Chapter VIII

Conclusions and Suggestions

After analysing the data collected from a sample of 395 men and women safai kamgars' I have formulated some conclusions. They are presented hereunder along with my suggestions.

1. Subordinate contemptuous treatment is being received by safai kamgars from the society. Even today various amenities and opportunities are denied to them and they are deprived of their rights and privileges assured under the law, owing to non-implementation. All this shows that not many changes have taken place in the socio-economic conditions of safai kamgars over last 60 years.

2. Despite the unclean nature of work, 91% of the safai kamgars are not prepared to leave this occupation. On the contrary their thinking is that, traditionally they have a right to this occupation and other Castes should not enter into it.

3. The Social Exclusion resulting from the caste system, inequality, restrictions on social interaction and social space affect the life of Safai Kamgar in a big way. It puts limitations on their all round development and they have to experience social alienation and deprivation.

4. Safai Kamgars always stick to their caste/subcaste. They are not prepared to distance themselves from the caste groups because they are afraid of being boycotted and thus being isolated. They also have a strong belief that in case of need, it is only the caste that is going to help them.

5. The difference between the local and migrant castes and the classification of work according to these two categories are indicative of internal stratification among safai kamgars. This creates distance and aloofness among themselves.

6. The society in general and local castes in particular look upon the migrants as 'outsiders' since they do not have proof of residence prior to 1950 in the state, therefore, do not get any reservation facilities, though belonging to scheduled castes. And they do not have the capacity to compete in the open market.
7. The Muslim Safai Kamgar does not get any benefit of reservation and welfare schemes being muslim and in their own society they are treated differently, being in safai work.

8. Ignorance, illiteracy, poverty, indebtedness, drunkenness and addiction were found on a very large scale during my survey.

9. The traditionally transferred occupation of safai kamgars is required to be continued for retaining the tenaments, whether one desires or not, whether one is educated or illiterate. If that is the case what is the meaning in getting educated. This was the mentality I came across. Such a feeling is even stronger among migrants, that is, other than Bouddhas.

10. The arrangements in the safai kamgars colonies showed caste-wise segregation. Every caste has its own caste-panchayat, very rigid rules and code of conduct with their own religious, cultural ceremonies. They never mix with each other.

11. The younger generation which came into this work after 1980’s is also not prepared to leave this occupation.

12. Various Commissions and Committees have been set up from time to time, to study the safai kamgars problems and suggest schemes for their improvement and self development. However, these recommendations are not properly implemented. State government is found to be very reluctant in this matter.

13. I found in my survey that safai work is not acknowledged as an occupation like others. Also safai kamgar is not treated on par with kamgar in any other field. The safai work is linked with the caste system and these workers are expected to operate within the caste structure.

14. All the local self governments have the same attitude towards the safai kamgars, that of indifference and neglect. Even the rich Local Self Governments do not provide basic amenities, security equipments and safeguards to the safai kamgars. They are not bothered that the safai kamgars are deprived of their just rights.

15. Exploitation from higher authority at the work place such as Hafta Vasuli, Corruption, Favouritism, these are the things commonly found in all the
Local Self Governments surveyed by me. Women workers are victim of exploitation on all fronts, such as economic, social, mental, physical.

16. Because of the gender bias all rights and privileges are denied to women safai kamgars. They face sub-ordinate status, harrassment and domestic violence.

17. Owing to the nature of work and lack of security equipments and safeguards, the rate of mortality is very high in safai kamgars under all Local Self Governments. **As many as 25 kamgars face death every month.** Average life span of Safai Kamgars is 48 to 50 years only. Yet, gravity of this issue is not getting adequate attention.

18. I found during my survey that health problems of safai kamgars are sadly neglected. There are no facilities for timely medical check up and proper treatment. Several safai kamgars suffer from more than one serious type of diseases. Yet there is not even a proper record, and a systematic health care programme.

19. While talking of inadequate medical care on the one hand, I found on the other hand that the safai kamgars were very reluctant to face medical examination. This was because of fear of being found unfit and thereby losing the job.

20. Though, the Indian constitution has conferred equal human rights on all Indian citizens the safai kamgars are deprived of these. In reality, they are not even treated as human being and have to face humiliation.

21. Evaluation of the physical work done by safai kamgars is done in terms of wages. But the fact that they work for health and hygiene of society at the cost of their own life, is not getting due recognition. It is essential that Social-Economic evaluation and cost of their services to be calculated.

22. The trade unions generally focus only on the economic issues. Then also there are many unions without any co-ordination and unity among themselves. There are also vested - interest at work. As a result, the most glaring problems of Safai Kamgars remain neglected.

23. Because of contract system and increasing competition for job other castes have started coming into this occupation. I observed during my survey that the safai kamgars feel threatened on this issue.
24. No modernisation is being brought into the safai work. The traditional manual scavenging still continues.

25. Those few of the younger generation who get educated and turn to other occupation, do not like to keep contacts with their own family, caste and community. Families of such youths expressed that rejection by their own children is more painful than that by the higher castes.

26. The abovementioned observations relate to organised sector of safai kamgars. In unorganised sector thousands of male and female workers are engaged in safaiwork. There is no proper survey to estimate numbers, they are also from same castes and have no legal protection.

Suggestions

1. Since all safai kamgars are a common victim of the social system, it is necessary that they come out of their mutual differences which arise out of the nature of their work (sweeping and scavenging) and the caste hierarchy, and unite. With such unity they would be able to make the higher castes take notice of themselves. Through such power they can emphasise importance of their work for clean and healthy surroundings.

2. For achieving social, economic and educational betterment and for asserting their human rights, the safai kamgars ought to set up a united front, thereby they can become a power to reckon with. Some vested interest groups deliberately work for keeping the safai workers divided. Such attempt can be resisted through united front. Further, the front can work for political awakening and to earn a position of dignity in the society.

3. The trade unions are important upto a certain stage. But their leadership is generally with white collar people or political leaders. Only in exceptional cases the leadership rests in the hands of safai kamgars. As a result, only the economic problems get focussed and other glaring problems, peculiar to safai kamgars get neglected. There are two alternative solutions to this problem. Either the leadership should be of safai kamgars or the safai kamgars should organise pressure groups within the union to give proper direction to the action programme of the union. It goes without saying that representatives of safai kamgars have to be above temptation and self interest.
4. Any work done for the smooth running of the social system has to be treated with due status. Same holds good for safai work also. Safai work needs to be freed from stratification system, to bring all safai kamgars under one category. Further, for abolition of Social Exclusion, safai work should be looked upon like any other profession/occupation. At present everyone feels that “I will create the garbage and someone is there to clean it.” This attitude of the society needs to be changed.

5. Such a change is very difficult to bring about. At present safai kamgars are experiencing Social Exclusion resulting in alienation and deprivation. They live in sub-human conditions. They need to be given right to live with dignity and right of social participation. This requires efforts at all levels, simultaneously.

6. The requirement of proof of residence in the state, prior to 1950 as presently applicable to migrants, should be revised to 15 years’ residence, or those who have a birth certificate of the state and caste certificate be given to them accordingly. In this manner, they can avail of reservation and such other facilities. This would also remove their feeling of alienation and give them opportunities of self development.

7. The Local Self Governments should maintain caste-wise record of safai kamgars. Fix caste-wise reservation quotas and follow them meticulously. Only then it would be possible to bring them into the main stream of development.

8. Muslims in the safai work do not get any facilities either as safai kamgars or as a minority. Their position is, therefore, deplorable. They should be given reservation facilities like the scheduled castes.

9. Considering the experience of last 60 years, it is obvious that the problems of safai workers cannot get any immediate solution. The least that can be done is speed up implementation of the various recommendations made by Committees and Commissions from time to time and various legal provisions. There is need for effective implementation of the various educational and training programmes for development which have already been prepared. Launching of more such programmes as per changing needs of society is also important. This will be one step in the
right direction for betterment of safai kamgars. This requires a very strong social and political will.

10. The problem of health of safai kamgars needs to be tackled with all the seriousness it deserves. On the one hand adequate medical facilities have to be made available and on the other hand, kamgars need to be persuaded about the need for timely check up and treatment. Eventually in the check-up if any one is found medically unfit he/she should be protected with wages and proper medical treatment should be given. This additional financial burden should be borne by the society.

11. For retaining the residential accommodation in the family, safai workers have enter this job generation after generation. This terrible situation is found everywhere. So in order to liberate coming generation from this work, Government should provide residential accommodation for those who are working in this occupation at least for 30 years for keeping society’s hygiene intact.

12. Evaluation of the work done by safai kamgars should not be done only by economic criteria. The Social - Economic cost of their services, to the society should also be calculated, then only society can understand the real cost of this work.

13. Educated children of safai kamgars who go for alternative occupation should not ignore their community; But should help other youngsters to follow them.

14. It is essential to utilise the knowledge and experience of safai kamgars for bringing improvement and refinement in the handling of garbage. Attempts can be made to minimise the generation of garbage and process of energy generation should be started. The final refuse can be disposed in the minimum hazardous manner. This way the safai kamgars can turn into “Safai Udyojak”.

15. Effective steps need to be taken for curbing corruption at all levels, malpractices like Hafta Vasuli, taking bribe, favouritism etc.

16. The year 2008 has been declared as ‘International Sanitation Year’. Taking advantage of this, a wide scale programme needs to be undertaken for sensitising people on the issue of safai work. At present the problem of
Class I cities is receiving maximum attention. The authorities are handling this problem by putting in place, a safai mechanism which will remain active round the clock. It takes for granted a mentality, that people will keep creating garbage and it will be the duty of certain sections of society to clear it up. This needs to change. People have to be educated on how to handle Garbage disposal at the initial stage, that is, the household level. Further they have to be educated to look upon safai work like any other profession and not treat safai workers, contempuously. Creating an atmosphere in Safai Workers that they can change this occupation with an assurance of alternative jobs, and cleaning a city is also equally prestigious and important work, and it can also be done by other community. All above mentioned suggestion need a very strong will and change in mind set of society.