

## Foreword

After centuries of severe exploitation of a social group as ‘scavengers’, the heinous practice of manual scavenging continues unabated in many parts of India. This is allowed without any hindrance and arrogantly continued on the face of the law prohibiting such practices. Not many researchers have soiled their hands with the studies on manual scavenging. In Karnataka, the use of dry latrines and manual scavenging is largely practiced in North Karnataka but not totally absent in the South. The economic conditions and social deprivation is quite acute in the colonies of scavengers and can put to shame any well-meaning citizen of this country. This study brings forth very important issues among manual scavengers of North Karnataka.

The study was undertaken by Dr K G Gayathridevi from a sociological perspective specifically focusing on understanding the intricate social relationship and socio-economic mobility among the scavenging social groups. She has also focused in this study on the process of transformation among this social group and ends up in analysing the socio-economic profiles in two distinct regions of Karnataka. The study is an eye-opener for many who feel that manual scavenging has been totally eradicated and that the persons involved have been rehabilitated. The conditions are pathetic and inhuman. The study brings to the fore the major livelihood support of an important group of society, who are forced into this profession and hence unable to put to use many of their potential skills. The revelation that the group is barred from any kind of economic and social mobility through State- supported irrational institutionalisation processes is something that makes us to refer to Dr Ambedkar and the kind of society he aspired for: “A society based on Liberty, Equality and Fraternity”. The State, however, failed in implementing its own legislations enacted to protect the human dignity of this group and also to help in harnessing the human energy that has been put to blatant abuse. It is time we look back and assess the extent of realisation of our Constitutional rights. This study is an attempt to record the apathy towards implementation of the existing legislations in letter and spirit and an effort to contribute to the existing knowledge base about ‘scavenging as an occupation’ and ‘Safai Karmacharis’ as a social entity.

I am sure that this study will be an eye-opener to those who have compassion and will for ameliorating the miseries of the Safai Karmacharis and who would like to understand the intricacies of our society.

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