, modifications of customary heir right; and civic organizational apparatuses by forming political pressure groups.
4. 1. Historical Overview of PMC Employees Union

By using content analysis method, the detailed history of PMC Union is drawn through labour surveys, reports, published pamphlets, audio-video CDs, documentary films and discussions made by PMC union executive members and with few retired Safai workers. It does not make any claim to factual accuracy, but it is an attempt to seek their sense of past. The PMC Employees Union, which is the registered under Maharashtra Trade Union (MRTU Act, registration No.293) as the Maharashtra Shramik Trade Union, was formed in 1943, December 10 by explicitly advocating Leninist-Marxist philosophical ideology. Before elaborating its functional qualities, the inspiration drawn from commemorating the violent upsurge in 1986 by popular legends (five brave workers on the legal demand for 8 hours work-shift in the industrial factories of Chicago city in America) may be outlined. Under the strict government security deployment, they were eventually convicted and sentenced to death as per the American judiciary court. This militancy of different working class movements was the cause in the emergence of Lal-nishan/zenda/bawata as a labour party insisting on demands against the working class exploitation and inequalities under modern State capitalism. Therefore Lal-nishan/bawata is a metaphor against exploitative nature of modern capitalism and nation-State’s repression. The second martyrs who legendary are 105 Marathi workers who fought and gave up their lives for the unification of joint (Sanyukta) Maharashtra. As part of these popular working class legends, the International Labour Day (May, 1) is celebrated by PMC union to commemorate memories of working legends. A popular political slogan was born out as 'Calling Workers of the world, unite! One could see that the PMC Union founders initiated plan in favour of the Lenin-Marxist communist ideology when they were studying in high-school. Being one of an optimist national ideology, Navjeevan Sanghatana as a giant organizational network in Pune initiated its affiliation for comrades and traditional labouring classes in 1925. Moreover, proliferate efforts were taken by the pioneer leadership such as Comrade-Appasaheb Bhosale, S.K.Limaye, Yashwant Chavan, Bhau Phatak, Madhukar Kakade, R.S.Patil, Dr.Katre, Ashok Manohar, Ram Kamble (former PMC opposition party leader), Ambadas More (Ex-Chairman of PMC Union). The PMC union has about 40 years of history of successfully managing and intervening on various labour issues. Before the formation of PMC union, the chief founders like Prabhakar Gokhale, A.D.Bhosale, conducted the notorious labour surveys and strikes at all Maharashtra level for endorsing the
recommendations and suggestions made by firstly Malkani Commission (Vashila-karar) during 1960-1967 on the issue of increasing scavenging work degradations and need for the customary heir right. In the period 1966-1976, the PMC union took up a leading role for the implementation of Vashila-karar agreement (Customary heir recruitment law) in PMC. As an outcome, the State government appointed the Lad Committee to review previous demands made by the union and to modify a new ‘vashila-karar’ agreement to those Safai workers who are the recipients of unclean allowance.

4.1.1. Trade Union: Background of 1990s: The pre-independence labour movement had struck at diverse labour issue in Maharashtra. Seeking the labour mobilization of unorganized labour through leftist rhetoric, PMC Employees Union was begun to underline labour issue against the old colonial Pune Municipality under the leadership of Bhau Phatak mainly addressing the undignified scavenging labour practices by Dalit communities across Pune. Since the period 1940-1943, there was merely a group of 30 scavengers; called as Maila/Kundi Coolies who used to carry out sweeping, cleaning and carcass removing related work in major parts of the city. Concomitantly, the movement revolved around the issue of manual scavenging for its rudimentary sanitary structure in which the maila coolie and kundi workers used to contract directly human excreta. House chamber (maila-kundi) was set up at 8-10 ft depth from ground areas where it was directly connected to the main drainage line. Along with such rudimentary sanitation alignments and the unhygienic environment, these scavengers had to usually face hatredness of orthodoxy of Pune civilians who even banned the transportations of maila-garbage during day-times. In fact, they would transport the city maila-garbage at night by holding kerosene lamps (diva) on the bullock-carts without safety measures. With the point of their occupational liberation, the movement began to put forth basic demands regarding definite duty work-hours, proper and timely remuneration of work and health safety on the workplaces. Besides these, other demands also brought to forefront the need to maintain the documentation and service records by the PMC in order to be officially designated their labour. The demand for fixed minimum wages and providing uniforms and payment slips as per the British municipal manual record (which earlier used to be unregulated by State administration processes) was also charted for several new developed and designated labour typologies such as Kachra motor Bigari, sweepers, drainage Bigari, animal
keepers etc. While forging these harsh issues, Bhau Phatak mobilized these Dalit scavengers as well as other informal labourers such as a ‘Gota-kamgar’, ‘Kotwal’, ‘Van-kamgar’, small peasants, farm labourer, krushti-utpanna bazaar Samittee kamgar, construction, press workers, small scale industrial workers for their social, economic and political inclusions and henceforth formed a labour union called a PMC Employees Union after 10 years the period during 1943-1954. At the same time, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar established a foundation for these Dalit Safai-kamgars by setting up a similar labour union which became inactive later on. Through consistent efforts, Prabhakar Gokhale was appointed as a first PMC Union president when the Pune municipality endorsed its makeover as a Pune Municipal Corporation on 15 February 1950. During the period 1952-54, Dr. Katre took on as Union General Secretary when A.D.Bhosale was underground forced by State law and went to Kolhapur to grasp the agenda for the working class movements. From 1954 to 2002, A.D.Bhosale worked as a General Secretary and started to formulate labour strategies by incorporating several other labour unions in the State. Such great successive personalities like, Prabhakar Gokhale, Bhau Phatak and A.D.Bhosale have contributed to the union through their efforts. Consequently, PMC Union got its stronghold from Lal-bawata ideology which canvassed workers, peasants and citizens from different parts of Maharashtra and States of India. Their decisive role in several issues of welfare of organized and unorganized workers could shape golden days for PMC union as well as for Lal-Nishan Party across India. After demise of union founder fathers, the union had to bear lot of problems while formulating labour strategies and sustainability. Following the inspirational works of A.D.Bhosale, Prabhakar Gokhale and Ashok Manohar, one of the Lal-nishan party activists Comrade Mukta Manohar took over the responsibilities of PMC union alongwith Comrade Prakash Jadhav. Due to their wide-ranging activism, PMC Union was able to set membership targets exceeding 14,000 for Pune district itself. The official activities of PMC Union are administered and governed by All Maharashtra Shramik Bhavan, Pune while organizing training camps and community awareness programs for workers and labourers across Maharashtra districts. Besides that, PMC Union nominated ward/zone union members among the Safai Kamgars. Most importantly among the ward representatives, there was also nomination of about 20 women Safai kamgars as Secretary and Joint secretary. Besides the ward representations, the Shramik Trade Bhavan nominates about four office bearers including 2 clerks, 1 peon
and about 4 voluntarily advisers. In fact, nominations are across different social and economic classes and castes categories. The educational level of Shramik staff members is ranges from VII to XII class in order to carry different official tasks.

**PMC Ward/Zone Wise Union Governing Members**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr. No</th>
<th>Name of worker</th>
<th>Caste</th>
<th>Present PMC Designation</th>
<th>Union Governing Member</th>
<th>Ward Office</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Prakash.B.Chavan</td>
<td>Valmiki</td>
<td>Mehtar-Bigari</td>
<td>Joint secretary</td>
<td>Dhole-Patil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Sakhubai Waydande</td>
<td>Matang</td>
<td>Sweeper</td>
<td>Vice-president</td>
<td>Vishram-baug</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Prakash Hurkudale</td>
<td>OBC</td>
<td>Asst. electrician</td>
<td>Vice-president</td>
<td>Hadapsar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Madhukar Narsingh</td>
<td>Matang</td>
<td>Bigari</td>
<td>Executive member</td>
<td>Ghole-Patil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Ratanbai Dhimdhime</td>
<td>Matang</td>
<td>Battery-man</td>
<td>Executive Member</td>
<td>Tilak Road</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Rama Kokare</td>
<td>Maratha</td>
<td>Gada Bigari</td>
<td>Executive member</td>
<td>Vishram-baug</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Savitribai Bhise</td>
<td>Matang</td>
<td>Sweeper</td>
<td>Executive member</td>
<td>Varje-Karve Rd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Kanu Jadhav</td>
<td>Buddhist</td>
<td>Motor Bigari</td>
<td>Executive member</td>
<td>Sangamwadi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Dileep Badhe</td>
<td>OBC</td>
<td>Battery-man</td>
<td>Executive member</td>
<td>Sangamwadi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Prashant Gunjal</td>
<td>NT</td>
<td>Bigari-Udhyan</td>
<td>Executive member</td>
<td>Varje-Karve Rd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Nagnath Gaikwad</td>
<td>Buddhist</td>
<td>Bigari</td>
<td>Executive member</td>
<td>Sangamwadi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Santosh Londhe</td>
<td>Buddhist</td>
<td>Bigari</td>
<td>Executive member</td>
<td>Yerwada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Chandrakant Ghamre</td>
<td>Matang</td>
<td>Bigari</td>
<td>Executive member</td>
<td>Dhankavadi</td>
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<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>Arun Kamble</td>
<td>Matang</td>
<td>Bigari</td>
<td>Executive member</td>
<td>Karve Road</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>Suman Adsul</td>
<td>Buddhist</td>
<td>Bigari</td>
<td>Executive member</td>
<td>Bibwewadi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>Anand More</td>
<td>Buddhist</td>
<td>Bigari</td>
<td>Executive member</td>
<td>Sahakar nagar</td>
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<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>Madhusudan Tupe</td>
<td>Maratha</td>
<td>Bigari</td>
<td>Executive member</td>
<td>Hadapsar</td>
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<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>Mangla Rasge</td>
<td>NT</td>
<td>Bigari</td>
<td>Executive member</td>
<td>Aundh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>Ajay Gole</td>
<td>Brahmin</td>
<td>Fire brigade</td>
<td>Executive member</td>
<td>Karve Road</td>
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<td>20.</td>
<td>Rajabhaum Gaikwad</td>
<td>Buddhist</td>
<td>Assistant</td>
<td>Executive member</td>
<td>PMC Press</td>
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<tr>
<td>21.</td>
<td>Nitin Mate</td>
<td>Maratha</td>
<td>Pump Operator</td>
<td>Executive member</td>
<td>Sahakar nagar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.</td>
<td>Anil Naik</td>
<td>OBC</td>
<td>Bigari</td>
<td>Executive member</td>
<td>Bhavani Peth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23.</td>
<td>Ram Adagale</td>
<td>Matang</td>
<td>Bigari</td>
<td>Executive member</td>
<td>Dhole-Patil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24.</td>
<td>Usha Alhat</td>
<td>Buddhist</td>
<td>Bigari</td>
<td>Executive member</td>
<td>Bhavani Peth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25.</td>
<td>Rajesh Avate</td>
<td>Matang</td>
<td>Bigari</td>
<td>Executive member</td>
<td>Vishram-baug</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26.</td>
<td>Namdeo Jadhav</td>
<td>Matang</td>
<td>Security Dept.</td>
<td>Executive member</td>
<td>PMC Building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27.</td>
<td>S Patil</td>
<td>Maratha</td>
<td>Bigari</td>
<td>Executive member</td>
<td>Shikshan Building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28.</td>
<td>Nana Orape</td>
<td>NT</td>
<td>Ward-Boy Ret.</td>
<td>Executive member</td>
<td>PMC Hospital</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29.</td>
<td>Vasant More</td>
<td>Buddhist</td>
<td>Peon</td>
<td>Executive member</td>
<td>Octroi Dept.</td>
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<tr>
<td>30.</td>
<td>S Pardesshi</td>
<td>OBC</td>
<td>Compounder</td>
<td>Executive member</td>
<td>PMC Hospital</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.1.2. Detailed archives of decisive strikes, *bandh-dharne-aandolan-morcha* by PMC Employee Union over the period 1960-2008, collected pamphlet and union record suggest the following:

1. The 1966s strike was fought against PMC for the demand of unclean allowance (*Ghan-bhatta*) and timely wage payment based on earlier suggested recommendations of Malkani, Barve, Pandya, Lad Commissions etc.

2. After the declaration of *Central Wage Commission* in 1966, 1976 strike was waged for 4 days at all India level to demand the dearness allowance for municipality and municipal corporation employees as the rule was enforced by central government itself. The leading PMC employees union included other all India level municipal councils and municipal corporation unions to support this demand despite the rejection by several ministers of the *Yashwantrao Chavan* government in Maharashtra. All PMC conservancy and non-conservancy departments including Octroi revenue department also actively participated for this *bandh*. Several workers, activist were detained by the police. As a result, the PMC union could attain the benefits of dearness allowance like the central government workers. The agreement was approved, at whatever time, the Centre Government will increase dearness allowances of their worker, and it would be also applicable and compulsory to PMC workers. Therefore, it could be regarded a historical agreement between PMC and PMC Employees Union under the leadership of *A.D.Bhosale*. While, around 100 *Safai-sevak* from various departments benefited in terms of house-accommodation facilities in *Bibwewadi-Pune* due to consistent series of struggles against PMC administration.

3) The 1986s strike was waged by asking demands for residential and housing accommodations and HRA for the *Safai-Sevak*. Before the year 1954, there were inadequate colonies built by PMC, but there were nothing in the form of restoration and new proposal for extra colonies for the constant increasing numbers of migrated safai-sevak in the PMC Departments. As a result of this strike, near about 3000 Safai kamgar benefited for the flat allotment in the PMC colonies.

4) In 1991, PMC union won the court case against PMC on the demand for proper health treatments measures to Safai and sanitary workers. In fact, the PMC is the one of the first municipal corporation in India who was able to introduce the *Central EGSC Medical Scheme* since 2006. The EGSC scheme insures free health and medical treatment by recognized hospitals in Pune such as Ruby, Jahangir, Poona and Mangeshkar hospitals. Despite having ESG health insurance coverage for employees,
some hospitals probably refused to hospitalize the PMC workers due to often delayed payment of hospital bills by PMC. Under such circumstances, the appointed PMC Committee was made to call meetings once in three months to discuss various shortcomings in health treatments, pending worker’s complaints and experiences in recognized hospitals. In general, there are also weekly meetings which are held in a weekends. Through such meetings, numerous issues are discussed regarding annual fees, regular maintenance and rent of trade union office and so on and so forth.

5) On 7 September-2006, the PMC union went on strike against decision proposed by the PMC for harnessing the sanitation technologies such as ‘Road Shooting Machine’, ‘Vacuum Machine’ to reduce the costs on labour. On the issue of subcontracting wide level road sweepings, and other kinds of sanitation repairs, huge amount of tender Rs.18 lakhs was sanctioned to Messrs B.V. India Ltd. The PMC put forth the reasons that huge heaps of road dust cannot be swept by sweepers alone. Constant road diggings under road-widening and other repair purposes, these machines were remained under no use factions. Very often union did warn the PMC administration against these labour replacing machines. Nevertheless, PMC has employed it on Paud road garbage depot under Bio-gas fertilizers project that generated from wet-garbage wastes. The project remained discontinued due to an inefficient plan and management. Despite the fact that the PMC purchased such costly infrastructure equipments; such as the dialysis machine in Dalvi hospital; filtration machine in water filtration plant and additionally more than 500 new garbage carrier vehicles to improve routine transport frequencies into different areas. The Paud Bio-project plan withdrew due to inability to maintain the vast expenses on such costly equipments. Under the mismanagement and failure circumstances, the PMC union strived to confront private contracts, sub-contracts and even offers of income packages through outsourcing for high-tech skill workers into different sanitary and non-sanitary departments. Consequently, the PMC had to face budget deficit having wasted a huge amount of money for these projects.

6) A macro campaign was organized by the PMC union on 3 Nov. 2007 to prevent the privatization of Dalvi hospital by a decision given by PMC General Committee. Being a PMC hospital, affordable and modest costs are usually charged by Dalvi hospital on maternity facilities, operation surgeries and medicines for the poor people since 50 years. It also holds different national programmes like pulse polio vaccine campaign. In these programmes, more about 80 nurses and doctors served.
7) On 30 April 2006, political campaign was carried out against State’s verdict on dissolution of Municipal Octroi Department. To have confrontations against this movement, the PMC union had to orient different leftist based-slogans on the issues of labour displacement (proliferation from the organized to unorganized) and anti-authoritarian State (democratic socialism to neo-liberal capitalism); such as “Save the Octroi revenue” by confronting different social organizations and NGOs Sanghatana, and few political parties as well. They propagated obvious clarification on the importance of Octroi revenues to be increased for PMC economic infrastructural developments, employees’ salary and even the budget on citizen’s welfare. The PMC union holds an accountability to resist this decision. More importantly, the PMC union regards that the Octroi revenue is collected through people and enterprises could be as like as blood veins which helps to circulate the blood all over the human body and hence this circulation process forever sustains human lives. In last five years, the PMC annual turn-over was about Rs.700 Crores and hence the PMC Octroi Department could be regarded as an ideal model in India. In subsequent years in PMC history at 1982; 1986; and 1995, the Maharashtra State has often announced its favour in the Octroi dissolution. In additions, State Government led Bongirwar Commission was appointed to prevent systematic malpractices and corruption into PMC Departments. Under the leadership of A.D.Bhosale and the PMC Union set up “Nagri Seva Raksha Samittee” to track down and even also recognize the roots in systematic and chain mechanisms of the corporate corruption within municipal Octroi Revenue Department at Maharashtra level. By its preliminary observations on causes of Octroi corruption, the Nagri Seva Raksha Samittee also convinced municipalities and municipal corporations across Maharashtra about their betterment through Octroi revenue profits. In 1982, the union established a special monitoring squad (gastti-pathak) while nominating IV class PMC workers. This union led gastti-pathak could identify some sort of manipulation methods among routine Octroi collection. While penetrating in the Octroi management on the local urban government bodies, the union led committee laid out rigorous time frames to be achieved its goals and hence these members remained active through unlimited duty hours. On the final recovery time; especially for the PMC, the PMC union not only succeed in saving PMC Octroi Department but it also able to raise income turn-over from about 12.5 Crores to 34 Crores.
4. 2. Standpoint of PMC Employees Union
Despite the continuous incorporation of the downtrodden labouring sections, the PMC union with support by the congregated Shramik Labour Trade Union has hosted several important issues regarding the rampant inflation of essential commodities; retrenchment of welfare labour laws; encroachment on right to strike as per supreme court’s verdict; social security and establishment of new labour reform policies; and women’s empowerment issues in general; whereas the commercialization of trade and education; systematic institutional corruption; obsessive alcoholic addictions among youth; struggles against government’s failure on the ‘Employment Guarantee Scheme (EGS); and protection of the PMC Octroi Revenue Department in particular. Since the upsurge of freedom movement and massive networks of independent freedom fighters, there had also been emerging the crucial and alternative forces of Marxist communist movements. On Indian national level, the communist movements have always challenged the economic class struggles between capitalist nation-State and working/proletariat classes and launched emancipatory projects for peasants, farmers and industrial small/large scale workers. In local Pune context, the PMC union is affiliated to similar labour ideologies based organizations/sanghatana from urban as well as rural areas. Since the inception of globalization on 1990s, the PMC union intentionally tied up with several organizations/sanghatana and even the political party confluence; such as ‘Lokayat’, ‘Kagad Kach Patra Kashtakari Panchayat’, ‘Maharashtra Rajyta-Shramik Mahasangh’, ‘Shramik Mahila Morcha-Pune’, ‘Pune Shahar Molkar Sanghatana’, ‘Maharashtra Rajyta Hamal-Mathadi Mahamandal’, ‘Rikshya Panchayat–Pune’, ‘Pathari Vyavsaheb Panchayat-Pune’, ‘Tempo Panchayat’, ‘Maharashtra Rajyta Kotwal Parishad’, ‘Chattrapati Shivaji Maharaj Market-yard Kamgar Union’, ‘Maharashtra Rajyta Dharan va Prakalpagrastra Shetkari Parishad’, ‘Krantivir Bhagat Singh Brigade’, ‘Rashtriya Appang Sanghatana’, ‘ Sarva Mazdoor Sangh’, ‘Mahatma Phule Kamgar Sanghatana’, ‘Bhumata Sanghatana, Railway Hamal Panchayat’, ‘Janwadi Mahila Sanghatana’, ‘N-CAS’, ‘NAPM’, ‘CITU’, ‘SFI’, ‘BEFI’, ‘Bhartiya Mahila Federation’, ‘Nari Samata Manch’, ‘Dalit Mahila Sanghatana’, ‘Nav-nirman Nyas, Sanvad’, ‘Samajwadi Mahila Sabha’, ‘Alochana’, ‘Masum’, ‘Marxist Communist Party’, ‘Lal-Nishan Party’ (Leninist), and other unions in the Industries.
PMC Union’s popular Slogans!!

Apale Nyay-Hakka Milvun Ghyya, Har Jor-Julm Ke Takkar Mein,
Thekedari Paddhat Bandhha Kara, Sangharsh Hamara Nara Hai,
Tumhi Sanghatti Vhha- Etaranna Sanghatit Kara, Sangharsh Hamara Rasta Hai,
Lal Bavate Ki Jay- Kamgar Ekjuticha Vijay Asso! Bhavi Ithias Hamara Hai!!
Kamgar Din- 1st May Zindabad!!

Uth Jago Bhuke Bandhi Hum Ladenge Sathi
Ab Khicho Lal Talwar, Udas Mausam Ke Khilap!
Kab Tak Sahoge Bhai Hum Ladenge Esliey,
Jalim Ka Attyachar, Ki Lade Bager,
Tumare Rakttase Ranjit-Krandan Kucch Nahi Milata!
Ye So Baras Ke Bandha, Hum Ladenge Unaki Yad Mein
Ek Sath Karenge Bhang Jo Shahit Huye, Ladate Ladate!
Yah Antim Jang Hai Jisako, Jo Shahit Huye, Ladate Ladate!
Jitenge Hum Ek Sath! Gavo International
Ghar Hoeil Tumache Bhakass!
Bhav Swatantrata Ka Gan!! Geli Jakat Tar
Mhatarpach Karayach Kay? Amdarala Pension,
Pension Ghetalya Bigar rahayache Nay! Khasdarala Pension,
Aamhala Matra Tension!

Thekedari Bandhha Kara-
Akavat Pagarachya Nemmuk Nakot!!

As far as the ideological strategies of PMC Employees Union since its inception has focused on surveys of Safai Kamgars by their routine and assigned labour typologies under the PMC Health Department while disposing solid/wet garbage waste and human filth. The rapid growing city like Pune, human waste/filth is primarily generated from the households, government offices, education institutions, public toilets and latrines, public places, entertainment establishment services, slaughter houses, dog/pig squad, fish markets, vendors and hawkers, catering service agencies, hotels and bar-restaurants, small clinics and hospitals, vegetable market, commercial shops, religious temples, daily city commuters, harmful industrial/non-recyclable waste producers, large/small-scale firms and enterprises, IT-enabled service industries, shopping malls and so and so forth. Through the extension of workplaces
and shrinking numbers of Safai workers since the beginning of last decade has coincided to create the workplace strains for limited Safai labour workforce and created the precarious working condition and spate of worker’s deaths. Since the last five years, PMC Union has undertaken several projects, health surveys and campaigns, documentary films regarding different forms of PMC Safai workers as well as undocumented recycling labourers to unveil couples of striking facts about their drastic health degradations and socio-political miseries. As a common recorded fact by these multiple PMC Union sources, there have been more than 107 death cases of Safai and sanitary workers since the last five years. In contrary, the PMC Union has been consistently lamented that PMC administration who deliberately produces an obfuscate data on deaths and accidents of Safai kamgars across its different administrative wards (Kshetriya Karyalaya). Over the PMC Union’s standpoint, I refer two rare and old PMC Union official records for detailed PMC ward-wise survey reports. Besides these, I drew on two booklets upon the socio-economic arrangement of sanitary and non-sanitary workers.

First ward survey report on ‘Chaturthha-Shreni Sevakanchyya Haddha Mojanicha Aahawal’ (‘A Report on Measurement of Work Area Limits (by Sq.ft) for Fourth-Class Conservancy Workers’) was done in 1983 by PMC Union, founded in 1943. Other important source of information for information about old ‘rudimentary scavenging system’ and sanitary structure under PMC was through formal discussion made with union committee members and by other retired sanitary workers. This report deals with strict rules for Safai kamgar on the square ft limit on work to be done every day into different Haddhis under PMC Health Department; sanitation, drainage, solid garbage, Arogya and other health related sweeping and scavenging departments. So to say, the designations of PMC sanitary workers, such as tikari/bhangi/mehtar, used to be assigned to a routine shifted about 10 seats of public latrines including few lavatories-toilets to be cleaned in the given areas. The most important thing is that the report did not expose the existing forms of open manual scavenging in localities and methods of disposal of cleaning the open human defecated waste. In addition, it has also mentioned every single member’s resolution number, enrollment of PMC employees circular of laws/rules regarding PMC job service and customary heir recruitment criterions that dealt with replacement by heir of father, mother, relatives; other methods of service recruitments, appointment and
retirement date, claim for the unclean allowance, PMC Promotional Service Acts based on the inter-departmental lower and higher class examination for promotion into the sanitary working post to non-sanitary posts; such as clerks, S.I, D.S.I, supervisory/monitory works etc. Secondly, there are two important small booklets, pamphlets prepared by PMC Employees Union during 1943-2008.

1. ‘The existing working and health conditions of sweeping and scavenging in Pune’

The union booklet has compiled information from official reports, documents, legislation laws (albeit of a general nature there being no specific legislation regarding those engaged in sweeping and scavenging as such) and union character. Besides, in the other section of the booklet, it also lays out regular membership register and records of the PMC employees. To maintain the employees record, the union has prepared the ‘Complaint Form’ and ‘Complaint File’ to have documentations of frequencies of problems and grievances which are generally faced by union members. This documentation of forms and files has proved to be a valuable source of information. Finally, it is interesting to note that not only is the Safai Kamgar Union built up the documentation base, on and for it, but is acting on basis of the same.

1. The code of ethics and conduct for the Safai kamgar;
2. Minimum work regulations and wage conditions;
3. Union membership formalities;
4. Negotiation in the recruitment of Safai workers and for their work demands.

Be the above as it may, especially in the context of the lacuna in information sources, both official and unofficial, the records of the Safai Kamgar Union have proved to be of immense benefits for studies of the Safai Kamgars in Pune.

2. ‘The socio-economic survey of sweepers and scavengers in Pune’

By regulating code of conduct for the Safai kamgars, the Socio-Economic Survey was also made by the PMC Employees Union by administrating random questionnaires, interviews and general discussions with Safai Kamgars and their household members. This study surveyed a random population numbers of the PMC Safai-Kamgars in the period up to 2007.

Despite obtaining a modest representation of the Safai kamgars in PMC, I had to face lot of problems regarding actual caste and category based population size and even
the record of PMC Safai Kamgar is not documented and updated regularly. There are lacunas regarding the detailed record and enumeration of overall Safai kamgars in the PMC Sallagar Kamgar and Health Department officials as I realized when I officially visited to cover the officer’s interviews during the field-work. To know the numbers of total sanitary workers, I initially visited to PMC Sallagar Kamgar office, (Human Development Unit) in the month of September-2007 and subsequently the Labour Welfare Officer. Alongside, I obtained figure approximating 7249 as an overall working Safai population across 14 PMC wards up to 2006-07 including Solid Waste Departments. According to Health Department, the official recorded figures are barely 4322 Safai Kamgars designated further: Jhaduwale-1917; Mehtar-865; Drainage Bigari-406; Gang-Work Bigari-130; Crematorium Bigari-57; Kachra-Motor Bigari-792; Ghanta Bigari-62; Sewage Bigari-26 and Depot-Bigari-67. During conversations with PMC officials, I was often told by them that the real and overall numbers can be brought together by enumerating the Safai kamgars by each and every ward ‘Khate’ and by ‘Kothi’ records. Soon after, I visited each ward ‘Khate’ and finally I could only collect rough information about the permanent workers, but could not get the figure by the contract and ‘Rojandari’ statuses. Having done these cross-official scrutinies, I realized the fuzzy character general official data, and lack of information on caste and community figure about the Safai workers. After long discussions, this dilemma led me to think upon the PMC Employees Union as the most reliable information regarding the caste and job designations. I decided to draw my sample for detailed narratives from the records kept by the PMC union.

While discussing with members of PMC Employees Union, over 14 ward offices under four Zonal (Kshetriya Karyalaya) Commissioner Office, the union was able to register the memberships of about 9,500 PMC sanitary and non sanitary workers out of total 14,000 as well as other private labour contracts, and sub-contracts. Having perceived the detailed opinions of PMC union for estimated populations of ‘Safai-Kamgars?’, the concerned record also randomly classified workers into castes, religions and percentage of existing reserved caste categories, and working percentages of every caste within PMC conservancy/Arogya-sanitation Department. About 50% caste population belonged to Hindu-Matang (among 6,000 sanitary workers); 30% Safai workers belonged to Mehtars/Bhangis/Valmikis and consisted other migrated lower caste groups (roughly around 2,500 Bhangi/Mehtar out of total
union memberships), 5% caste groups belonged to Telgu-Kannadi castes such as Dhangar, Wadars (of Gawandi/stone-broker labourer), Neo-Buddhist and 5% caste groups belonged to Maharashtrian NTs and OBCs caste categories such as Bhoi, Koli, Kumbhar, Lohar, Kunbi etc, approximately rarely 5% caste population belonged to Muslims (mostly consisted of the traditional occupational scavenging Muslims such as Halalkhors, Lalbegis- while joining PMC's service, most of the Muslims had changed their surnames, for examples, Mohammad Islam Kondhavakar, Chakankar etc.) and mere 2% groups belonged to Dalit Christians, 3% population belonged to other non-scavenging Hindu castes. But union has not enlisted the caste wise population of on contract based workers under the whole PMC departments as well as allied workplaces. Presently, the PMC Employee Union has registered officially nearabout total 9,500 PMC employees which constituted of both nearabout 9000 PMC IV grade workers and 1800 other III Grade employees like clerks, `Mokadam` (Supervisors) etc. Apart from this registered membership, union is also fighting for over 5,000 people those works in the unorganized sector and are hired by contractors too. The PMC union has also organized numbers of monthly campaigns; `Safai-Kamgar Melavas`, and `Saksharta Abhiyan’ for documented and undocumented contract workers who have been mainly concentrated around Padmavati, Bibewadi, Kondhava, Parvati slum areas. Such migrant workers from these areas basically belong to Buddhist-Mahars, Matangs from Pune itself as well as Dhangar, Wadari, other NT, DNITS from Karnataka State.

4.3. Profile and Strategies Studies of Present Chief Governing Member of PMC Employees Union

1. Comrade Mukta Manohar

Muka Manohar acts as a Union General Secretary of PMC Kamgar Union and also a member/activist of the Secretarial Board of the Lal Nishan Party (Leninist). Mukta has devoted her life for uniting the organized and unorganized working and deprived classes in Pune and even State level. Presently, Mukta is active in conducting couple of social campaigns for new generation of working class youth including Safai Karmacharis and domestic workers whose labour for the city is as a valuable as the professional workers in Pune. The idea is to mobilize working class youth irrespective of caste under Bhagat Singh Brigade to struggle for stable and decent employment rather than casual, poorly paid jobs. Additionally, cadres of Bhagat Singh Brigade as
an organizational pressure apparatus would take up several issues regarding income inequality, reproduction of extreme inegalitarian and exploitative classes within castes, inflation in basic essential needs and problems in PMC housing allotments, risen cost of education, and other globalized and neo-liberal policies. So to say primarily three things are evident in Mukta’s narrative; first is about rejecting State’s mistaken decision over the dissolution of the Octroi revenue which is managed by any municipality and municipal corporation to bear up the economic development and welfare projects for the city as well as citizens. Second refers to confrontation between PMC Municipal Corporation and PMC Employees Union, in which most important consensus underlined against the PMC was that, PMC must not enforce the privatization, informalisation and contractualisation into health and sanitation services alongwith NGOs and their contractors (*thekedari*). Third one is rigorously raised by Mukta is the repeal of the customary law that enforces the traditional SC castes such as Mahar, Matang and Valmiki-Mehtar to inherit the caste group occupation. Under recommendations of State and Central Government Safai Commissions and Committees, the Lad Committee is one of it 20 years old appointed Committee by the Maharashtra State to fulfill requirements of customary law recruitment (*Vashila-karar*). There must be interface between the State Government, PMC and PMC Employee Union to eliminate the continuity of Safai generations into these occupations by appointing special Committees. Ironically, she argues the Center and State Governments have always only redone and resubmitted old Safai Kamgar/Mehtar/Scavenger Commissions and Committee and their recommendations since post-independence. There is no drastic and competent improvement in their working and living condition irrespective the persistence of customary vashila-karar. It may have caused by due to political unwillingness for their proper implementations. Having dealt with the emancipatory notions of activism, Mukta pointed out critical questions regarding Safai and scavenging labour as follow:

1. It is necessary to examine growing vulgarities into politicized local leaders belonging to scavenging communities themselves who have intentionally provoked their young generations in pursuance of hereditary occupational legacies for the sake of their economic benefits and the identity politics. Ironically, the internal caste political dominance probably disrupts upward occupational mobility of the younger generation by invading the *`Thekedari`*/labour Safai contracts. Stake holding contracts to sustain their customary labour occupancies have often been resisted by them, especially in the
new service providing stake-holding institutions within PMC sanitation management system such as Sulabh International, JNNURM sanitation reform projects, garbage and bio-gas processors, professional enterprises and so on and so forth. Moreover, caste identity politics claims assure the sustainability of their caste survival by creating informal employment opportunities rather having alternate non-sanitary jobs for their caste fellows. Consequently, the youth are pushed back in ‘undignified traditional occupations’ by these community agents. The elected PMC Corporators MLAs, and MPs belonging to scavenging castes are keeping mum on the emancipation of their caste fellows. On the contrary, they have been trying to maintain their good relation with other political colleagues by not discussing the real situation of their communities. Simultaneously, we need to see seriously over the growing conformist mentality and ghetto crimes among the youths due to long-term and rampant unemployment.

2. On the other hand, how the mainstream politician’s support the contract system thekedari and technological advancements in the name of city makeover planning alongwith a moderate adoption of Safai recruitments under Vashila-karar. In future, PMC would certainly bring these cheap hiring contract services under Health-sanitation, fire-brigade, drainage, crematorium, security, water supply etc. The working hours in contract jobs are also unlimited; the shift probably from 6.00 a.m and goes on until 4.00 p.m. The contract works are probably carrying with scarce man-power of around 25 garbage workers. The sanitation jobs are modernized and covered in the name of housekeeping cleaning services in corporate IT Zone in Pune. To what extent, the growing job boom may attract youth belonging to traditional scavenging castes to earn up to Rs.5000 or even more enough is to Mukta an important issues. Despite the massive outcomes of the globalization for the low-status workers, their cultural liberation is still a far away dream, she concludes.

3. The union has always opposed the PMC’s efforts to enforce different privatization projects on essential services. One of the incidents took place about the contract work accountability when contract workers did not lift the dead bodies of dogs and other domestic animals; whether in fresh or very stinking and spoilt condition. In addition, each year after immersion (visarjan) of Ganpati idols, the contract workers probably run away having seen the debris of scrap and plastic waste, bottles, gulal, rappers, decorations leftover waste etc. on main roads in the heart of Pune. Alternately, the PMC permanent workers from all wards had to clean the stink; scraps consistently
every 4 hours. There has always remained a gap between contract and permanent PMC workers. The issue is to recognize the accountability and commitments among these two forms of work conditions.

4. Importantly, there is need to enumerate caste wise and politically influenced thekedar and labour contractors in the PMC Sanitation and Health Departments. Because there must be some hidden reasons in their mind to displace these traditional practices and formal sector employment. Under this situation, PMC union have suggested to PMC to dissolve all caste-based designation (e.g., Mehtar-Bhangi).

5. Regarding the Indian Constitution based reservation policy to the Dalits or SCs in the government public sector there must create radical debates and discourses by taking into consideration the outlook and opinions of contemporary Dalit intellectuals on the issue of the perpetuation of caste based reservation policy into class IV on mass scale. The factual questions to Mukta are; Do the Dalit Intellectuals really give up their Constitutional reservation rights? Can they contribute to discourage the Dalit masses to renounce such inhuman State recruitment mechanism through customary vashila Karar right? Can they even critically think upon proper rehabilitation and liberation of the Safai and scavenging castes even within the neo-liberal State agenda?

6. Mukta argues that there is a need to assess the situation of growing flux of domestic women workers (Molkarin) in PMC sanitary contract jobs irrespective of caste, class and gender statuses. The domestic workers due to having inadequate salaries alongwith hectic working frequencies at about 3-4 work destinations are moving into these sanitary jobs earning approximate Rs.2500 - 3000 (Rs.100 per day including unpaid holidays and weekly-offs). This is always more than earlier meager paid domestic jobs without close interaction and rapport by employers/contractor/thekedar.

Discussing consequences of health insecurity, lacking safety measure and proper training requirements for the PMC sanitary workers, Mukta stated “the death ratio (each year 106 deaths) of sanitary workers has increased because masks provided by the PMC are useless against toxic fumes into drainage chambers. She further contended, “Just last two years, about 227 Pune conservancy staff died while cleaning city’s filth especially the Safai-kamgar who clean the city’s garbage, toilets and sewage, and dispose unclaimed dead bodies. It is clearly noted that about 40 Safai-kamgar have died in the first six months during 2007-08; subsequent 107 died in previous year and 80 on 2005-06. The spate of deaths has been merely reported under
“sickness” according to the PMC record. The most shocking part is the average age of those who lost their lives; 45 out of the 107 who died in 2006-07, as many as 70 attributed to cancer, tuberculosis jaundice, heart diseases and by severe accidents on workplaces. The deaths include both men and women. PMC employs over 6000 such staff but the numbers of death cannot be just ignored seeing the early age deaths and the reasons. In addition to this statement, she also pointed out that the safety provided by PMC such as gumboots, gloves and rain suit etc, is hardly received by the workers. In other words, the provided safety equipments are uncomfortable (particularly in same standard size) to use on rainy season on the workplaces. “PMC workers have not been trained or motivated to use the gas detector, and gloves have not been distributed to anyone”. Gas masks apart, even first-aid kits, harness belts, head-lamps and soaps and water are not available at the ward offices since last 4-5 years. Conservancy workers are never taken seriously and left to face a difficult life after working in hazardous conditions. The PMC, by law, has to provide these workers with proper working gears like a mask, boots, a cap, gloves and enough water to clean themselves. But these rules are not followed. Consequently, the workers, especially ‘Drainage cleaners’, have to enter manholes without safety protection. Even workers handling dead bodies are at risk of contracting diseases. These are simply horrendous. Also there are also approximately 5000 conservancy workers in Pune area who are hired by contractors, NGOs, they never get safety measures while cleaning human waste, working inside gutters in bare handed, the workers are exposed to methane gas, and harmful viruses due to old drainage system or citywide underground sewage systems. These workers do not have a union of themselves. As the jobs of these contract workers are not stable, workers cannot fight for their rights, or one does not know whether they are aware of their rights. While the PMC Employee Union fights for the rights of their members, who will carry the voices of the contract conservancy workers. She suggests some measures to PMC to be avoided the forthcoming problems related to numbers of deaths on workplaces. Workers should be provided with modern safety tools and equipment without replacing their labour and without compromise on cost. If PMC thinks on the modernization of sweeping activities, equal number of vacuum machines should be provided to equal numbers of workers, but do not bring single vacuum machine with replacing 100 sweepers for saving the cost on labour. There shall be government intervention if public sector insurance agencies are denying a security cover the conservancy workers. Regular health
checkups and free medical facilities should be provided. The drainage system should be modern and meet international standards. Similarly, the PMC union secretary also comments on urban society which is also responsible for these kinds of problems. If the citizens keep their surrounding clean and do not let others loiter around, this will be a good contribution, unfortunately we as the citizens forget that we have other duties after paying taxes, Mukta comments. No one care about the people who clean the places we live in. Because of these persistent efforts by the union with screening the documentary films, conducting awareness programs and rallies, publishing reports, booklets, hosting media coverage on working and living of Safai-kamgars, the Central government has acknowledged these ongoing crucial efforts taken by PMC Union and is also fostering some action plans over it.

By dwelling on reckless policies of the State and Centre Government and local urban bodies over the extreme hazardous working conditions for Safai kamgars, Mukta succinctly pointed out that the PMC union has been officially experiencing number of problems while issuing health insurance policies especially for PMC Safai kamgars. Due to the lack of information, the family members of PMC workers who died in workplace accidents are now struggling for compensation. It shatters the family when a key bread earner dies at the age of 30 to 45. The life insurance corporation (LIC) of India was earlier offering a group insurance of Rs.30,000 to them, but has recently closed the scheme by saying that this was not viable to them due to the increased numbers of deaths. Now, the compensation that is possible for the family members of dead workers is a meager amount Rs.15,000 under the “Kamgar Kalyan Yojna” (as kamgar-kalyan nidhi which is collected monthly about Rs.100 by monthly payment) and 35,000 by the PMC. It means a gross amount is paid only about 50,000 through these sources themselves. The PMC repeatedly talked with the SBI to provide an insurance coverage of about Rs.50,000 to each worker. Due to these above mentioned facts the available compensation package is unsatisfactory. Within the period of one year, the SBI did not keep its promise for retain the modest course. During the 2-3 meetings between SBI officials and PMC union, an agreement was done to charge a premium only Rs.375 for per annum over the insurance policy. But afterward the SBI tried to grab excessive premium charges as up to Rs.800 per annum. The workers were formally cheated by SBI to rupture the welfare financial bond according to Mukta.
2. Comrade Prakash Jadhav

Prakash Jadhav is one of the members and Joint-Secretary (Karyadhyakshya) of PMC Employees Union. He has been active in the union since 32 years. During his childhood when he was 15 years old, he got influenced by the PMC Union founding fathers such as Comrade Prabhakar Gokhale and Appasaheb Bhosale. In 1976, Prakash joined as an office peon in PMC Garbage Department. Subsequently, he got a promotion as a Special Squad Investigator (vishesh gastti pathak) under the Octroi Department and then as a Mokadam at Gultekadi Vehicle Depot. Since long time, he has actively been contributing on the class issues and labour based struggles since the establishment of the PMC Employees Union. He talked about complaints made against Safai Sevak/Safai Sevika from PMC officials such as DSI, SI, ward officers mention irregular attendance, incomplete daily assigned work, arrogant speaking, lying, and disobedience of PMC’s mandatory orders on workplaces. Some complaints are also noticed against ward officials by the Safai Sevak about imposed huge workload, biased attitudes on unequal work distributions, sexual harassment of Safai-sevika, abuse and assault, pressurize for the extra works. On such reciprocal complex situation, while handling these cases, he said, "In the beginning, we have to visit such workplaces, ward offices and try to understand the truth or false behind the received complaints by communicating with the accused worker and official. If any PMC Kamgar is found faulty/guilty through such complaints by the officials, the union warns him in a written form or taking an undertaking with conditions for further complaints against him. If the official staff is found to guilty as per worker’s received complaints, the PMC union initially insists to ask for his apology and undertaking letter to be not retained to avoid such conflict situation in future. If he/she does not commit with his apology letter in written form, Jadhav informs that the union may write an appeal letter against such officials to the PMC Commissioner/ Additional Commissioner for justice. If the officials disagree for their leniencies and regrets, we take the decision for strike, bandh-dharne-morcha against injustice as a last measure. He further concluded that punishments for both servants should be equal depending on his/her mistake because we have always believed in transparent regime practices. Finally the records of these incidents are kept properly for further action. Importantly, he added that massive changes are taking place in the PMCs administrative mandatory policies and its functional laws. Over the PMC law execution policy envoys, we have always been monitoring its changing resolution for and against the PMC workers.
among designated grades and public as well, Jadhav added. The point is to prevent the
PMC as well as Maharashtra State from talking one-sided resolution against important
civic sections such as the workers and citizens, and even the continuous scrutiny of
such resolutions and decisions which are made by PMCs Expert/Standing Committee.
As an example of the first, he added that Maharashtra State government has been
discarding its major income source as its Octroi-revenue right into municipalities and
municipal corporation which are based on the ranks of A, B, C, D. Against such
repressive decision of State in the period 2004-05, the PMC union tried to mobilize
relevant Municipalities and Municipal Corporations for the State level
strike/demonstration in Mumbai and Pune itself. The union’s demand was to preserve
the right of Octroi for welfare of the people. The struggle is still on-going. Second
example is related to the newly launched modern technology (Road-Shooting
Machines for the sweeping purposes and jet vehicles for manhole related cleaning) in
the Arogya-sanitation on the name of facilitation of the regular work to workers but, it
is direct onslaught on the customary heir right and making easy entry by the PMC
contracts and sub-contracts, thekedari. We generally regard technology come to
replace huge labour activities and harass poor contract workers for their future social
security. For that, the union is struggling for long years against the PMC
administration privatizing the essential departmental services within PMC regime.
Very often, the PMC union has been demonstrating our resurgence on the occasions
of ‘International Labour Day’ on 1st of May. The union has always taken up rectifying
responsibilities in favour of public convenience and awareness for their utilization of
civic services as well as worker’s relief and social security into the troublesome
scavenging works.

While talking on the obligatory laws and rules, regulations of municipal corporations,
PMC union has played a major role to conducting coaching classes for PMC worker’s
in promotion into lower and higher posts. The present inter-departmental promotion
measure system of local government seemed much more exploitative in nature. The
larger sections of conservancy workers in PMC are being excluded and repressed
from promotional recruitment criteria/pattern because of their unmatched social and
educational conditions. The female PMC workers have always lagged behind in it. It
means that not a single woman or Arogya-sanitary worker has appeared for these
examinations. Explaining the existence of union’s achievement, Jadhav put forth
clearly further the laws of Municipal Corporation about (III and IV grade/class) worker’s promotional provision are under the BPMC Act-1949, MSSR (Maharashtra State service rule-recruitment conditions for qualifying examinations), Local-Self Government Diploma (LSGD) courses for sanitary inspector, pre-sanitary inspector. Firstly, the BPMC Act, the BPMC Act has defined the scope and extent of statutory duties of the Municipal Corporation. The Act has entrusted municipal corporations with statutory responsibilities for the maintenance, operation and development of certain public utilities and welfare of municipal workers in ward regimes. The services presently provided by PMC are classified as obligatory and discretionary. According to the discretionary functions of municipal corporation (under section 66 of the BPMC Act, 1949), the Act mandates for the municipal worker’s inter-departmental promotional provisions in services. The Act has put a further provision into a single line “Any other measures for the welfare of municipal servant or any class of them”. In other words, Z.P, Municipality, and Municipal Corporation have mandatory classifications into the Inter-departmental examinations:

1. Lower Class Inter-Departmental Examination (Concerned with the promotion for a clerk, mokadam, and typist in worker status);

2. Higher Class Inter-Departmental Examination (Concerned with the promotion for a SI, other supervisory posts into workers).

These coaching classes for these two exams have been going on for more than 35 years by the PMC union. The PMC Union (recognized) was the first trade union among all municipal corporations of India which argued for promotional systems to all ranks of workers. Since the last 35 years, nearly 300 workers have been benefited by some examination for the supervisory posts. Generally, the examinations are held once a year in the month of October. There are some strict rules about workers qualification records as per Maharashtra government by which almost 1/3 population of PMC workers could not qualify for promotion in services; such as he/she must complete minimum 5 year service, minimum 40 per cent marks obtain from pre-examinations, no criminal record, nothing any warning memo by his/her working department (khate), 75 percent compulsory attendance in service, minimum education (12 plus for higher supervisory posts and SSC for other lower class posts). There are other criteria related to appearance in the examination, failure in first and second attempts in examination shall not result in stoppage of increment or loss of seniority; but a person who has not passed the examination shall not be promoted to any higher
post until he clears the examination. If a person fails in all the three chances and is allowed a fourth or subsequent chance, then he/she shall not be allowed to draw the increment after his failure in the third attempt until he passes the examination or is exempted from passing it by government by condoning his failure.

3. Comrade Anil Rokade

Rokade addressed the issues of State appointed Safai Commissions and Committees for the scavengers/Safai kamgar/mehtars in the period 1952-1990 to examine suggested recommendations by Malkani Commission, Bhanudas Pandye Committee, Barve Commission, National Safai Karmacharis Commission, and Commission for Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes (1970-71) and The Bombay Provincial Municipal Corporation Act (BPMC), 1949 and Factory Act, 1948. Rokade drew on prior commissions/committees underline major implementation dilemmas into general recommendations regarding the working and living condition of PMC Safai-kamgar/scavengers. Related to the suggested recommendations these committees and commissions, the official issues are to be examined by the union are as follows: type of work/labour (prohibition for the manual scavenging); recruitment patterns; salary, dearness allowance and other allowances; work hours, rest time and work extension; degradable, unlimited and overloaded works; procedure to be carried for permanent employees; weekly-offs; paid holidays in national festivals; paid annual leaves; casual leave; medical leave; maternity leave; dress/apron; safety equipments and security measures; medical compensation on the accident casualties and; retirement fund, PF, gratuity, pension and life-insurance benefits etc.

Above mentioned recommendations are not implemented from time to time by the PMC Ward Office. Due to the consistent failures of the implementations on working condition of the Safai kamgars, PMC Employee Union had to experience manual scavenging till 1996. Excepting more or less sort of benefits, the Lad Commission appointed by State could bring out major shift for guarantee of heir recruitment after death, accident, retirement and physically unfit for unclean workers into sanitary departments. Beside these recommendations, the Lad Commission also made recommendations for house accommodation, safety tools and pesticides. The activists of PMC union like comrade- Prabhakar Gokhale, Appasaheb Bhosale became the chief contributors for the appointment of Lad Committee. They incorporated representatives, activists, workers from all municipalities and municipal corporations
in Maharashtra to demand for the establishment of new monitoring committee over earlier set-up commissions. They put forward to the State Government unresolved implementation inadequacies by previous commissions to improve the quality of working, living, economic standards of workers. Due to proposed constant demands by the PMC union, Maharashtra Government set up the Lad Commission. Even though the heir Vashila agreement recommendation of the Lad Committees in the PMC recruitment, Safai kamgars have always been excluded from uneasy procedures of claiming the heir post. Reporting by union officials on several pending claim cases in PMC, more or less 200 cases could not forwarded due to the innumerable objections on heir identification documents by PMC officials. These are based on prejudices, support to the privatization policy in sanitation, or corrupt attitude of officials. Several cases have not yet been cleared because of long-time objections, insufficient age of heir, troublesome responses, and confused laws of PMC. In addition to support his arguments, Rokade describes the lengthy procedure of Vashila-karar (heir claim agreement) which pose a hurdle. For an heir to claim for Vashila recruitment his/her father, mother or any relatives must be retired in service or victimized by any accident, medical unfit/board out case. Generally the retirement tenure is approximate 20 years from his/her joining in the PMC. On the time of retirement, the retirement letter is given by concerning ward-office where he/she was working earlier. The particular time period (within a year) is decided by the PMC for his/her heir’s claim in service entry. After that, the concerned case is sent to the PMC union for putting further remarks and the certificate identification scrutiny as per the Lad recommendation. Requirements of evidences and proofs (affidavits and consent/permission certificates) which have been produced by the concerned waras (heir) case must be submitted for scrutiny affairs to the appointed lawyer of the PMC Union. The document must have: affidavit of the heir; permission/consent letter by all members of family like brother, sister, mother etc for no-objection to his claiming; identification certificate by the guardian; residence certificate; ration card; death certificate (if it claimed untimely incidents like an accident, heart-attack or other physical break-down etc.); two photographs of the heir and; gazette reference number and affidavit (If suggested any change in an initial name, surname etc.).

The minimum period for claiming the PMC post is only two months. The procedure may take minimum 2 or more in accordance with certificates and no objection query
fulfillments. Subsequently scrutinized certificates and permission documents are sent by lawyer to the union office. The union staff checks the errors in claims as these file documents may have some possibilities of bogus certifications. Having checked these documents, the PMC union clerk forwards document file for the signature of the PMC general secretary. Union sends a recommendation letter along with its receipt at the concerning ward office where he/she was working. Then the file is checked by the head clerk of ward office and few objections and concerned solutions over such objections are noted. After that, the file is sent to Sallagar Kamgar PMC office for cross-inspections. Releasing all objections on the file certificate, eventually the file is sent to the offices of Additional Commissioner (General), Commissioner. After the final remarks by these officials, the concerned department (khate) releases an order for the heir to join the post of her/his father, mother, husband or other relatives. Before this, the medical and blood test of heir are completed for find out numbers of deficiencies in physical fitness. Finishing entire procedure, the PMC ward office gives permission to join the post of her/his father, mother or other relatives on the same work and same workplace kothi whether the heir is good-educated. The payment scale is obtained accordance to unclean allowance provision to the workers. Earlier the customary heir right used to be kept for at least five years; now it is only for one year. Eventually, some claim cases are excluded from traditional employment right. This according to Rokade has resulted vast numbers of suicides, criminal activities, addiction to alcohol, smoking etc.

PMC union does not believe that the youth of Safai workers should be stayed in the unclean sanitary works. The aim for customary Vashila agreement is not for this. Beside, Dr.Ambedkar spread out massage to all untouchable castes/communities to give up the unclean occupations in the villages and come to the city to be absorbed dignified occupations. Adversely, the urban semi-caste based stratification could not confer the clean and blue collar occupations for them. Therefore, again they had to hold same unclean occupation which was institutionalized by colonial administration, Rokade explains. Today, the need is to sustain their social security within these government bodies on the age of privatization and globalization process. We deny the comments of such organizations and associations in the urban settings who think that the Vashila Karar reproduces caste, he concludes.

In the last section of the chapter, the study draws out the social, education and occupational mobility of three generations of the Safai and scavenging families. To be more descriptive, I also discuss various different factors of social mobility by comparing the gender compositions of Safai workers across generations. Thereby, these case studies help to explore the role of caste, gender and labour dimensions to understand the intensity of exclusions through government agencies, society and their own community politics. Furthermore, these case studies attempt to unveil subjective explorations of Safai workers regarding their traditional caste and internal caste tensions; resistance against unfulfilled commitments by the government for liberation from the traditional scavenging castes from the customary labour occupancy; and the existence of neighbourhood and mainstream isolation due to the occupations, livelihood and caste setting.

Case No: 1. Says Bharat who is in his mid-forties, ¨I condemn a brutal incident of public beating despite no mistake on my part at my regular City-Post worksite. As a Kachra-Motor Bigari, I was loading and emptying overflow garbage buckets on the compactor container. While working, one citizen who threw all his waste garbage outside the bucket. Immediately I just refused to throw this. At the same time, he got angry and abused me arrogantly. Eventually, he attacked me along with his few colleagues. I was severely beaten by them without having committed serious mistakes. Nobody around me came to stop my continuous beating. Even efforts of work fellows and informed union staff who tried to interrupt and convince them were in vain. As the concerned Ward Corporator negotiated this matter and then thereby settled it. “Even we do not have a right to give proper suggestions to the citizens for their rude behaviour and improper of throwing the waste-refuse”.

By asking the history of arrival of his forefathers, Bharat remembers, ¨My forefathers had migrated 100 years ago from Sangola to seek livelihood in Pune and later joined PMC. Father got a job as a Gang-Coolie as well as mother was appointed as a sweeper in PMC on our traditional caste legacy. They joined on `Rojandari` status getting Rs.130/- per month by PMC. `Gang-Coolie` is a British title, which referred to those carrying refuse was on their heads or bullock-cart. But my father retired from Galischa vastti nirmulan (gavani) department of PMC as a Gawandi. My parents
served for 27 years on the `Rojandari` status. When I was 22 years old, I got call from employment office, Pune as a police, but my mother insisted and expected to work in her place after retirement from PMC. On 1994, I recruited on the vashila-karar as a `Rojandari` kachra motor Bigari under Dhankavadi ward area. I used to privately do the electric wiring work on part-time basis. In my whole life, I never suffered from caste discrimination despite being a Matang. Now it is all right. There is no discrimination on the public places and workplaces and even dining-drinking habits. Many times we go to the houses of the Maratha and Brahmins and share the meal. Today we sit with upper-caste like Maratha and others Hindu, drinks water, tea in their glasses both on the PMC workplaces and their homes too because they afraid of the law. Interestingly I also got married with Pardeshi caste woman after my earlier wife divorced me”. He has 2 children who are studying in Marathi Medium School at Dhankavadi. He aspires for his children to pursue IT and computer skill education. He is more skeptical for his daughter’s future education life rather than son. He added that if proper match in marriage is found, I would not hesitate on her marriage because day-by-day the situation is becoming worse by viewing T.V and outside cultural environment. If my son remains unemployed despite having good education, he would let him take in PMC services claiming `Vashila-karar` agreement.

Case No: 2. Nirappa, 58 years old belongs to Dhangar Community, who migrated from Karnataka in 1958. He never went to school due to his traditional occupation as a shepherd. His mother used to engage in bidi making profession. Once, his father beat him because of some mistake. After that event, he left his home and moved toward seeking employment in Maharashtra at the age of 20. Firstly, he worked as a labourer in Mumbai for six months, but he came to Pune after hearing news of PMC recruitment. Before joining the PMC sanitation service in 1969, he worked in the Sassoon Hospital for 15 years being paid Rs.2.25 paisa per day. He had to carry drums of faeces on the head and had to dispose it in the open ground. Since he did not speak Marathi he could not interact as it is very rare people in Pune could speak his mother tongue Telgu. He says “PMC officers do not understand my Kannad language. While working in the Sassoon hospital as a privy cleaner, PMC had announced people to join in the sanitation services on the Rojandari/Badali status. He was very hopeful for getting this new secure employment so that he could bring his family in Pune. While entering in this sanitation work, initially the PMC officials used to call me on
my caste name despite the name Pujari. He joined the PMC as a Gang-work Bigari, his work included cleaning road, cutting grown trees along the road and to clean the parks. In 1985, he was injured by severe accidents at the workplace. He has been facing lot of occupational accidents. One day while cutting branches of tree under the old gang-coolie post, he slipped off the ramp, broke his spine and had to undergo the orthopedic operation. He narrated this accident event as further, “When I was a gang worker Bigari, I slipped from the tree and fell down on the stone where I lost my spine and severe injury of right hand leg. The doctor advised for urgent operation of legs. When I was cured, the ward office considered my suggestion and recruited me on alternate work of kachra-motor bigari. Sometimes, even I have to suffer while pushing the wheelbarrow or `kachra-gada` with filled full of garbage”. As far as advantages from PMC service are concerned, he could buy 2 acres of land in his origin village in Karnataka as well as build own house in Ghorpadi-Pune. He never complained against the ward office about the inadequate circulation of tools and equipments. Now he is ready for his illiterate son to join on his place after retirement from PMC. He has also bought sewing machine for his 16 years old daughter for extra earning source for family.

Case No: 3. Amol, a 24 year old Matang boy, is employs as a Kachra Gada Bigari in the City Post Hajeri Kothe under PMC Vishrambaugwada ward office. In the age of 20, Amol joined the PMC Sanitation Department as his father’s replacement (Vashila Karar) under the Vishrambaugwada ward, city post kothi. He had a love marriage at the early age of 19 years. At the time of my marriage, father-in-law had given Rs.10,000; gold ring and suit as well as he could also manage whole marriage expenditure, Amol adds. Presently I earn the salary of about Rs.6,500 per month. While discussing in his reason for dropping out of education after 8th standard, he comments, “I was not interested in further education because my father earlier decided to hand-over his PMC job. Now my father has retired and benefiting from pension. My father with his two brothers had migrated from the Pandharpur to take any job since 30 years ago. He says, “My parents were begging in their village from Pandharpur. My father sometimes shares their own experience about extreme poverty, starvation and caste discrimination in employment in his village. Amol’s uncles named Kishan and Janardhan are still working in PMC as a permanent Sanitation Bigari and sweeper. He also predicted, “If I would had a sufficient education, I could
have got PMC table work, but this inadequate education level does not allow me to enter other non-scavenging departments. Amol appeared somewhat irregular in his work due to daily rush and tiredness of work and garbage collection risk. He put his opinion as; “I had never seen these types of garbage stink. After my fresh recruitment on the place of my father, every day I have to work without any safety tools and implements. Sometimes this leads to violent headache and skin allergy from this stink work. In the initial 6 months, I became a half in my earlier size”. He has been injured several times while lifting and pulling the garbage gada/wheelbarrow into the heaps which consists of varied clinic and hospital waste like injections, serene, dispose tubes, broken pieces of glass and used condoms. He added that he would hand over service to his son in future after his retirement. Since my appointment in the Kothi, PMC did not provide any safety and medical measures to me, he concluded.

**Case No: 4. Dutta**, 33 year old married, joined in PMC as a Drainage Bigari worker in 2001 on his father’s place. Dutta works under Lal Mahal Hajeri Kothi under Vishrambaugwada Wada Ward Office. He discontinued SSC education due to his father’s death. While tracing history of his family engagement in PMC unclean work, he replied, “I was born and brought up originally in Pune, my father Subhash Shinde had moved toward Pune from Solapur in search of a job. Even sometimes he did Bigari works. During that time, some people informed my father about the PMC recruitment for ‘Rojandari’ and ‘Badali’ sanitation workers. My father served around 35 years as a Drainage Bigari in Jijamata-lalmahal kothi where now I am working on his same place, same kothi and same post. One day my father caused severe spine injury while working with sanitary rod in chambers drainage line. He fell down because of narrow spaces between two lanes. He got himself a voluntary retirement. We are two brothers and one sister. The elder brother works in Travel Corporation in Pune and the sister got married with my cousin 5 years back. Presently, I have admitted my son in English medium school, and daughter in Marathi due to the inadequate income salary. About their future, he asserted, “My Son has to become an army officer and daughter would acquire D.Ed teaching profession. With this hope, he wakes up at 4.30 a.m at early-morning for catch the first attendance on kothi at 6.00 a.m. and works till 1.00 p.m. After returning from duty, I have to make 4-5 daily trips for their tuition and schooling. Sometimes if the ward complaints are not properly attended within the duty hours, we have to give extra-time for uncover work.
without paying extra-money by PMC. He is also part of local political parties and voluntarily activist with PMC employee. According to him, union is striving for us; with many cases of municipal employees and for better working condition of workers such as eradicating degrading scavenging and reduce the mortality and morbidity rate among sanitary workers in PMC and elsewhere too. The PMC given safety-tools for workers are useless in the drainage repairing. Cleaning the sludge is one of the tiring works because while pushing sanitary rod into chamber line, we cannot use mask in such under-ventilation positions. Imagine oneself entering a sewage manhole is all that is needed to understand the horrendous nature of the tasks. While talking on the city’s huge waste, he mentions inadequate water resources and overcrowded cities and towns as a problem. It is convenient for civic authorities to reserve these labouring tasks for certain caste group in the name of ‘an expertise’, ‘being accustomed’ ‘a readiness’. The only answer to the problem is that, PMC must take responsibility for perpetuating appalling backward condition of work and bring modern health sanitary technological form without displacing our traditional scavenging job-claims in the government local bodies. He has also witnessed couples of the workplace death accidents of the drainage workers. Witnessing a workplace accident; one of my works fellow alongwith another did not check the oxygen level before entering inside the sanitation chamber. Incidentally, two drainage workers died inside the drainage chamber because they were inflicted by the toxic gases inside.

Case No: 5. Arjun, 25 years old, joined the PMC sanitary work as a Sewage Bigari in 1976 when he was 21 year old. He belongs to Valmiki-Mehtar Community and lives in the Haraka-nagar Pune. But he has hardly information of his old Uttar-Pradesh origin. He also never visited his village. He says, ‘Our relatives are dispersed within the Maharashtra State since my father’s arrival in Pune. According to him, his father was working in PMC sanitation as well as mother was appointed as an Aayya in PMC hospital. He stays with his wife, brothers, grandson-daughter and three children. He managed his both daughter’s marriages at age of 17 years. His married son is a driver who earns Rs.3000 per month. Due to his daughter’s marriage and medical treatment purpose, he had to borrow 1,00,000 loan from banks and private moneylenders. Yet, the loan is not covered due to several illnesses in family.

Arjun did the heavier job like cleaning man-holes and septic-tanks. He states quite calmly, ”My work is dirty; my body cannot stay strong longer. I stand in the septic-
tanks in waist-deep filth. The stench is unbearable. I inhale all those fumes; those smells which are ultimately distort the body-balance. By this harmful work condition, I got addicted to severe drinking and smoking habits while working on the workplaces. While talking on the daily working schedule, he mentions that the first thing in the morning we have to do is sign the muster. We are not given enough tools, so we have to do cleaning manually. The government may claim that the system of carrying waste on the head has been abolished in Maharashtra, but carrying it manually has not stopped. Even today we resort to alcohol so as to be numbed to the dirt and stink we encounter in our work. How can we progress if this continues in our caste for such long period of time? It has a direct effect on our life span, which are only 45-50 years on an average (life-expectancy). Those who clean manholes also consume alcohol so as to be able to withstand the strong gases inside. Our people are forced to enter manholes by the corporation drainage department despite arrived new jet machine for cleaning chambers and sewers. Savarna people are also employed in our department but they give monthly sort of money (Rs.1000 to 1500) to our people to buy country liquor and thus bribe them to clean manholes instead of doing it themselves. This is how our community is exploited by the PMC. Secondly, in many cases three or four members in a family have jobs. If they have good jobs, the total family income is around Rs.20000 per month. But all the money is wasted on harmful addictions. Whereas for ‘savarna’, even if they earn Rs.2000 a month, spend their money wisely. Thus, even if we earn more, we neither progress nor have a good standard of living. The result is that our community lags behind in each activities of the mainstream society. As far as sanitation work and caused numbers of sufferings are concerned, sanitation work is undoubtedly the worst of all kinds of work. One may not be able to see why the work of scavenger/sweeper is polluting, but our senses bear witness daily to the repugnance we feel when we have to walk through the littered street, or in front of smelly urinals. By extension, this revulsion seems to extend naturally to those working in those places. What we seem to forget is that the same revulsion is felt by us when we are asked to do certain types of jobs. Arjun explicitly contended that unless we drink and numb our senses we could not do this job. What is more tragic in his case, as the following narratives explain, is that he has attempted a numbers of times to find a other non-scarenging job elsewhere, but has failed. He adds, “Many times, when a dog dies, we take it away. Sometimes a buffalo dies on the river shore, and the body lies there for many days. We tell our officials
clearly that to remove the dead buffalo we would need to drink, we feel tired. If we drink, we feel energetic. The smell is reduced. We gain extra energy after drinking. This can happen. One can do the job of cleaning the gutter only after drinking. If one has not drunk, the smell is so overpowering that one immediately runs away from the place”. This excerpt from the interview draws attention to addiction to drink and a consequent inability to save. The amount of money wasted by these more skilled and high risky workers/Bigari on drinking is related to the work they do. It is worth asking whether the kinds of work they do can be done without the numbing of the consciousness provided by alcohol. The only solution is to devise better tools and technology that make waste disposal less traumatic to those engaged in it.

Case No: 6. A 52 years old Sukhdev, belongs to Matang caste, works as a Gutter Bigari since 1986 in PMC. Today he earns around Rs.8400 and supports children’s education. He has 8 acres of land and own house in his native place at a village in Osmanabad. Presently, Sukhdev’s elder has son left his education and works as a carpenter. Sukhdev is a permanent resident of Kasewadi-Pune. As a gutter Bigari, he is reminded of one event, “We were working on the same chamber-drainage line where our 3 sanitary Bigari died due to inside toxic gases 3 years back. The chamber was approximately 30 feet deep from the road surface. They had to lose their lives for their survival of family. I think nobody wants to accept these kinds of risk work”. We save lives of people, but citizens hold long-distance from us while working on the road-side”.

Case No: 7. A 42 year aged illiterate Ramdas was recruited in PMC Dog-Squad Department as a Bigari on his father’s place based on PMC customary heir right agreement in 1986. His grand-father had also worked in this same department. His father, Shankar, had migrated from the Purandhar block of Pune district areas. His father also engaged in same dog-squad works and served for 21 years in this department. Shankar got married at the age of 19. He has four children who are studying in the PMC Marathi schools. His elder daughter, Karuna (17), has left the education and helps in household works. Shankar made clear, “I have also planned to marry her soon, if the proper groom is gotten. He took a loan Rs.2,50,000 from the Bank of Maharashtra for domestic investment and accident treatment purposes.
Ramdas narrates, "My job is to lift and carry the dead dogs across several parts in the PMC ward areas. We generally receive complaints from everywhere and then we carry by a ‘dog-van’. The dead-dogs are found in very spoiled condition. Sometimes while lifting them we feel omitting, but I have had no option but to do this work for my family’s survival. As the record, we pick-up and dispose daily 8-10 dogs on dumping ground areas. For this work, the PMC gives us rope, injection and bleaching powder etc. For this work, I have to drink and smoke after the duty. In addition, when we return home after 8 hours duty, the stray dogs sometimes bite us due to particular dog’s hair smell over our body. There was a terrible incident taken place in our department 3 years back. One worker named Waghmare died due to infections of the dog’s poison. There are other many risks on the workplaces. He commented on the PMC, PMC has stopped to provide the tonic tablets 3 times during duty hours. When we visit the PMC hospitals for treatments, the prescribed medicines by PMC doctor never get to us. Several times, the weight of dogs may become harmful to our spine and waist, while dragging and lifting them, we sustain injuries, he adds.

**Case No: 8. Dattu**, a 51 year old Buddhist, works as a *Crematorium Bigari in Vaikunt Smashan-Bhumi* since 33 years. He left formal education in standard 7th due to extreme poverty and starvation of family members. They were 6 siblings included two sisters and four brothers. The elder brother is now working in Bajaj-tempo and other are engaged in farming. He came to Pune from *Khadakvasla* - Pune by the support of his brother-in-law who was working in the PMC. Earlier he worked 10 years in PMC Badali status, and became permanent in 1996. He has three children: two sons and a daughter. He wanted to train his daughter to be a police constable, but unfortunately he had to get her married and she had to discontinue her education after 12th standard. He spent about Rs.1,50,000 as the marriage expenditures but rejected dowry gifts as per the norms of Buddhist marriage associations. His elder married son, Vishal, who works as a clerk in the Punjab National Bank earns about Rs.15,000 per month. Dutta’s family is economically better off. Although his son is well settled in employment, Dattu wishes to employ him in PMC in non-sanitation departments or on table works under the law of ‘Vashila-karar’. Neither his parents nor grand-father/mother had prior scavenging work background in their village. Duttu has reported high risk of possibility of T.B which is an occupational hazard. The harmful work causes T.B and Dattu is suffering from diabetes since 7 years. He also added,
Though there were only the Mang and Mahars for the crematorium works since several decades, but now-a-days other traditionally non-scavenging castes have also taken up such kinds of polluted crematorium works due to having several governmental benefits and job security purposes. He says, “Our caste people cannot give up such crematorium works unless there is a strong motivation by PMC officials to divert them into non-scavenging works”.

Dattu elaborates “Being the precarious and stigmatized traditional form of labour; it is mostly occupied by the migrated and illiterate scheduled castes youth especially belonging to Matang caste. They are a majority among contract labour in PMC. The Crematorium Bigari have to usually lift dead bodies with help of the stretcher, to clean the dirt of the dead bodies after push in the electric furnace (Vidhyut/Gas-Dahini) and finally to sort the burned bones and ash of the dead-bodies. According to the key respondents, daily about 8-10 dead-bodies are burned in the Vidhyut-Dahini. The Vaikunt Crematorium has a premise of 17 acres. It involves 2 electric furnaces, 1 gas-furnace and 8 waiting-sheds for the convenience of the citizens. The dead-bodies come from several hospitals, peths and other Pune city areas. Here the duties of the cleaning/health and electric staff run into three shifts. The divisions of works are for the Crematorium Bigari; one who lifts and pushes the body on stretcher after taking over, another clean the dirt of the body, the operator burns the bodies and next one sort-out the bones of body after it is burnt”.

**Case No: 9. Sandeep**, 24 year old belongs to the Matang caste, works under PMC contract job as a Diesel furnace operator under the Yerwada Crematorium. He failed in his final year of SSC exam due to some responsibilities within the family. All his family siblings discontinued education due to inadequate money supply for the school fees and bad study progress. His grandfather had left the Valaki village in Ahmednagar 70 years back, and settled in Pune. His grandfather-mother and his father used to beg in Pune. But after some years, they worked as a hamal and seasonal labourer. His family had no prior background of the scavenging works. Still his father works as a hamal and raises daily quarrels/clashes within family members due to his continuous drunkenness and unhealthiness. He says, “No one in our family had a permanent employment, but this traditionally crematorium unclaimed dead-body disposal work has been only performed by matangs. So I am contractually working here with my caste-fellows. I have not yet suffered by caste discrimination”. He also
commented, “Although today I earn Rs.3000 from this work, but we works with huge insecurity of health-measures from daily infections by unclaimed bodies and produces toxic fumes and gases while burning the bodies in diesel furnace. Through the year, we have to suffer from minor fever, cough, and deadly headache. We get severe respiratory diseases through huge contamination. For these reasons, we have to maintain continuous addictions and habits; such as chewing ‘gutka’/tobacco and occasional drinking on workplace for avoiding stinky poisonous odour and gases. Our young generation is vastly under the threat of the long-term unemployment and nuisances. PMC does not give the unclean allowance”. Several times our caste people are sub-contracted for these crematorium works and others earn profit. Thus, we all are here working based on sub-contract nature.

Sandeep also elaborated numbers of reasons that may lead to loss of work from the contractor: if someone makes demand for salary increment to contractor; if the contract agreement ends up as per PMC rule; if worker raises bad words with public and their relatives or asks for money; if machine operator works not cautious; if they avoid weekly maintenance works of diesel machine furnace; one does not inform to the contractor of absence; if one gets late on duty; if contractor wants to recruit another person to replace earlier one; if someone demands for essential facilities like PMC permanent worker and; if someone claims for extra hour payment. In brief, he outlines the complete lack of choice and assertion for the sub-contracted workers.

**Case No: 10. Vishwanath,** 50 year old, belongs to Matang caste, works as a Dead Body Disposal Bigari. Vishwanath recruited in 1974 as a kachra motor Bigari before being appointed as unclaimed dead body disposal Bigari under PMC. His father had served for 30 years in PMC as a kachra motor Bigari. He entered this most hazardous work due to poor education and father’s vashila-karar claim. Presently he lives in the Gunj-peth where mostly matangs have inherited homes by their forefathers/ancestors. Even, he does not know anything about his old village of origin. He claimed that some unclean works in the PMC are kept only for our people; the works are also distributed on caste-basis by the senior PMC official. Interestingly, the savarna-upper castes people have probably taken the jobs in particular scavenging works like sweeping, garbage Bigari and mokadam. He succinctly commented, “We have to work with cancer, TB, Aids and poison contracted unclaimed dead-bodies in our
entire duty. The dead-bodies are brought from all Pune hadhis. The unclaimed dead-bodies are investigated by civic/railway police either as suicide case, murder case, and an accident case. Vishwanath elaborates the working condition as further: “I can tell you a case in the Sassoon hospitals where I usually work. There was a dead body, burnt to death. The body had remained there for four to five days, it gave off a foul smell, and it had to be taken away. It was kept in a closed house and there were insects on it. We were three of us. Sometimes the cold room in the hospital is full. There is separate P.M Room where it was to be kept on ice. The smell is terrible and powerful that even after dousing it with dettol, phenyl, and turpentine, the smell did not decrease. Then we told the person to bring masks so that we could cover our faces with them. If we do not work they fire us or then suspend us. So we have to do it”.

Such kinds of Bigari work is immensely neglected by the all strata of the society and PMC officials too. Bigari workers closely work in the Dead-House at the Sassoon hospital where we have to carry a daily minimum 7-8 & maximum 11-12 dead bodies after post-mortem and get number of them disposed in the Yerwada crematorium. To the crematorium Bigari, their working boundaries have widened due to unlimited extension of the Pune city. They have to collect unclaimed dead-bodies across main city and rural areas (haddhi) in Pune; especially from Pune-Daund railway line. Having collected the dead bodies, the death claim identification is done by police investigation for 3 days unless the relative claimants of dead person do not contact to the police. Now-a-days, the death ratio of the Bigari has increased due to the lack of proper safety measures and time bounded health check-up by PMC. Two years back, two bigari-workers died due to working condition and inadequate safety-measures; their names were Jabvant Kisan Jadhav and Gangaram Bhaguji Gaikwad. The working team was low strength only four Bigari-workers and a driver of dead-body van (shav-vahika).

Vishwanath further contends, “Why has such unclean occupations not been spread out among different castes; why are there no incentives for the traditional scavenging castes. They have to take stigmatized inferior division of labors in the PMC local body associated with the crematorium, slaughter house, dog-squad, pumping station, carrying unclaimed dead-bodies. Why are the scavenging castes alone given these jobs too readily- these are all issues that the State and society ignores. The PMC civic authority wants the jobs done, and the easiest way of managing is to get caste already
`trained` in it to undertake it. Our occupation is tied to caste here in the most insidious modern setting. The war to be fought is against three different mindsets: one of the government that too readily gives employment according to traditional caste occupation; two, of society that refuses to transform the system through personal example; and three, of a group that accepts a traditional occupations in a disguised form perhaps because it is easier to give in than to fight, or perhaps jobs are so desperately needed, or because practices have been too long internalized.

Although having most risk of death, PMC has been neglecting monthly health check-up, T.T injections, tonic tablets and essential gloves and gunboot. The drunkenness is common on this kind of hazardous work. When I return home, my family members always complain about my dangerous body smells despite regular bathing twice a day. As well as I have also no option to hand-over the PMC service to my son after retirement. Now I am staying with 2 sons and wife. I was got married at the age of 20. My sons are taking education in PMC Marathi medium school, and elder daughter was married at the age of 18 years. I gave more than 30,000 rupees to son-in-law for launching business and also managed the marriage expenditure. He also expresses working condition, "We have to walk without protected shoes on the spoiled and dispersed blood and laying sphere organs of the post-mortem dead-bodies in the Sassoon dead house while carrying the dead-bodies after numbering. The dispersed blood might cause for septic to anyone. Since last 4 years of working experience, our one fellow worker was heavily injured by the broken bone of dead-body and it damaged his arm. It was a sad moment for him that within 6 months he died due to poison spreading in his body".

Case No: 11. Ashok, a 53 year old illiterate worker, is belonged to Buddhist community from Karnataka and was appointed as a ‘Mutton-Gadi Bigari’ in 1975 under PMC Rojandari status. He has 2 children. His elder son works in a private firm. He resides at slum in Hadapsar with his illiterate wife and divorced daughter. His wife, Gauri, runs the pan-shop to support to family income. Even today, he just understands, but cannot speak Marathi. He can speak and understands Hindi. He remembered his old story of migration and employment, "I was brought in Pune by Tadiwala contractor for the PMC’s building and colony construction works. I spent 10 years on Rojandari job status, and after got in the PMC permanent job in 1975. On Rojandari job status, I used to wake up at early-morning 5 a.m and join queue of
labourers for getting day work. It was very hard time because some time if did not get work; I had to borrow for food by the Savkar. Even today, I have borrowed Rs.30,000 for land investment and medical treatment of daughter by Savkar on 25-30% monthly interest rate. It is such huge interest rate which I cannot return them despite permanent employment”.

Ashok comments, “I was deceived by a land-seller who took advantage of my illiteracy. While talking on his working condition, he seriously says, ‘He has to lift and carry the waste fish pieces and spoilt mutton from various shops and PMC leased beef centres under the Kasba-Vishram ward area. The mutton vehicle is released from the Gultekadi vehicle depot to remove whole waste under the ward. While lifting and sorting the bones and picking up other sharp waste, we have to work without health measure and equipments. As a result, I got more addicted to alcohol and smoking bidi for avoiding the long tiredness from work. During his PMC service, he was admitted 3-4 times in hospital because of high-risk working and roughly breast-cough. Each month, I have to spend minimum Rs.1500 for buying medicine and taking medical treatment by private doctor”.

**Case No: 12. Atish**, 26 year old, belongs to matang caste, employs as a PMC seasonal field-worker Bigari under the Drainage Department (Kitaknashak). He completed SSC education despite several domestic problems. He wanted to pursue ITI course, but could not due to his father’s death due to extreme drunkenness. His father, Vishnu, served in PMC for 30 years. His family borrowed Rs.75,000 loan from the Urban Bank of India for the father’s medical treatment and his marriage purpose. Now, he is staying with mother, brother, wife and his 2 children. Since 2000, he looks after family when he got appointed in PMC on his father’s place. His wife is perpetually ill. According to his grand-mother, they came to Pune 60 years ago from the Latur district. He angrily expressed discrimination by the PMC and local officials as follow:

“My work is to spray pesticide into the nullah in order to prevent epidemics. I have to enter inside the rivers to remove the floating green garbage on surface. It carries possibility for infliction of dengue fever. He also reported, “PMC never take any health precaution for our hazardous works. The smell not only affects my health but my small kids too after returning home. They do not come close to me. The PMC
officials pressurize us for own house cleaning. If we deny doing, there might be more possibility of transfer to different ward office”. He also added up, “When I was working in Bibwewadi ward office, the DSA ward officers who always used to give priority to their own caste-fellow workers to have less-hazardous and supervisory jobs under ward areas, but they never intimate us. He always used to recommend me for heavy and more hazardous works. Eventually, I decided to make my transfer in other ward office.”

Case No: 13. A 25 years old, Nilesh, a smart convent studied malaria-investigator field-worker. Nilesh unwillingly gave up his aspirations due to the insistence by his parents to join the PMC service on the place of his retired grand-mother. Though Nilesh was enrolled as a Safai kamgar he now works as a malaria investigator on technical designation. He is aware that his present education got him a promotion in the PMC. He says, “My parent insisted me to take the service of the grand-mother after her retirement in PMC. He had no option except to clean and sweep the garbage. The reasons were to continue residing in the PMC colony home and to get benefits of other several free of cost PMC facilities for family. I was appointed as a sweeper on my grandmother’s prior status in 2003 despite being enrolled in the final year B.Com in BMCC College. My well-settled friends always tease me about PMC work status and my nasty choice”. He added, “Despite my name is registered as a Safai-kamgar, on muster, but ward officials have promoted me for supervisory work as a field-worker because of my good-education. I can communicate well in English with my senior officials under the ward. I might shift from this PMC occupation if I get proper job outside. I want to pursue the post-graduate examination in commerce”. According to the obtained information by his grand-mother, her father-in-law had shifted from the manjri-budruk, Pune district in order to search for employment in PMC. Since that time, the PMC used to hire people on daily payment basis for the unclean work around the Pune. He worked as a Maila-Coolie Kamgar about 20 years in PMC. Then they both could get easily the PMC employment. My husband got the ‘Gang-Coolie’ job which was considered as much manual work. Some years later, I assigned as a sweeper based on Rojandari status on 1964”, his grandmother adds.

Interestingly, Nilesh’s father, Suresh presently works in the Pune University as a A.S.O. The elder brother has completed B.E degree in electrical engineering and is
employed in M.E.S.B as an electric engineer. Recently, his younger sister has appeared in M.Com examination, and grand-mother gets pension by PMC. His family seems economically well off, but the family borrowed about 4,00,000 loan from various public and private banks for investing the money in own house and vehicles. Nearabout 50 per cent of loan has been paid off. Nilesh belongs to Mahar caste and resides in Pandhav-nagar PMC colony since his childhood. He seems very satisfied with good earning from this service to support the loan-returns.

**Case No: 14. Ramchandra** is 35 years old PMC contract worker in Phule mandai, and is a contract Bigari under Pravin enterprises. Ramchandra left SSC night-school education after his father’s death 4 years ago. He belongs to the Bhoi community in which their traditional occupation is fish-selling. As a home responsibility, he got married at the age of 27 and sought this employment with the help of friend in 2001. He has one daughter; she studies in 2nd standard in Numavi School. He admitted her far away from his home to have better education and surrounding. He had got a four wheeler license for getting employment, but it was useless. Today he stays in rented house where he has to pay more than Rs.5,000. Ghume’s father had been displaced from the land when the factory was built. Earlier his family had no option but to work as contract labourer. He lives in ramshackle labour colony without any civic amenities. He was not entitled for any welfare service provided by law. His dead father had served in PMC non-sanitary service for 25 years. Mother sells fish and wife sells carry-bags.

Ramchandra comments, “Mandai area is generally overcrowded by the commuters, buyers, vendors and hawkers in a day. Tones of spoiled vegetable waste is produced by the vegetable sellers, wholesalers etc in the market area. The daily work within the market is run through three shifts alongwith 30 Safai-kamgars. Ramchandra adds, “Due to the irregular payment schedule by contractors Earlier, I was doing some work and earning now the PMC move has made our conditions worse. We are neither here or nor there”. It is a purely contract status, which does not include social security like insurance, provident funds. He was employed through a labour contractor. He earns Rs. 2,500, well below the stipulated minimum wage. The PMC contractors have been always lying and mislead some information regarding the actual wage and payment hike as per new contract laws. Ramchandra works in the night-shift as a loading-
unloading mandai Bigari to earn more income for family. He narrates, “Our salary is deducted on any holiday or health ailment. We work for more than 8 hours, sometimes I clean the streets, the sewage. On the regular night shift, I usually work with more 3 work-fellows. My duty starts from 9 p.m to 6 a.m. Various kinds of spoiled and scattered vegetables have to be cleaned at night without taking any break, we do not have enough time to sleep. We are probably get tired by the spoiled odor in the workplaces. We have to collect and load all types of waste without any safety tools, as well as walk on thick vegetable mud. As a result, we have to constantly spend money for buying chappals. Several times, we get injured by broken piece of glasses because most of the alcoholic people who use this place to drink and also they use this place to defecate”. To prevent these troubles, I take regular drink and chew ´gutka´, tobacco while working in night shift.

**Case No: 15. Lata**, a young and illiterate matang caste woman age 19, remembers her life journey. Lata had worked in the fields with other members of the husband’s family until her mother called her to Pune to take up a temporary*50* sweeper’s job in the municipal corporation. Lata joined in 2004. She got married at the age of 17. Lata earns as much as Rs.1600-2000 that was double of what is used to get as a domestic worker (molkarin). Her family borrowed Rs.50,000 loan from private savkar for husband’s business, build house and her first delivery. My husband had asked for bank-loan, but the bank denied. She describes her daily routine and wages; “Earlier I used to work as domestic servant/molkarin, I had to work into two or three houses in a day. I switched from domestic worker to Jhada Bigari so as to get enough time for children, household responsibilities, limited working hours and affordable salary by the contractor. But in this PMC contract work, I usually work to sweep the waste vegetable garbage in the morning from 8.00 a.m - 5:00 p.m. Contractor does not provide any brooms and paty. We bring these all tools with our own money. People feel our work is more contaminated, despised is thinking us to be worse than dogs. She found the work in Pune as just hard as in village, but added that “it is hopes of a permanent post which keeps me going”. Her husband was a vegetable vender in same Phule madai where she works. But she stays with her husband and child in the Gunjpeth because it is closed to her place of work. “I miss my child the entire day, she said, but what can one do when one has to fill the stomachs of so many people?” Her little son is looked after by her mother-in-law while she goes to work. Here visits
to her native village are also rare. She commented, “In my working life, none of the contract women worker had got more than a couple of day’s paid leave, no maternity paid leave, no hospital check-up facilities, and no recommended medicines from PMC hospital. She also says, “Sometimes I lost my earning due to constant absenteeism during the hard days of life, this would make me late for work, and I would get into trouble with my employers. It was usual to work almost till the day of delivery. Despite of my self-earning, I give my salary to my husband. He then hands me a sum of money with which to buy the daily vegetables. He buys clothes for children and me. I do not know the reason for this. Since last 3 years, my husband has become a drunkard and beats me up regularly. Sanitation workers in the municipality also exploit contract workers.

Case No: 16. Indrajit, belongs to Mahar-Buddhist, works as an Oilman-Cum-Bigari. Indrajit discontinued education at matric level and migrated from Latur district in 1972 with the help of his friend who was residing in Pune. After coming to Pune, he worked in Swagat lunch home at Khadki as a waiter as well as subsequently worked as a safai-sevak in the Russell Company and Cantonment Depot. He joined in PMC sanitation department under kasba sewage pumping station on 1977. He is now aged about 47, and worked as a ‘Bhangi-mehtar’ until 2000, before being promoted as an oilman-bigari. Earlier he had to carry human faeces, dispose deterred carcass of animals into the sewage pump machine. Ironically, although all over India, scavengers or sweepers have been given the new name of Safai karmacharis. Before getting promotion as an oil-man, so for 15 years, I was also officially designated as a ‘Bhangi’ on my identity-card. I have to clean gutter sludge and clogged carcasses into the sewage pumping station. His voice recalls the past. Curiously, it is totally devoid of emotions or bitterness.

Indrajit says, “I gave up my career aspirations but I wanted to do anything else. I had no option. My work is dirty. I hope my educated children would never clean gutters or sweep the streets although their future guaranteed employment in PMC after my retirement. In other words, I have educated my children; they have reached upto intermediate and graduate level. Now my elder son and daughter have reached upto graduate level and younger son has failed 10th standard. However, Indrajit’s daughter stood third in the high school board examination, and he proudly says that, “I will
educate my children and will not allow them to work in this profession despite the PMC traditional job claim right”. He talks, “I may not have stick up with my firm decision about customary heir right. I urged my younger son must be recruited in non-sanitary departments in the PMC. In addition to say, “Indrajit is social as well political activist. He works full-time for congress MLA under Bopodi constituency. He was appointed on the PMC school guardian committee as representative. He could raise several issues for scholarships, fee concessions for the poor people. As a result, these demands were agreed by the administration As far as his saving and loan affairs are concerned, he says, “I have bought a bigger house for Rs.2, 00,000 on my savings and a loan borrowed from the PMC Ganesh Credit Co-Operative Society. But I earn more than Rs.8,000 from my work. It’s become very easy to pay the loan because my wife is also employed as permanent in PMC Dalvi hospital as an Aaya. My elder brother, Kamlakar, also works in PCMC in sanitation department as a safai sevak. He was invited in this service through sending call from the Pune Employment Office.

**Case No: 17. Bablu** is aged about 43, and worked as a Sewage Mehtar under Kasba-STP. He resides in Indira Nagar with his wife and 3 children. His elder son has left the education in 8th standard, and two daughters are still studying. His wife is also an illiterate. He is not optimistic about daughter’s future. He would accommodate his son in PMC job. Talking about his prior history of family, “No one had engaged before in this unclean occupation. His father, Jaghanna served in army for 5 years and joined in the non-scavenging PMC work. My grand-father migrated from Delhi for searching job in Pune. Interestingly, his father had issued the caste-certificate on the name of ‘bhangi’, it became continued even on my official record. Ironically, although all over the India, scavengers or sweepers have been given the new name of Safai karmacharis by base code principle. He commented, “PMC must end up this rude and old system caste-calling work such as bhangi. We forced the union for encounter the memorandum in front of the PMC. Gehlot says, “I wanted to do work in the other non-sanitary municipality works, but there was no such kinds of works apart from traditional scavenging occupations. I could not get any other work. None of valmiki/mehtars has got a job with PMC’s other departments excluding sweeping and scavenging. Those who got the work do not get salary and therefore most of them have returns to doing private work. He clarified, “I have to clean and carry everyday human faeces directly into the sewage machine. Sometimes if the sludge under
machine is uneasy to clean, I enter and jump inside the machine to remove clogged excreta, faeces and human carcass under sewage pump. Many have died of inhaling poisonous gases. What happen and once we enter a manhole, we feels suffocated and later feels almost paralyzed in every limbs till we comes out. It is too risky to do due to having unhygienic work nature. I take alcohol occasionally, I do smoke regularly. One of an interesting phenomenon illustrated by some of Safai respondents is that when it comes to assign such type of work, caste differences and discrimination operate in the general department incharge of cleaning the city. Non-scavenging castes do apply for the job, but they have other means to further their career. Bablu describes some of the incidents he has dealt with. ‘Once a non-scavenging caste worker gets in, he is sure to become permanent after five years. He uses influence to get a white-collar job. One who joins as sanitation workers becomes, after some times, a peon, or a clerk. Nearabout 18 Savarna worker in my department changed their unclean status of Sewage Bigari works and they serve on table works. The savarna caste work fellows never entered in manholes even at once. Their name is on the rolls as a sanitation worker, but they do other jobs. Persons like him bribe or threaten our people and get them to do the work of entering the manholes. There are more than 1000 savarna sanitary workers under my department who have upgraded their unclean forms of works with producing the affairs of caste favoritism”. According to Gehlot who himself got the job, the eight people who have joined as Bigari workers belong to especially Marathas and other upper-caste under the Kasba-Sewage Pumping Station. All of them refuse to work as sweeper while taking salary of a sweeper and doing the babu work/table work or supervision under the ward offices or in main building of PMC. Gehlot informs that the municipality never felt that, ¨We too can able to undertake these table and supervisory works¨. I have three children, it is hard to survive. Sometimes, the local shop-keeper hesitates to give us daily food grains on debt. He also added, “I am an active member of ‘Valmiki Samaj Prabodhan’, a Jat-panchayat which perform against social and community evils such as family disputes, marriage activities, and caste discrimination and so on. The dowry forms among valmikis are not different than other lower scavenging castes people from Maharashtra. In my marriage, bride-party gave me only cycle and managed marriage expenditure. In the city there is less untouchablity; we sit together and have tea and also eat. “We have not considered such differences. We also bow to other goddess when we pass by other temple. I worship the Bhagwan Shankar. On an
auspicious day in our family and community, we call a Brahmin or our religious
guru/maharaj to perform our rituals. The valmiki community has its own
bhuya/maharaj/guru for certain religious ceremonies. The community manages its
own religious rituals in its own way, independently, without external support.

Case No: 18. Sunil, 36 year old, has been employed as an Assistant Mokadam
(supervisor) under the PMC-Vishrambaugwada City post hajeri kothi since four years.
He belongs to Vholar caste and was recruited on the place of his aunt based on PMC
vashila-karar. His both illiterate father and mother had served as a sweeper since their
migration from Solapur district 40 years back. Since 10 years ago, his parent passed
away due to severe diseases and long-term engagement in PMC unclean works. His
father had migrated due to unemployment and starvation of whole family. He decided
to shift to Pune to feed his family after his marriage. As he came to Pune, he heard
from his relatives about the recruitment of sweepers and bigari under PMC wards. His
both father and mother got job as a sweeper.

Presently, Sunil stays with his wife, sons and an old aunt in the PMC Ambiloda
colony. At the prior time, he was recruited as a kachra gada Bigari, but within 4 years
he was unofficially promoted on supervisory posts because of good communication
and hard-working job under ward. Sometimes, he was also praised by the local
corporators for the good management of all ranks of Safai kamgars in the haddhi. His
4 year old son, is in English medium school despite of his own inadequate middle
level of education. Her sister is also employing in PMC as a sweeper on the place of
his mother. While talking about his well-managed attitude and regular work load
schedule, he explained the Assistant Mokadam carries out more important
responsibilities than the peth mokadam. He has to daily supervise workers under
ward-haddhis as well as clear the sanitation complaints by citizens, corporators under
the ward. He assists the mokadam in supervising labour and marking their attendance
in a whole day. In the City post kothi, it has one of higher density area in Pune due to
the expansion of stationary and wholesale business, increasing numbers of vendors-
hawkers, Mahatma Phule subzi-mandai area and coverage of red light area and old
‘wada’, religious temples around the ward. I have to wake at the early-morning at 4
a.m to leave home around 4.15 a.m due to given various responsibilities and
continuous absenteeism of the safai workers. After reaching on the workplace, I check
the entire haddhi to see the actual workload and sanitary complaints by the citizens.
As per the work-load, I assign the work to all workers. Finally, our mokadam only
draws attendance and make regular work-report. He also added, “The area is over-
crowded by the commuters in various purposes on entire day and night. We have only
42 Safai kamgars staff involved 28 sweepers, 4 mehtar (bhangi), 9 kachra gada Bigari
and drainage Bigari who serve for 12,000 ward populations. Every day, numbers of
complaints of sewer line leakages are noted by the ward citizens and sometimes daily
produced unlimited garbage consists of condoms, dispensary/hospital waste, shit
(tikri),*51 hotel waste. This cannot be taken on vehicles and containers such as the
compactors, BRC and DP. It might cause various physical injuries and possibility of
diseases to workers while they working with bare-hands alongwith women rag-
pickers/waste collectors. Interestingly, when the prostitutes throw their dust-bins on
the bucket which filled with used condoms and other waste; our workers have to
suffer eye-infections. Every day, about 4-5 buckets are covered by these kinds of
refuse waste only in our workplace kothi. Further he firmly noted his statement
against the helpless advanced garbage lifting technology which fails to clean the
garbage in the narrow-lanes and roads. As well as Sulabh is also a worst maintained
by the private thekedar and employers. Every day, our mehtarani has to clean
manually the shit (tikri) outside the latrine area with the help of groom and water.
While talking on the drainage and sewage work, our drainage bigari remains
continuous absent since 2-3 months, therefore if occurs major problems of sanitary
line clog, or overflow chambers, several times I have to hire outside workers to
manage the repairing tasks with my own money to get a ‘no objections’ within the
ward. Apart from assisting to mokadam, I have to collect revenue receipts from the
hawkers and vegetable vendors. In addition to say, “There are several problems which
arise about leave quota, complaints, weekend holiday of the workers in my kothi,
however I have to consider the problems of workers and try to solve them, he feels.
Each month, mokadam must settle various problems regarding worker’s unlimited
leave record, their poor response in the work, irregularity instead of charging money
hafta around Rs.1500-2000 from them.

Further, Sunil is dissatisfied with the role of union for solving the worker’s problems.
When we visit to PMC Union office for various purposes, the union staff behaves
arrogantly about worker’s complaints by officials as well as even they do not help to
write applications. They assume that the workers must have done wrong somewhere
rather than officials. In the time of strike and procession, union informed us before 4-5 days without meeting details of the strike reasons. It results, half of worker who attend the strike, they do not know the purpose of the strike by union due to either their illiteracy or weak-communication by the union members. Most of the sanitary workers, including me, always hesitate in calling strikes, bandh because after strikes even they have huge load of garbage cleaning and unpaid days. Union did not give attention to the circulation of safety tools which have not been provided since 3-4 years ago. While working in ward workplaces, interestingly we work with a spirit of brotherhood. I have experienced a different feeling at work. Our workers fight and quarrel at home, but when they gather on the ward workplaces, the work is equally shared by them. If one person among hundred behave roughly, then we do not notice it. People doing the same job behave like friends. They live in peace; they work in a spirit of cooperation’. Though I have much more skills in sanitation works, I have not done other private works. “I am satisfied that I am doing a job because I get the salary. I do not do private jobs nor do I have to ask for other bribe to the Savarna fellow workers to do their municipal work.

Case No: 19. Gurav, 57, works as a Peth Mokadam (supervisor) in the City-Post Hajeri Kothi under Vishrambaugwada ward office. The work of peth-mokadam is to put the attendance of workers over three fixed times on daily shift. This task is considered as a more supervisory and responsible works on bottom level hierarchies within ward officials. Before getting promotion as a mokadam, he was engaged in maintenance and repair works as a vehicle mechanic in Gultekadi Vehicle Depot. His father has worked in government service. He has three children and taken good professional education. He passed the SSC with knowing somewhat English writing and speaking. He was very unsatisfied with this work. Regarding the working condition of workers under this charge, he says, “We have only 14 regular workers among 42 in the kothi. As well as most of the posts of safai-workers remain vacant due to the further appointments of heir. After a long time, the posts of heirs are filled. It is quite difficult while working on such as populated and congested ward haddhi area. He further elaborates, “There are so many problems in taking casual and medical leaves by the workers within 365 days of year. Most of the workers in our kothi are illiterate. Therefore, I do adjust properly the sanctioning leaves matter of the safai-kamgars handling daily work. The huge work-load in this ward tends to lead to more
absenteeism of workers. I regard hardship of workers, but I have also been assigned several responsibilities of regular three time attendance, and daily report writing. At the end of a month, I have to face all senior ward officials for clearing the attendance, leave and ward civic complaints report. Sometimes, some officers are not available or delay the procedure. He asserted, “Every kothi has its strict rule about their work in-out, compulsory PMC dress, and identity-card and so on. But this in kothi, I avoid such strict rules and see their problems. But, I have to lose my money for daily tea consumption for workers. There may have further job description formalities for workers under a duty: if someone is found outside his haddhis areas, he/she loses the paid day; if someone is getting late on the workplace, he/she has to go back to home; PMC dress is compulsory while working and; identity-card is compulsory. Despite of these obligations and restrictions on work, several times we avoid these rules. Workers probably misunderstand about my job status which is more supervisory.

Case No: 20. A 40 years old Anil who belongs to Mahar-Buddhist caste, contended, “Despite of having better level of education (Standard 10th + B.E), I have not been getting promoted from my initial father’s Vashila-kaarar post as a sweeper. Before accepting my father’s job, I was privately engaged in various electric maintenance contracting activities in Aundh area. I chose this work so as to be not squander the right of PMC heir claim after my father’s retirement. I had kept one wish in my mind for PMC supervisory works so that I could able to maintain side-by-side my electrical profession. I urge if I get proper remuneration from any work, I must be honest with this occupation whether it is unclean or clean”. Since my appointment in the PMC in 2007, the ward did not provide any safety tools. Talking about parent’s history, “My father, Hanumanth, had left Osmanabad and settled in the Pune for the search of the employment. My cousin works in PMC as a fireman worker in fire-brigade department. I have two children who are taking education. My elder daughter studies in 10th standard but younger one in 5th standard in English medium”.

Case No: 21. Fifty-three years old widow Sakhubai, a PMC Sweeper, was appointed in 1986 as a Badali kamgar. Illiterate Sakhubai, belongs to Matang caste, stays along with her 27 year old son and 16 year old grand-daughter in mangalwar-peth area. She is very weak is inflicted with low blood pressure. Sakhubai migrated from Ahmednagar with her husband 20 years ago with only had 10 rupees in her pocket.
Her alcoholic husband always used to beat her regularly; therefore she left her husband and lives with her son. Her husband got remarried with another woman. She worked as a domestic worker for survival of her family. Eventually, she got PMC Badali job with the help of ward corporators. After joining the PMC, a first household loan (Rs.50,000) from Ganesh Bank was borrowed to renovate the hut. After that, she borrowed loans from other two banks around Rs.2,00,000 each for her and her son’s medical treatment purposes. Unfortunately, all banks authorities decided for loan recovery and evicted her from her home. She has remained in the extreme poverty till now. Sometimes, her alcoholic son abuses and beats her for demanding money for purchases alcohol. He also pressurizes her to leave the service for his heir claim. She cleans garbage and mandai-vegetable with help of her 6th standard grand-daughter due to her weak condition. Her grand-daughter always comes in the morning to help Sakhubai in sweeping and cleaning works. She usually sweeps the narrowed lanes and outside Sulabh areas. Today, she spends more than Rs.2000 per month on the health treatment and medicine.

Case No: 22. Jeevanbai, a 55 year old illiterate widow woman, lives in Harkanagar-Kashewadi Bustee which is over-populated by the Mehtars/Valmikis. Jeevanbai is employed as a permanent mehtarani in the PMC Health Department since 28 years. She got married at the age of 16. She has been working in the City post hajeri kothi. This ward kothi is covered with red light area, Mahatma Phule subzi-mandai, and other kinds of congested places. Under the ward haddhi, the department is assigned 2-3 public latrines/sulabh and other public toilets/urinals; she says, “I had to face the sexual harassment and public abuse several times. She is reminded of an incident, “When I was cleaning the toilet, the man who was in rush came in the latrine openly. I asked him not to, but he abused me loudly”. As a woman worker, I used to work manually handling the faeces when joined the PMC. All the women bhangi/mehtar called as `tikari utanewali` in the language of the PMC officials. The majority of sweepers and cleaners in the Pune are Dalit migrant, who are treated with utter contempt by the Pune population. Jeevanbai is one of those. Her grandparents migrated to Pune from Delhi. Their predecessors were settled there before India’s independence. At that time, Valmiki’s belonged to ghettos known as Harkanagar-Kashewadi that Peshwa’s/British government employed as cheap migrant labour to clean their public toilet and city, yet none were ready to rent out a house to these
people. The municipality therefore constructed separate dwellings for them besides the site of old Bhavani peth-Pune area. His grandfather and father alike worked with the same PMC as a manual scavengers/maila coolie. His wife is also ‘privy-cleaner’; and she did not ever visit Delhi.

Jeevanbai, who lives in Haraka-nagar valmiki bustee, has spent her whole time doing mehtar and domestic works. She angrily says that she carries narak (hell). My mother did it, my father, brother, sister-in-law did it and I also do it”. “As it is, my hands and feet and waist get marked by the ‘narak’. The works are clearly distributed based on the caste status. She clearly opines, “Each caste must do their own scavenging work; like matang, mahars and other Savarna caste must not come in this toilet cleaning jobs. This is only one our traditional legacy for our survival. People feel that our work is more condemned, despised and related worse than the dogs. All over the State there is fear and insecurity among our people”. Speaking about the working condition in the rainy season, she narrates, “much more stink is dispersed everywhere in the rainy season. In the rainy season, it is really bad. Water mixes with the shit and when we carry it on our paty, it drips from it on our body. When I return home, I find it difficult to eat food sometimes. The smell never gets out my clothes. It is difficult to say which is worse. We cannot remove excreta despite the ‘kharata-paty’. We are in such miserable condition. If the work is not done due to the rain overflow storming water, the citizens complain/report against us at the mokadam or other PMC senior officials/corporators. Then the officials put absentee for that whole day. Sometimes if the mokadam, SI or DSI is good natured, he could manage to bear us. She also says, “Having lot of difficulties in the scavenging works, “Aise jine se to marela acchaa!!”

Whether under heavy rains, we must have to remove the excreta manually without taking any our regular weekend holiday or monthly medical and casual leave. Sometimes on Sunday as weekly-holiday, we have to come and work unlimited hours. By remembering the experience of caste and work discrimination in Sadashiv Peth worksite, Jeevanbai emphasizes a routine experience, “People from Sadashiv peth abuse us on different workplaces; they probably say, “Ye Bai Chalo Baju Hato, Hamko Jane Do, Mat Chhuo”.

Jeevanbai contends on the role of valmiki Jat-Panchayat regarding status of women. She says, “When any discussion is going on about marriages and other issues among the elders of the Jat-Panchayat, we have to sit inside the home under veil irrespective
that the education level and age of a woman. The women cannot share the community
decisions with men; men regard us as a Bahuwa as per the community norms. Every
family has to follow the decision or suggestion with made by the Jat-Panchayat. Even
while going outside the home, we have to cover pardha. This norm is predominant in
our community for women”.

Case No: 23. Surekha aged 43, stays along with her jobless husband, in a pucca
house in Haraka-nagar. Surekha is employed as a permanent mehtarani under the
Vishrambaughwada ward office. She got recruited in 1989. She has a married son and
grand-son. His son, Vijay, left school into the SSC class and bought rickshaw through
borrowing loan. Her daughter in law completed SSC education and is engaged in the
domestic work. Surekha studied up to the 5th class and, although she got married in
1962, she had attempted the final annual exam, and finally she passed. She added, “I
studied at Abhinav School till 5th standard. There was lot of incidents of
discrimination which used to take place in the school. She commented, “Earlier the
situation was different for school sitting arrangement both for the savarna students
and us. Earlier our lives used to be a dependent on the daily wages due to the
traditional utter poverty, so we were not educated. Presently my grand-son is studying
in the English medium. In earlier times, generally when the boy is 16-17 years of old,
their father used to say, “Come on! Let’s go for work, thus when one gets some
money through work, one leaves school”. Over the voices of the valmiki women, she
describes the tragic situation that she faced, “My father was illiterate but he wanted to
educate us. My eldest brother and I, next to him in age, were sent to school. We did
not like studying because untouchablitly was widely practised in our days. Upper caste
teachers would not teach us properly, and as a result, we were not at all motivated.
Our father had literally pushed us to go to school. We would unwillingly since we
were forced to, but we actually learnt what the teachers taught others. He would make
us sit separately, only a little away from others, so that we did not feel completely
alienated. I must say that studying was much better than household work. We repent
later on. I studied till 5th standard, and then my father got me married since I had come
of age. That is why I had to give up studies. My father wanted to give me the chance
to study upto Matric level by postponing my marriage for two years. But I would have
to go to long distance to walk to study in the school, and since I was a girl and it was
not safe for me to travel alone, the idea had to be given up. My brother studied till the
Xth and gave up, but my cousin studied further and is a teacher at present. As far as remember, I had good friends in my education time. Surekha was a very active and hard working woman. She recalls, “I was married at the age of 13, but did not go to my husband’s home till I was 17. After a month of fussing over me, my mother-in-law told me, “presently daughter, like all of us, you must take up a job”. I started working in a few private homes until my eldest son was born. After his birth, they did not force me to go back to work. But when he was 2 years old, my father-in-law, a corporation sweeper, asked me whether I would like to try for a permanent job. My husband was already employed in a corporation school. I said that I did not mind. I went through some kind of interview, and was quite surprised when I got the job in PMC as a mehtarani. In the beginning, it was difficult. I had to help my mother-in-law with the cooking when I came back after 8 hours shift. Then once I started having children every year, I wanted to give up my job. Everyone thought I was mad. Besides I used to get three months paid maternity leave each time. From that time, I decided to stay on. As we lived with my husband’s family, looking after the children were never major problems”. As far as the family’s occupations are concerned, “My illiterate grandfather, mother and father had joined as a Bhangi designation in old days. They had to work as gang-coolie around Mangalwar and Kasba Peth areas where the migrated people used the road and foot-paths, slum for open defecation. Every day at the PMC morning duty, they would work and manually lift human excreta openly on with bare hand. For removing the excreta, they would carry it on the head with the help of buckets and drums. Our caste is one of most oppressed Dalits groups in India. We are the Valmikis/bhangis/mehtars, the caste group that performs the most menial of all tasks: the removal of human waste and garbage in the villages and urban areas. “What kind of freedom is this?” Our community mired in filth, poverty and slavery, it is to be found in each city and village of India, asks Surekha. The scavenging communities want to give education to its children but the pull of the occupation is very strong. Some of them have succeeded in giving some school-level education to the next generation, but how far they succeed in getting jobs other than what they traditionally do is highly debatable.

The same thing recurs with my nephew who started out on his educational career but had to stop it because of financial considerations and other domestic problems. Omprakash Solanki is a graduate from Pune University. He completed B.Com degree
and went for LLB course. Despite of having had educational degrees, he is presently working in the municipality as a sanitary worker on the place of her handicapped mother. People look down upon those who are educated and yet doing a sweeper’s job. His father put pressure on him to study. He kept awake at night to study and studied upto B.com. He could speak English and had lot of knowledge. His father told him to do the sanitary inspector course. His mother, who was working as a safai kamgar, met with an accident when a scooter that collided with her caused multiple fractures in her body. Omprakash was studying and wanted to do course further but his father said that his mother is not well. As a result, he had to go to work on her place. His first feeling was that I had acquired such a lot of education, and what would people say if I became a Safai kamgar. After becoming a sweeper, he tried hard to find other non-sanitary job in PMC. He had submitted many applications to the municipality itself, but I have not been able to obtain office job. He is still trying. On another way, there are well-graduate educated daughter-in-laws (bahuwa) in Harakanagar are working in PMC service, but unfortunately they wake up at morning and hold kharata-badli (broom-bucket). We demand for their official work, but the PMC rule is adverse for women. The PMC Officials have always postponed and delayed our children’s appointment. The official work is only given to male heir, if he is well-educated”.

As Surekha commented, “In the Sarkari naukri (government job), we have to work longer hours than those in private contract works, but we also get a lot in return. Now that it is all behind me, I am very glad I did not leave. It is true that I am out of the house for over eight hours in the day. While comparing with women in private jobs, I am very fortunate. In the early mornings nowadays I clean the outside faeces on roads, along with male sweepers, but without enough tools. She commented on the role of PMC union in the accessing the procedure of customary heir right, “Union clerks take such a long-time and also do not help him in writing complaint application. They do not do much for them except to see that their heirs get jobs after them. Even after 240 days but unions do not care about all this nor approach the court. They are only interested in making money (annual fee Rs.100). The chief PMC union leaders are all Savarna and other lower castes, only two or three of our people have some voice in the union”.

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Case No: 24. Deepak, 19 years old, works as a Sulabh Care-taker. Deepak came to Pune 3 years back. He belongs to Bhumiyar Brahmin and came from Bihar State and works in Jansewa Sulabh Sauchyalaya, Mahatma Phule Subzi-Mandai in Panmala. He is involved since 2005 in this service for both toilet cleaning and somewhat supervisory works. He left education in 8th standard due to bad progress in study. His father is incharge supervisor in the L.P.G Gas Company in Bihar. Despite of having good condition in family, he could not able to pursue his education further. His family has 1 acre of land, tractor and four wheeler possessive assets. After leaving education, he remained unemployed for some years. His friend recommended him to come for work. My family is not aware about my work. Deepak says, “I have to clean the toilet regularly, and I get Rs.1500 for this service. Most of the Brahmins and Rajput are engaged in the Sulabh works. Sulabh appointed me on care-taker post with giving accommodation facility. Sometimes, several bad responses come from persons who use this toilet service while charging. We are not sure for secure employment here, he says. We do not get medical or any other leave. No hope for payment increment. The Sulabh care-takers have to work more than 15 hours. Majority of unemployed Bihari Brahmin have engaged in the Sulabh unclean works”. He further puts forward the possible reasons for losing this job: if the average of daily collection of cash is less; if cleaning work is not done proper and; if people lodge complaints against misbehavior.

Having outlined the history of the union and narrating the labour and life-histories of 24 Safai labour and their families, I will in the next chapter outline narratives of Roma Gypsies before undertaking a quantitative analysis of socio-economic factors in lives of Safai labour in Pune.