

## **Socio-Economic Conditions of Manual Scavenger: A Study of Meerut City**

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### **Abstract**

*Human dignity and sanitation are related in terms of being able to access a safe, hygienic as well as easy toilet facility. Mainly in India, Hundreds of thousands of people are compelled to engage in the exceedingly demeaning and inhumane practice of manual scavenging in regions of South Asia. Despite all the governmental plans, the allotted resources, and Inquiry Committees set up in 1947 to eradicate manual scavenging, this inhuman practice continues even today in India. Scavenging castes' names imply that they are a functional community made up of people from many ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds. People from the lowest socioeconomic strata were most frequently forced into this career, particularly in metropolitan areas, owing to economic needs. As a result, the current research aims to examine the socioeconomic situations of manual scavengers in Meerut. To obtain primary data on scavenger workers' earnings, a personal interview approach was used with a well-designed and pre-tested schedule for a different source of income, savings pattern, investment and debt position. D The kind of dwelling homes, household distribution, drivers of per capita income, household consumption expenditure, household consumption expenditure economies of scale, pattern of savings, investment, and debt volume were all studied. This document now presents the primary findings, recommendations, and conclusion, demographic characteristics and the physical environment was discussed in the previous chapters.*

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## **Introduction**

In terms of ritual purity, the Jati is a diverse occupational group. Priesthood, administrative, and military tasks are explicitly declared to constitute the first two varnas' professions. The Vaishyas, in contemporary use, were mostly traders, while the Shudras, lastly, were the producers. The untouchables, who are considered unclean, low, and filthy, have a status that impacts all of their social connections. They must clean human waste, and urinals (toilet clean They must reside on the fringes of communities or in their own settlements, separated from members of the caste system. Ing), dispose of dead animals, sweep, and scavenge, among other unsanitary and unpleasant jobs.

Traditional Dalit jobs existed as well, albeit with a significant distinction. For the most part, their jobs were unpleasant and defiling (Srivastava, B.N. 1997). Aside from regional and local disparities in employment opportunities, the Dalit had mostly two occupations: leather processing and cleaning or sweeping.

A caste that cleans latrines and removes night dirt belongs to a well-defined category in the Indian social system. In India, all of these employees are now referred to as "scavengers".

Their work is not only demeaning, filthy, and exhausting, but it is also underpaid. It is regarded as exceedingly disrespectful to consume the leftovers from another person's plate. Scavengers frequently collect one or two chapattis from the homes they serve. Despite the fact that this is a part of their standard rights and remuneration, It's almost as though they're pleading. Although the tradition of gathering food is increasingly fading from large cities, it is still widely practiced in rural towns and villages.

## **Definition and Meaning of Scavengers**

Scavenging literally translates to "cleaning up" or "removing" waste, junk, filth, dirt, and other such items. As a result, a 'scavenger' is someone recruited or hired to clean, clear, gather, remove, dispose of, or otherwise deal with night soil, dirt, carcasses, rubbish, junk, and other such items. As a result, the word "scavenger" should be used for all sanitation workers, regardless of whether they work in high-end corporate offices, as long as they are functionally part of this group. In actuality, the Ministry of Welfare's definition of "scavenger" has generated a great deal of consternation. The National Commission for SafaiKaramCharis, a national statutory commission established in August 1994 under the provisions of the National Commission for SafaiKaramCharis Act, 1993, is responsible for the welfare of disadvantaged groups such as Scheduled Castes and Tribes, people employed in unclean professions such as scavengers and flayesr, minorities, backward classes,

and others. (64 of 1993) In case you're wondering, the Hindi name for scavenger is 'Safai Karamchari,' which roughly translates as "sanitation worker." Unfortunately, rather than alleviating the current misunderstanding and controversy about the meaning of the word scavenger, the Hindi translation has exacerbated it.

### **Origin of Scavenging**

In ancient writings, no castes such as scavengers or nightsoil removers are mentioned among the traditional vocations, and no caste is specifically relegated to this job. Scavenging as a vocation is still not practiced in most rural areas nowadays. The formalization of 'sweeping and scavenging' as a vocation appears to be quite recent. There is a statement in Kausalya's Arthashastra that defecation in open spaces in towns was forbidden during the Maurya era, but there is no mention of scavengers disposing of nightsoil. The old scriptures, on the other hand, provide some insight into the scavenging system. 'According to the contents of the scriptures and other literatures, scavenging, particularly the disposal of nightsoil by a particular caste or castes of Indian society, has existed since the beginning of civilization with the emergence of towns,' writes Dr. Bindeshwar Pathak (1991) in his book "Road to Freedom.

### **Manual Scavenging**

In most regions of India, the term 'manual scavenging' is used to describe the everyday job of physically cleaning and rendering human feces from dry (non-flush) latrines (lavatories). These employees, virtually all of whom are women, are also known as 'night soil laborers,' a Victorian euphemism that covers the vileness of the 'shit' that people truly mean. Manual scavenging is a caste-based employment that Dalits typically perform. Their position in the village settlement pattern reflects and reinforces their social, economic, and cultural marginalization in society. They are functionally tied to higher castes, despite their low status. They are completely reliant on the higher castes for their survival. Some marriage and death rites are impossible to accomplish without the scavenger caste's participation. The winnowing fan used for presenting devotion to the Sun deity in Chhat, and the basket utilized in many rites in a caste Hindu marriage, for example, are socially accepted as their creations. Above all, it is a Dom who provides the Mukhagni (the fire that lights the funeral pyre).

In the ceremonial life, the scavenger is a lonely figure. They follow the practices and rituals of upper caste people, although they worship gods and goddesses in their own homes or communities. Similarly, they do not participate in any rituals with members of the upper castes. They get food and other household items as customary Labourer's for all upper castes during key festivals like as Holi, Diwali, Chhat, and others, but they do not enjoy these holidays on an equal footing with members of other higher castes.

### **Economic Status**

Scavengers are economically dependent on the city, particularly those from upper castes who work as traditional laborers. The typical task of the scavengers is to sweep and remove waste from the city. The Municipal Corporation/ Nigam employs the majority of these scavengers as regular or temporary employees. The others work in large nursing homes, private businesses, or other places where their skills are needed. Urban scavengers have a little better situation because they get paid at the end of the month.

The rural setting is distinct. For toilet cleaning in rural locations, the village is split among many scavenger households. From generation to generation, each rural scavenger family has served a specific number of families (Jajmans).

The Jajmani method, in essence, uses genetic personal links to describe labor division. The Jamjar pays his scavenger in cash or in goods on a regular basis. On Holi, Diwali, Chhat, and other major occasions such as birth, upanayana, mundane, marriage, and death, scavengers get presents such as clothing, food, raw materials, and so on.

### **The Problem's Statement**

Scavengers are at the bottom of the social food chain. The conservative attitude toward work was shown to be in keeping with the caste society's specified conventional jobs. "Generally, a caste system or a set of associated castes recognized particular callings as its ancestral vocations, leaving which in pursuit of another, albeit perhaps more profitable, was deemed not to be acceptable," according to the Indian system. Scavengers are the lowest of the lowly and the untouchables of the untouchables in India. Scavengers have faced human indignities throughout history as outcasts and rejects of Indian society. They've been labeled "Impure," and as a result, they've been ritually avoided. They have been ostracised as less than human by a large number of people. While their contributions have been recognized as very useful, and in certain cases, crucial for society's existence, these wretched individuals have been treated as if they were a terrible contagious illness, necessitating a great deal of scorn and minimum social contact. They are no longer allowed to enter Hindu temples or offer prayers at these sites of worship. Scavengers have been forced to live as socially disadvantaged people as a result of their social deterioration.

### **Objectives of the Study**

- ❖ The specific objectives of the study are:
- ❖ To investigate the demographic features and physical environment of a group of Meerut scavengers.

- ❖ To examine and compare the type and extent of discrepancies in the distribution of male and female scavengers' per-household income.
- ❖ To investigate and compare household spending patterns and distribution.
- ❖ To examine the elements that influence scavengers' savings.

### **Review of Literature**

In his study, Rama Sharma attempted to investigate the manifestation of their identity in their struggles on political, economic, and social fronts, the recession of their marginality with the politicization process, and the forces reinforcing their stigmatized identity leading to breakdown are all discussed in relation to the Bhangis and their attempts to shed it. The study's universe is Delhi. The 'holistic portrayal,' a methodological entity, is employed in conjunction with anthropological methodologies and processes. Participant observation, broad 'open-ended' interviews, informal chat, meeting people, participating in events, maintaining diaries, and other intensive procedures are used.

The study's major goals, according to Mary Searle Chatterjee, are to learn how sweepers organize their lives, what keeps them together as a group different from the rest of society, and what tactics they employ to try to change the conditions in which they live and work. The research also looks into men and women's relationships and the many shapes they take in different aspects of their social organization.

Bakshi D. Sinha et al.<sup>4</sup> conducted a study to assess the current social and economic status of the scavenger community after evaluating the government's (both central and state) implementation strategy for various development policies and programs aimed at their upliftment, as well as making recommendations. appropriate strategy for up-gradation of this community.

Srivastava's research focuses on the origins of scavengers in India, their social and economic position, caste organizations, cultural legacy, and territorial distribution, as well as measures done by the Central and State governments and notable non-governmental organizations.

According to Bindeswar Pathak, the research is a sociological analysis of scavengers' freedom through low-cost sanitation. The study's major goals were to determine the extent to which various Sulabh Shauchalaya systems had been adopted, as well as the involvement of formal organizations in the scheme's acceptance.

According to Pandya's research, scavenging and sweeping are done only by one caste, the Bhangi, who are at the bottom of the socioeconomic hierarchy. There are 'high' and 'low' Harijans, but the Bhangi is the lowest of them all. Every

caste has the right to see other castes as inferior, but the Bhangi and his counterparts, the Halalkhor of upper India, the Dom of Bihar, and the Madaru of Madras, The situation of scavengers in rural and urban settings, according to Archana Sinha's study, is different. In cities, the scavenging class works for municipalities, companies, hospitals, colleges, hostels, nursing homes, and other such organizations. As a result, they are educated enough to organize their own organizations and labor unions. They demonstrate their mettle without hesitation if there is an upsurge in conflict with their bosses. In a rural setting, the notion of 'cooperative ranking' takes precedence over individual ranking, and status is determined jointly. Similarly, the scavengers' working circumstances and methods of labor are very different.

### **Methodology**

Any effective examination of a research topic requires the development of a suitable methodology and the selection of analytical instruments. This section covers the technique, including the sampling procedure, research time, data collecting, and analytic tools.

### **Collection of Data**

The current study made use of both primary and secondary data. A pilot study was conducted in Madurai to learn more about the socioeconomic situations of scavengers. Based on the information gathered, a well-designed pre-tested interview schedule was created and used in the field survey to capture the main data. Before the main survey, a preliminary interview schedule was created and conducted with 30 scavenger respondents to test the validity of the interview schedule.

The chosen scavenger respondents were called in person, and the study's goals were properly stated, and their cooperation was guaranteed. The socioeconomic characteristics of scavenger respondents, including their familial traits, income, and employment status. Expenditure, savings and the like relating to the overall objectives of the study were collected through the direct personal interview method.

### **Demographic Characteristics of Scavenger Households**

The demographic characteristics show a tendency toward a nuclear family system. Because of their low income and inability to share their advantages with other family members, it is more common among the poor, especially during lean seasons.

### **Type of Houses**

It is widely believed that a household's economic condition is influenced to some extent by the physical surroundings, kind of dwelling unit, and ownership.

A Kutcha construction is defined by its plinth walls and roof, which are built of mud, grass, leaves, and/or thatch. A mixed construction is defined as having a

plinth, wall, and roof built of pucca building materials for the plinth and wall, and zinc sheets or asbestos sheets for the roof. The base, flour walls, and roof of a pucca construction are formed of burned bricks, tiles, stones, cement, concrete, and/or wood. The numbers of respondents living in kutcha houses are found to be high both among the male scavengers and female scavengers. Hence the living condition is found to have not improved.

### **Households with a Certain Number of Living Rooms**

The number of living rooms in the residence must be at least one plus the number of married couples.

### **Forms, Sources and Determinants of Saving**

This section attempts to analyze the types and sources of savings among the sample families of male and female scavengers. It also aims to investigate the link between the level of savings and the influencing variables, such as income, assets, kind of job, educational status, and family size, in order to pinpoint the elements that influence the amount of money saved.

### **Forms and Sources of Savings**

Physical and financial savings have been categorized as separate types and sources of savings. Land and diamonds are used as physical savings. Cash in hand, post offices, LIC, chit funds, and other forms of financial savings are used.

The difference in yearly average per capita savings between male and female scavengers was discovered. Overall, the study revealed that there are a lot of variances in saving patterns among different saving groups.

This section attempts to investigate the factors that influence the degree of savings, such as the type of male and female scavengers' jobs and the size of their families. For this, the sample household was divided into three categories: low level, medium level, and high level. the medium level and high level per capita savings.

One of the most significant variables of saving is the size of the family. The smaller the degree of savings, the larger the family. A large family may need to spend more on purchases and, as a result, their savings may be limited. A small family, on the other hand, may be able to save more. There may, however, be exceptions to this rule.

To gather primary data on scavenging workers' income, diverse sources of income, household consumption, savings patterns, investment, and debt situation, a personal interview approach was used with a well-designed and pre-tested schedule.

### **Summary of Findings**

Socio-economic conditions of scavengers' households were discussed.

The bulk of the sample scavenger households lives in kutchha dwellings, with 50% living in one-room houses. The sample of homes' number of rooms per household, per capita floor space, and other amenities are determined to be woefully insufficient.

The investigation of the income distribution pattern found that self-employment revenue is a key source of income for both male and female scavengers. For male scavengers, the larger concentration of respondents was located toward the bottom of the annual per capita income distribution, but for female scavengers, it was found at the bottom of the distribution.

As a result, the distribution of yearly per capita income for male scavengers is favorably skewed, whereas the distribution for female scavengers is negatively skewed. The histogram also shows that for male and female scavengers, the yearly per capita income of the homes was skewed to the right and left, respectively.

The correlation coefficient matrix revealed that a household's per capita income was positively related to the number of earning members, the degree of employment, and productive assets. In male scavengers, however, it was adversely linked with family size. In the case of female scavengers, similar findings were reported.

Earning members, degree of employment, and productive assets were found to be significant and positive in both male and female scavengers, according to the estimated findings of a multiple linear regression model. In both male and female scavengers, the family size was statistically significant but adversely associated with yearly average per capita income. Among the important factors, earning members for male scavengers and productive assets for female scavengers had a stronger impact on the households in the research area's yearly average per capita income. As a result, earning members and productive assets have been identified as dominant determinants that impact the household's per capita income in male and female scavengers, respectively.

In both male and female scavengers, the research revealed a mixed tendency in various income categories. The study suggests that food spending is not proportional to income. This might support Engle's law, which states that "as income rises, the per capita income spent on food decreases." Furthermore, it has been noted that male scavengers spend more money on schooling than female scavengers.

The family size study of per capita consumer expenditure in male and female scavengers revealed an inverse relationship between family size and expenditure on food and non-food items.

### **Determinants of Consumption Expenditure**

A correlation coefficient matrix was created to explore the link between various spending categories. The findings indicated that among male scavengers, the largest connection was observed between food spending and fuel and light expenditure, whereas in female scavengers, the highest correlation was found between education and fuel and light expen.

### **Economies of Scale**

It was discovered that there was a trivariate link between expenditure, income, and family size. The trivariate model was estimated using the least square approach, and the findings indicated that, in both male and female scavengers, a change in family size can lead to a positive change in yearly household expenditure on food, clothing, fuel and light, and miscellaneous things. In terms of income fluctuation, religion and social expenditure were shown to be more responsive in female scavengers than in male scavengers.

### **Analysis of Savings, Debt and Investment**

The examination of savings forms and sources indicated that there was a significant variation in yearly average per capita saves between male and female scavengers by income grouping. In the research region, banks/cooperative societies had the highest per capita savings, whereas chit funds had the lowest amount invested. The average yearly per capita savings inland were found to be larger in male and female scavengers in the physical form.

The ratio of saves to income is higher in male scavengers in all income categories than in female scavengers, according to an examination of per capita savings by income group. Furthermore, it is assumed that when income rises, savings would rise as well.

The findings of a fitted multiple regression analysis of the drivers of savings revealed that the variables of yearly family income, educational status, and family earning members are statistically significant and positively associated with the amount of savings among male scavengers.

It is statistically significant and inversely connected to the amount of savings in the event of family size. Annual family income had a stronger impact on the volume of savings among male scavengers than the other important factors. As a result of the investigation, it can be stated that yearly family income is a major factor in affecting savings in both male and female scavengers.

In both male and female scavengers, the aim of the loan study indicated that a high proportion of families borrow money to satisfy their consumption expenditure.

It is followed by the intention to invest. In both male and female scavengers, the link between spending and debt was positive. In terms of per capita debt by family size, there is a small difference between these categories.

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