

“A CRITICAL STUDY OF PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC STATUS OF WOMEN RAG - PICKER’S”

1- Ms. Arteeshyamal Shyam Khambekar

M.A (Mass Communication and Journalism), M.A (Women Studies)
Ph.D research student, Department of Mass Communication and Journalism,
Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Marathwada University, Aurangabad, Maharashtra, India

2-Mr. Mahesh Digamber Joshi

M.Sc. (Environmental Science), M.A (Mass Communication and Journalism)
Post Graduate research student, Department of Environmental Science,
Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Marathwada University, Aurangabad, Maharashtra, India

ABSTRACT

Rag-pickers are the backbone of Solid Waste Management. It is the largest informal sector that is cleaning up the city at no cost to the government. Rag- pickers are estimated at 1% of the Indian population. There are an estimated 15 lakh waste pickers in India. Maharashtra state has more than 3 lakh waste pickers, with nearly 5500 of in Aurangabad district. Around 90 percent rag-pickers are women and work in this sector to earn money. Work in this sector is usually insecure, low earning and carried out under conditions that pose risks to both mind and body. There are fewer acceptances to this work. The present paper throws light on the personal, social and economic status of women rag-picker in Aurangabad district of Maharashtra. The article is concluded by offering suggestions for uplifting of socio-economic status of women rag-pickers.

KEYWORDS: Municipal Solid Waste Management, Women Rag-pickers, Garbage, Aurangabad, Maharashtra, Segregation centers, Swachha Bharat Abhiyan,

INTRODUCTION

Women perform various types of work to earn money. This works depends upon her educational qualification, financial condition and need. Based on these criteria's some women are engaged physically hard work while some on their educational qualification and mental ability works in comparatively easier sector. Though the sectors are different, their aim is to earn money to support family, for good education of her children, to get facilities and to secure future of her family.

The present paper deals with women engaged in the informal sector. This sector offers opportunities to earn money to unskilled and semi-skilled sector labours. Work in this sector is usually insecure, low earning and carried out under conditions that pose risks to mind and body.¹ Due to lack of education, awareness and need these people enters in this sector. The overall scope of informal or the unorganized sector is vast. Hence, one of the most prominent amongst it, the women rag-pickers or the waste pickers is selected for the present study titled as “A Study of Personal, Social and Economic Status of Women Rag-Picker’s”.

India's booming urbanization brings along with it, the problem of waste management. As more and more people are migrating to city, the amount of waste is increasing at high pace.² Thus; Solid Waste Management has become a critical issue. Rag-pickers play an important but unnoticed role in Solid Waste Management in Indian cities. Rag-pickers are the people who actually go through the garbage bins to pick out the things people discard as waste. These rag-pickers mostly women, men and children belongs to lower rung in the society. They contribute a great deal to waste management as they scavenge the recycle matter thereby saving the municipality the cost and time of collecting and transporting the dumps.³

The informal sector represents an important part of economy and certainly of the labour market in many countries and plays a major role in employment creation, production and income generation. In countries with high rates of population growth or urbanization, the informal sector tends to absorb most of the expanding labour force in the urban areas.⁴

In India, almost 94 percent of total women workers are engaged in informal sector, of which about 20 percent work in the urban centers. Majority of women workers in informal sector come from those sections of the society which need income at any cost. Nearly 50 per cent of these women workers are sole supporters of their families.⁵

Waste pickers are usually estimated at 1% of the Indian population. There are an estimated 15 lakh waste pickers in India. Maharashtra state has more than 3 lakh waste pickers; with nearly 5500 of them in Aurangabad district.⁷ The objective of this research article is to present the scenario of Women working as rag pickers in the Aurangabad district.⁶

RESERCH METHODOLOGY

The present study is basically empirical in nature. The secondary sources like reference books, newspaper articles, journals, government booklets, manuals, websites and published and unpublished work related to the subject was used. As the study was related to women rag-pickers, the Feminist Research methodology is applied in the research. It has included the basic concepts of Social research. The research throws light on the physical and mental health, social, family and financial issues erupted due to the gender biasness. The study is more objective than subjective. The descriptive research method is used in it.

The primary data is collected with the help of a 400 structured interview schedule containing 65 questions. Along with it personal detailed interviews are also conducted. 10 case studies are done to get detailed information covering all aspects of the research problem. The qualitative information is obtained during the interviews. The data obtained was edited, compiled and analyzed by using the statistical methods and presented in the form of percentage. Tables and charts are prepared accordingly.

METHOD OF DATA COLLECTION

Field research was conducted in Aurangabad district that includes 9 tehsil's Viz. Aurangabad, Paithan, Vaijapur, Gangapur, Kannad, Soyagaon, Khultabad, Phulambri and Sillod. They all are adhering Municipal Solid Waste Management rules 2016. Government of India launched the Swachha Bharat Abhiyan started on October 2, 2014. Under this campaign, government is conducting Swaccha Survekshan (Cleanliness survey) across the nation. It has changed the scenario of Solid Waste Management both in urban and rural part of nation.

The problem of Solid Waste Management became severe in the Aurangabad city in the month of February 2018. The alone dumping ground at Naregaon, around 12 KM from city was closed after protest from the local villagers. As there was no alternative for dumping and treatment of waste, it affected people and environment in city.⁷

After this the Municipal Corporation established three segregation centers which are run by an NGO. The Kagad, Kach Patra Sangathan, an organization of rag pickers is engaged in door to door collection of garbage. In Waluj industrial estate waste is dumped in C-sector without treatment. In Waluj residential area, CIDCO collects and treats waste. There is no such facility available in Pimpiraj, Chimaniraj and Chitegaon villages covered under this study. Waste is still dumped outside villages. The Nagar Parishad has deployed NGO's for collection, awareness and treatment of waste in Paithan, Vaijapur, Kannad, Soyagaon, Gangapur and Khultabad. There is no segregation or treatment facility available at Phulambri and Sillod. In Lasur village, the Nagar Parishad vehicle collects waste and dump it in an open landfill.

RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

Table 1: Waste picking as work personal

Age group	15-25	25-35	35-45	45-55	
	3.5 %	21.15 %	49.5 %	27.75 %	--
Years of working	1-5	5-10 years	10 ++ years		
	36 %	12 %	52 %	--	--

Education	Illiterate 60.5 %	7 th std. 29.5 %	10 th 9.5 %	12 th 0.25 %	Graduate 0.25 %
Caste	SC/ST 99.5 %	OBC 00 %	Open 00.5 %	--	--
Workplace	Dustbins 52 %	Door to door 30.5 %	Dumping ground 15 %	Other 0.75 %	--
Distance	30 mins–1hour 48 %	1 hour- 2 hour 52 %	--	--	--
Reason of rag picking	Poverty 58.25 %	Husband's Death 41.75 %	--	--	--

Table-1 reveals that the maximum 49.5% of rag-pickers falls into age group of 35-45 years followed by 45-55 (27.75%) and 25-35 (21.15%). 52% rag-pickers are in this industry since more than 10 years. This is the same which has crossed 35-45 age. Kids of rag-pickers start this works with parents and further continue it forever. Hence, 60.5% remains illiterate.

99.5% rag-pickers are from the erstwhile “untouchable castes” also referred to as scheduled castes. It includes Buddhist, Matang, Kureshi, Bhill, Masanjogi, Wadar etc.

52% rag-pickers collect garbage from dustbins. 48% Rag-pickers walks for 30 minutes to 1 hour to reach at workplace. 48% rag-pickers work during 6 am-3 pm daily. Though poverty is main reason (58.25%) for entering in this sector, 41.75% perform this work because of husband's death. These women lacks of education skills to do any other work. They don't have funds to invest to start any business. There is no limitation of time, they could take leave whenever they wants and now gets instant money at the end of day.

Table 2: Health, Accidents and Injuries

Injuries	Cut/abrasion 91.75 %	Dog bite 2.25 %	Other 6.0 %	--	--
Stressful period	Monsoon 86.75 %	Summer 91.5%	Deepawali 22 %	--	--
Physical stress	Body pain 97.93 %	Eye leaching 32.21 %	Vomiting, acidity 88.91 %	Headache 57.21 %	Leg pain 22.93 %
Treatment	No treatment 8.5 %	Doctors 10.5 %	Pills from druggist 76.6 %	Home cure 4.4 %	--
Washrooms/ Toilets	Open ground 27.75 %	Behind tree 16.75 %	Behind wall 55.5 %	--	--
Addiction	Gutkha / tobacco 55 %	Liquor 00 %	Smoking 00 %	Black Tea 45 %	--
Diet	Dal /chapati 97.25 %	Rice 3 %	Non-Veg 100 %	Vegetables 97.25 %	Milk 00 %
Safety Wares	Yes 39.25 %	No 60.75 %	--	--	--

Table 2 reveals that risks faced by rag-pickers are beyond the expected risks of infection and communicable diseases. Cuts and wounds, animal bites, chemical burns and inhalation of toxic gases, falls and traffic accidents, sexual violence and mental trauma are all part of their daily burden. Mixed waste plays a determining role in rag-picker's health. Mixed waste includes kitchen waste, paper, plastic, glass, condoms, diapers, syringes, left-over

chemicals and cleaning agents etc. Because of mix waste 91.75% rag-pickers are injure due to cut or abrasion. 2.25% have faced dog bites. 86.75% rag-pickers feel that the rainy season creates problem in their work.

During this season, rag-pickers are prone to infections from fecal materials washed into waste. For 22% Deepawali is major concern as many unburned crackers burns in the sunlight. It spreads fire in the dustbin. 97.93% women suffer by body pain while 88.91% from vomiting and acidity. However, 8.5% avoids any sort of treatment from doctors to save money. 76.6% buys pain killers pills from druggist. 55.5 % feels workplace is insecure for them. There is no facility of toilets, hence they have no alternative rather than to go in open place.

55% women consume Gutkha or chew tobacco. 45% drinks 5-6 cups of tea, especially black tea without milk. Their daily meals include Dal/chapati/vegetables. Only 3% includes rice. However, 100% women take non-veg food on every Sunday. But they eat after male members finishes. Not single women drink milk. Many face mental health issues.

Table 3: Family background

Family members	Up to 3 5.5 %	3-5 83 %	5-8 9.5 %	Above 8 2 %	--
Husband's status	Labour 30 %	Dead 41.75 %	Idle/handicapped 25 %	Other 3.25 %	--
Dependents	Up to 3 75 %	3-5 10.75 %	5-8 14.25 %	--	--
Family violence	Beating 53.08 %	Taunting 33.70 %	No food 5.61 %	Insult 4.77 %	Other 2.80 %
Families Approach towards work	Accepted 75.5 %	Dirty work 17 %	Family not aware 7.5 %	--	--

Table 3 reveals that 83% rag- pickers have 3-5 members at home. 41.75% are widowed or deserted. 25% rag-pickers husband does not earn money. 75% women have up to 3 members dependent on her income. It includes husband and 2 kids. Despite doing hard work at daytime, they undergo mental or physical torture. 53.08% are beaten up by husband. 75.5% families have accepted their work. But 17% feels that the women are doing dirty work. 7.5% women have not informed about their workplace to the family members, especially mother-in-law.

Table 4: Financial

Associated with any organizations	Yes 48 %	No 52 %	--	--	--
Sale of scrap	Scrap Cart 11.75 %	Scrap dealer 83 %	--	--	--
Daily earnings	Yes 69.5 %	No 30.5 %	--	--	--
Monthly earnings	Up to 10,000 99.5 %	Above 10000 0.5 %	--	--	--
Loan borrowed	Yes 12 %	No 88 %	--	--	--
Loan borrowed for	Son/ daughters marriage 45 %	Son/ daughters Education 9.3 %	Construction of home 29.16 %	For buying cattle's 16.66 %	--
Loan borrowed from	Bank 0 %	Credit society 0 %	Self Help Group 100 %	Relatives 00 %	Other 0 %
Loan amount	Up to Rs.10000 8.3 %	Rs.10000-20000 45.41 %	Rs.20000-30000 2.08 %	Rs.30000-40000 4.16 %	--

Savings	Bank 0 %	Credit society 55.55 %	Self Help Group 5.55 %	Home 5.55 %	Other 0 %
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Table 4 reveals that 48% rag-pickers are associated with any organization, union or NGO. But 95% said that the organization does not support them other than issuing identity cards. 83% sell scrap to the dealer. But rates of scrap are different at different places. The scrap dealer visits in the evening at the segregation center that saves their work and time and 69.5% gets daily money at workplace. 99.5% earns between up to 10000 per month. To meet with financial needs, 12% have borrowed loans from Self Help Groups. As they don't have proper documentation, bank or other financial institute does not consider their loan proposals. Son or daughter's marriage and construction of home are main cause of borrowing loan amounting between Rs.10000 to Rs.20000. Rag-pickers at segregation centers deposit Rs.50 to Rs.100 per day to pigmy agent of a credit society.

Table 5: Government Papers

Paper Name	Yes	No
AADHAAR	94.5%	5.5%
Ration Card	71.5%	28.5%
Bank account	30.5%	69.5%
Election ID	91.75%	8.25%

Table 5 reveals that significant number of rag-picker have Aadhar, Ration card and election ID. But despite government's special initiative, only 30.5% have a bank account. They have opened it under the Pradhanmantri Jandhan Yojna.

CONCLUSION

The present study has attempted to explore the personal, social and economic status of rag-pickers in Aurangabad district of Maharashtra. The study concludes that the rag-pickers are living in extremely poor condition. Lack of education and awareness is major hurdle in their growth and prosperity. Large number of them belongs to backward caste. They work hard but earn less. Because of less earning does not take balanced diet or visits doctors for illness. They develop bad habits of chewing gutkha and tobacco. They are frequently abused, both physically and mentally at home and workplace which is not secured to them.

The study suggests various measures to uplift life of rag-pickers. It includes aware them about their rights and responsibilities. It is need of day to organize workshops, seminars, street plays, cultural events, religious events, competition to make them informed, empowered about government schemes, health and hygiene, bank loans, education, skill development facilities, legal aid etc. Special school for their kids at workplace and for women at night for continuing education is need of day. The corporate groups should take initiative to impart special job ready training and job opportunity to the rag-pickers. Dedicated 24 by 7 hospitals should be started for rag-pickers with free medicines at every city. Message of gender equality should spread widely.

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