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A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF STRUGGLES FACED BY THE WOMEN SANITARY WORKERS

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ABSTRACT:

Sanitary workers are main pillar of the every country. We can't imagine the earth without sanitary workers. A country development is depends upon the countries cleanliness. If the country is clean no dangerous to health ex. Corano virus. Many peoples died due to spreading virus. Many countries affected by this virus like India, China. The government is for well being of the people. Without people there is no need for government. But without sanitary workers there is no chance of survival. Therefore the people health is important. Main goal of every country is protect the people. These all becomes true only by the sanitation. So we should respect and protect the sanitation worker especially women sanitation worker. Sanitation workers are also a human beings. Sometimes discomfort litter are cleaned by sanitary workers. Manual wastage, Industries wastage, medical wastage are clean by sanitary worker. If sanitary worker stop their work earth will turn into garbage forest. But their fundamental rights are violate by common people. They forgot that sanitation work doing only for the such people and such people health. They create a new generation to the world. They protect each and every member of the country.

But in this article we clearly deals about Women Sanitary Worker. They are vulnerable character in nature. Usually women always treated with discrimination. Women sanitary workers faced many issues physically and mentally by superior authority, common people even her family members. They are basically from the poor family. Already in financial instability but we don't forgot that they are human like us. They are Sexually assaulted in the working place.

Untouchability is still practiced in the modern world even it prohibited by the every country. Mostly their human rights violated by the superior authority. Job permanent, availability of insurance scheme, pension scheme to woman sanitary worker and provident fund is not available to the women sanitary workers. Lets we discuss about the matters in detailed nature.

INDROCTION:

This study gives detailed knowledge about struggles or challenges faced by the sanitary workers. In India or a state engaging so many workers to clean a earth like that Railway sanitary workers, scavengers, Municipality corporation sanitary workers for cleaning town like Bus stand, Roads, Public toilets, Street. Government has divided as a region, division, wards to clean easily. A group of sanitation worker engaged to clean the area which is provided to them. We all know that sanitation work is not too easy to carryout. Its only a person who have physical and mental strong to carryout this kind of work to do. In that meaning they have a strong mental power and physical strength to enter into the work. They serve their life to us because they are not only clean an environment instead they protect a nature and gives healthy life to us. They saved a healthy nature to our future generation. We compared sanitary workers with the military man because the military man protect us from terrorist, sanitary worker protect us from terror virus. But sanitary workers faced many issues both inside and outside which is intolerable one to a common man. Especially a women sanitary worker challenged may problems than men. Women are physically had more commitments. They play a role of mother, wife, daughter in laws and so and so. Normally, working women having more pressures and they should satisfy all needs of her family members. Women sanitation work is more complicated one. They are being discriminated. They are the one who need to protected. Financially they are weaker section. Government should focus on the women sanitary worker. Indirectly they protect us in the name of earning for self needs. The followings subtitles and matters are discussed below directly derived through my survey. Hence let me explain a detailed study about women struggles in sanitation work.

1.2 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

1. To examine the discriminatory practices on women sanitary workers.
2. To examine the financial instability and exploitation of women sanitary workers.
3. To give suggestion to the government to take action to provide healthy life and financial assistance to the women sanitary worker.
4. To discuss about the sexual assault to the woman sanitary workers.
5. To examine about the job permanency of sanitation work.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

1. **Occasional paper on lived realities of women sanitation workers in India. [Participatory research]:** In this research author discussed the reason for women entering into the work. He said the main reason is the poverty and caste system. And also discussed about salary issues that is a inequality wages given to the both high pressure worker and simple pressure work.¹
2. **A study on quality of work life of sanitary workers. Author G. Meena ISSN 2394-3114:** Discussed a gender variation engaging sanitary work. Problems faced by sanitary worker during work.²
3. **The hidden world of sanitation workers in India: Author Sharada prasad:** Discussing about socio economic challenges, health issues, contract issues.³

RESEARCH GAP:

In sanitation work, delay of wages, Separate financial assistance to women, pension scheme after her termination, superior authorities domination, issues in permanency of the work are going to be discussed in the present paper.

Emotional and physical suffers faced by the sanitary workers:

- Women sanitary worker cannot maintain her health. They have no proper time to go to hospital and test their body to avoid any disease attack. They not wear glows and mask, face shields during the work time. During the work, they drink waters without wash their hands in a proper way. Because no availability of place and infrastructures to

¹ www.pria.org.

² Tpsindia.org. A study on quality of work life of sanitary workers. Author G. Meena (ISSN: 2394- 3114) Vol-40- Marcha- 2020 studies in Indian place names (UGC CARE JOURNAL).

³ www.wateraid.org The hidden world of sanitation workers in India.

sanitize their body.

- Children are backbone of the mother. In fact women live only for her children. But she is failed to make foods for their children and family members due to unstable working hours. They cannot spend time with their children. It may lead to broke the family structure. It may chance to affect the growth of the children.
- Women workers cannot buy anything which is desired by her children. Because their salary is not enough to maintain a family now a days. Lack of financial capacity they not provide higher studies to their children. Again their children enter into the same job on contract basis.
- During menstrual, continuously working with the pain. One side family pressure and another side work pressure is intolerable one to the women sanitary workers. It will more weakening the women.
- Sexual harassment may commit by their employers and public during the working hours, If he denied to accept their offers.
- During working hours any emergencies for natural calamities, they don't have a private place. People are not allowed to use their toilets even at the time emergencies.
- After death of her husband, wives are compelled to work to maintain her family. No other available option to choose another work field.
- Salaries provided by the government is not sufficient to the women sanitary workers. Mostly widows and wives of irresponsible husbands or addicted to alcohol or drugs were engaged in the sanitation works. Hence, they are only the income earner in her house. All burden turned into women in a family. But no safety is available to her. And un determination of work is lead to pressurize her family.

UNTOUCHABILITY PRACTICES AMONG WOMEN SANITARY WORKERS

- Public not ready to give some water for an emergency situation. If people willing to give water only dirty jugs or waste plastic water bottles were used. This may affect her human dignity.
- People not allow them to sit outside of their house and provide foods to them and demand to sit outside to eat thereafter they provide foods.
- Sanitary worker's children also treated with inhumanity. Other children are not ready to share food even they are not willing to sit aside. They are object to play with them.
- If a sanitary worker sat beside any person, immediately they move from that place.

- According to me, teared clothes given to the sanitary workers for their use is also discrimination.
- Separate plate and water bottles were used to provide foods to women sanitary workers.
- A particular caste only engaged for cleaning work. This type of work is also a discrimination. Where there is a discrimination there is a untouchability.
- Because of sanitary worker they being treated as animals. People treated with disrespectful manner.
- A private shop owner demand to clean his shops litter. They don't ask even think like that some other people to clean.
- In the world, there is a assumption, illiterate people only clean litter. Educated people don't have a common sense to clean their own manual wastages.
- People thought, sanitary worker will accept whatever salary given to cleaning. For that they easily ask them to clean hazardous wastages.
- Recently many news channels telecast that a new born baby found in a trash bin is rescued, taken to a government hospital and given a new life to the child by sanitary workers.
- Sanitary workers recover stolen money from trash bin and hand over to the near police station even If they are poor, they don't think twice about it.
- Now a days honor killing is reared its head. People not only hesitate to develop relationship with the schedule class but also consider the jobs of parents. If they are doing work in IT field or government sector or any other respected field ready to develop their relationship.

HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATION AMONG WOMEN SANITARY WORKER:

If any fundamental right being violated it have a compulsory place to human rights violations.

- Equal pay for equal work is a slogan of labour law. But sanitary worker not get equal salary. Many employees of the government staffs get maximum amount for a mental applied work but sanitary worker put both mental and physical labour to save the country but receive minimum salary.
- If any questions raised by sanitary worker against their superiors, authority will punish by give more works to the such worker than others.
- Exploit the labour is a human right violation. It against the Article 23 of Indian

constitution. It prohibits trafficking in human being, including forced labour, slavery, or exploitation⁴.

- Some of the sanitary worker have no proper house to live. According to Indian constitution right to shelter is one of the fundamental rights under Article 21.
- Right to health is also a fundamental right under article 21 of Indian constitution. But in this field there is a major chance to affect their respiratory systems easily attack virus, it will affect the health system of sanitary worker.
- Right to live with dignity but public not allowed them to live with dignity. They always want to discriminate the workers because of doing this kind of work.
- Superior authority don't care about sanitary workers. They not provide adequate equipment for cleaning.
- If any person eating food in the public shop like restaurant, tea shop, they insult sanitary workers, immediately send out from that place.
- Right to hold opinion is one of the fundamental rights but no one give chance to explain her opinion. Even any false allegation is made to her no chance given to disprove the allegations.
- Right to economic empowerment is violated to the women sanitary worker. No one can recognizing their worth and capabilities.
- Family member of women sanitary worker not respect the woman. Even they sacrifice her life.
- While doing sanitary work accidents may occur to the women sanitary worker but because of lack of voice and vulnerability classes of people, not disclosed to the world. Even insurance availability not accessible to them. Employers not given any kind of insurance to sanitary workers in case death occurred at the time doing work.

GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES:

The National Action for Mechanized Sanitation Ecosystem Or NAMASTE Scheme:

It testament to the government's human centric approach where no sanitation workers have to manually engage in the hazardous task of sewer and septic tank cleaning operations.⁵

Ministry of social justice and empowerment in convergence with ministry of housing and urban

⁴ <https://indiankanoon.org>

⁵ <https://pib.gov.in>

affairs have launched **NAMASTE** scheme in July 2023 to ensure safety and dignity of sanitation workers.⁶

The Swachh Bharat Mission 2.0 guidelines, under the ministry of housing and urban affairs focus on the welfare of sanitation workers urging urban local bodies to promote their occupational safety through access to others.⁷

Tamil Nadu Urban Sanitation Programme:

In Tamil Nadu, Tamil Nadu Urban Sanitation Programme was launched in 2015 to support the government of Tamil Nadu in its sanitation mission. But this programme was implemented only for five years. The programme aims to improve urban sanitation in Tamil Nadu by demonstrating innovations in two model cities namely Coimbatore and Trichy.⁸

Tamil Nadu Cleanliness Workers Welfare Board work for sanitation worker.

On 9th December, 2025 in Madurai, Chief Minister M.K. Stalin inaugurated the sanitation worker Development Scheme to protect the welfare of conservancy workers in the state.⁹

Usually no workers were clean people's home during their working hours. But some people were clean people's home to earn income. Some people asking to clean their home and refused to give money. And most important thing came to know that is some woman sanitary workers are doing work in people's home during working hours. Because wages provided by government is not fulfill their basic need to lead simple life. That's only stimulus the women sanitary workers to clean people's home during the working hours.

People always refused to provide water and foods to the sanitary workers. But it is came to know while randomly asking some woman sanitary workers they said that people provide water only using waste jug and waste plastic water bottles and also they refused to use again the vessels. some people ready to provide food if workers ready to sit and eat outside from their home.

Some Male workers were encountering inappropriate behaviour directed towards them.

⁶ <https://socialjustice.gov.in>

⁷ *ibid*

⁸ [Tnussp.co.in](https://tnusssp.co.in) Compilation of welfare scheme for sanitation worker

⁹ The Hindu.com updated on 9th December, 2025.

Misbehaviour by other workers in the same place, where they are working. Even superior authority do these kind of activities.

Women workers has been working 6 AM to 11.30 AM without break and working from 2.30PM to 4.30PM. They started their work early morning so they don't have a time to spend time with their children. Because of that they are uncertain if their children are attending school regularly or not. Infact it will leads to growth of criminals. Because all criminals are not a born criminals but atmosphere will change their character. Lack of parenting is also one of the reason to growing children with wrong intention.

Women workers were struggled with their income to maintain their family. They only gain 12000 per month for 219 hours work. Still they are working on the basis of contract for twenty years.

No concession is provided to them. They said by an unexpected meet of some sanitary workers The Magalir Urimai Thogai and free bus provided by TAMIL NADU Government is very useful to us but no separate monetary assistance were provided to them.

Only individuals with better living conditions than workers can obtain a loan through their house property. Worker who is not living better life cannot obtain a loan for financial assistance.

No internal committee is there for solve their problems regards work and any disturbance occurred during worrking hours. No authority can ready to hear their needs. Vishaka committee suggested that every working place which has women employee shall constitute internal committee and its extent to schools, college even it appllies to school and college students. In every district mostly sanitation works cover women employee but not consider their well being. Administration of every district not execute the vishaka guidelines.

Every person working in the process of sanitation is human beings even whatever work they do. But the person who is doing sanitation work feels always discomfort. They do work with full of tolerence.

All sanitary workers feel disgusting to clean uneasy area. They clean wastage of people is most

intolerable one. So people should help them to making the area too clean.

Challenges:

Women sanitary workers are temporarily working as a sanitary worker for period of 15 to 20 years. They are still working on the basis of contract. The temporary nature of the sanitary workers contributes to their exploitation.

1. Two decades ago, sanitation workers earned 40 rupees a day, totalling 1200 rupees a month. But they still receiving 12000 rupees per month. There is no huge difference. Currently, expenses are rising daily, making the salary allotted to sanitary workers is inadequate.
2. Salary has been delayed. A month's wage is deposited on the 15th of each month, which disrupts their daily routines and making budget is more challenging.
3. They are financially disadvantaged. If they require funds, the bank is unwilling to grant a loan since they lack collateral. So they are suffer for money.
4. Women Sanitary worker got their job only by reference. Most of the workers are get their jobs through reference made by neighbours. Many workers are not aware about the employment opportunities. The government have to notified in gazette regards the requirement.
5. If they took leave for half a day, full day salary was remitted. It will impact them. Working half a day without pay is a form of exploitation.

SUGGESTIONS:

- Government has to introduced the loan scheme for sanitary worker's children for their educational purpose in a minimum rate of interest.
- Pension scheme has to be introduced to provide money assistance at their old age.
- Internal committee has established to hearing pros and cos of sanitary worker. And investigate their problems. The complaint given by the sanitary worker has to be keeping secret.
- Unlike Ex-service man reservation in a government educational and employment opportunities there should be introduced the reservation policy to sanitary worker's children for their getting opportunities in education and employment.
- Government has to conduct special coaching programme for sanitary worker's children to develop their skill and improving English language. Starting internship programme to

learn practical knowledge.

- To conducting awareness programme to the public about respect the sanitary workers.
- We all know that the word “scavenging” is differ from the “sanitation”. There is no separate act to protect the rights of sanitary workers. Even The Prohibition of Employment As Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act 2013 and Factories Act 1948 didn’t focus the sanitary workers rights, protection and rehabilitation but only discussed about the manual scavengers.
- Workers employed in industrial employment protected by Industrial Dispute Act 1921. Workers working as contract labour protected by section 3 of Tamil Nadu Industrial Establishment (Conferment of Permanent Status to Workman) Act 1981¹⁰ in the case of permanency of works. Section 3 deals with every workman who is in continuous services for a period of 480 in a period of 24 calendar months in an industrial establishment shall be made permanent. But even this act didn’t focus the sanitation workers. This provisions also upheld by Justice D Bharatha Chakravarthy.

Madurai Corporation vs. The Inspector of Labour, Madurai and Ors.¹¹

on 22nd April 2022 This decision of the Madurai Bench of Madras High Court directing the Tamil Nadu Government undertaking the sanitary workers into the ambit of section 3 of Tamil Nadu Industrial Establishment (Conferment of Permanent Status to Workman) Act 1981 to provide permanent status.

CONCLUSION:

The study discussed the struggles faced by women sanitary workers. Opportunities and respect should give to all women sanitary worker like government employees. If once born in the earth as a human being they should all treated as equal. No one should be treated with discrimination. Government should conduct awareness programme to the people about treated equally. Providing safety measures and medical camp can improve the livelihood of women sanitary workers. Even though the Government initiates programme and policies.

¹⁰ Indiacode.nic.in

¹¹ <http://aicctu.org/workers-resistance/v1/may-2022-workers-resistance/justice-sanitary-workers>

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3. WEBSITE: <https://socialjustice.gov.in>

Tnussp.co.in Compilation of welfare scheme for sanitation worker

The Hindu.com <https://indiankanoon.org> www.pria.org

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