Dalit, Labour And Stigma Against Waste Work: A Question Of Dignity And Self Respect.

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Abstract

In the Indian context, some informal labour devoted to traditional occupation system, which based on the hierarchical caste structure, and as per the castes, occupations are divided. Lower caste principally the Dalit's (ex-untouchable) traditional occupation relics considered worthless, dirty and filthy in a society and it further constructs stigma with their caste identity. Moreover, a peculiar kind of labour like a manual scavenger, ragpickers, and waste work consign one particular type of perception which produces deleterious vocabulary with damaging concepts like injustice, humiliation, indignity, and disrespect. The social phenomenon consisted of negative attribution of work with particular labour raises the questions: What kind of labour can produce dignity or is there any labour that consists of lower caste identity (Dalits) can generate dignity and respect or only the intellectual or so-called white-collar labour can produce dignity?

This paper proposes one proposition and argument that the lower castes Dalits who are traditionally intricate in so-called polluted, dirty or filthy labour such as scavengers labour, leatherwork, and waste work, these forms of work dispense negative meaning and stigma with their labour. This theme and paper explore the questions mentioned above and try to comprehend the impression of labour, which spawns stigma with identity and dispense some negative provenance such as dirty, filthy, disgust, purity and pollution with caste identity.

Keywords: Dignity, Self-Respect, Stigma, Labour, Dalits, Scavengers, Waste Work, Humiliation.

Introduction:

In India, labour has its connotation, and ascription assign to it, not every labour enjoys equal status, worth, dignity and respect. In the Indian context, some informal labour devoted to traditional occupation system based on the hierarchical caste structure. Traditionally as per the caste, occupations divided among the caste groups in India. Lower caste principally the Dalit's (untouchable) traditional occupation relics considered worthless, dirty and filthy, which

constructs stigma with their caste identity. Moreover, a peculiar kind of labour like a manual scavenger, ragpickers, and waste work consign one particular type of perception which produces deleterious vocabulary with damaging concepts like injustice, humiliation, indignity, and disrespect. The social phenomenon and level of the negative provenance of work with particular labour, raises the questions: What kind of labour can produce dignity or is there any labour that consists of lower caste identity (Dalits) can generate dignity and respect or only the intellectual or so-called white-collar labour can produce dignity? Therefore, it further raises the question: What kind of stigma is attached to the labour traditionally done by Dalits?

Finally, are they getting dignity with their traditional occupation, which is associated with their caste identity? There is a stigma attached to waste work due to its connectivity with Dalits or lower castes people. Even though Dalits or lower caste people elevate themselves in economic matters; however, still they do not get equal upliftment in intangible elements such as dignity, respect, freedom, and a choice. Intangible factors are equally crucial compared to tangible factors based on materials since intangible elements make the feel of equal moral worth.

This paper proposes one proposition and argument that the lower castes Dalits are traditionally intricate in so-called polluted, dirty or filthy labour such as scavengers labour, leatherwork, and waste work. These forms of work dispense negative meaning and stigma with their labour. Moreover, as mentioned above, the waste work labour makes their static location at the bottom of the hierarchical caste structure. These negative attributions are not countenancing them to create an agency to relish equal dignity as the other human beings are enjoying. In the Indian context, selected professions like scavenging, leatherwork and waste picker, and rag pickers yield the conception of stigma. Moreover, it offended the dignity and self-respect of those allied with these occupations. This theme and paper try to explore the questions mentioned above and try to comprehend the impression of labour which spawns stigma with identity and apportion some negative provenance such as dirty, filthy, disgust, purity and pollution with caste identity.

According to Gopal Guru, "The issue of the dignity of labours invoking the negative language of stigma". Negative language from a vantage point offers us an advantage to access the reality of stigma more efficiently than the affirmative mode, which often tends to drift into endless abstraction". (Guru, Two Conception of the Dignity of Labour: Gandhi and Ambedkar., 2014). It illuminates that 'dignity of labour' can be comprehended by the negative dialect mode instep of affirmative dialect mode. Moreover, Javeed Alam contends that 'the ideologically the act of doling out stigmatizing meaning to work constitutes a circle of unfreedom'. He inferred the near and thick interface between unfreedom and socially impeded groups in India. There is a continuous network among the poverty, Dalits and their occupations that considered filthy and dirty, which curb their choices and lead to unfreedom.

Comprehending division of labour

Division of labour remained as the characteristic feature of human society. In many societies, specific functions have allotted to certain labour groups. The allocated 'work positions' and the diversity of 'work functions' generate thinkers in human society. The industrial revolution in England later in the eighteen-century brought massive changes in the 'division of labour' arena. The individual craftmanship had replaced with the industrial form of production to coordinate

the mass production. The economic tasks shattered to diverse aspects of society and its associational institutions like government and law. (Coser, 1984). The advancement in the complexity from a comparative simplicity was for society as it emancipated the individual capacities. Human beings were perplexed nothing more than that 'cog in the machine' to use Weber's words (Gerth & Mills, 1946).

Several scholars analytically understand the revolutionary transformations in social living and productive system. In his 'The Wealth of Nations', Adam Smit came in grip with Industrial Development effectiveness and increased productivity. He exited for the transformation as he assumed such transformation would enormously push human happiness. Nevertheless, a swift change in the form of division of labour has impelled other such as Karl Marx unsympathetically expound and understand the circle of the capital system "the new industrial division of labour alienated human beings from the products of their labour., from their work, as well as from their fellows, and even from themselves" (Coser, 1984). Furthermore, many reactionaries to the industrial revolution reviled the deterioration of 'individual capacities' and moral degradation of personality in a given society—the multiplication of goods and productions seen as the primary focus area of bonus. (Pocock, 1975).

The nineteen-century French sociologist 'Emile Durkheim', gave the most noteworthy contribution to the 'division of labour' in society. Durkheim disdained the past debates on alienation and productivity and emphasized the enquiry of harmony and unity in contemporary society, which he contented has converted 'abnormal'. Furthermore, the interrogation of individuality and human autonomy curbed by the safeguarding institutions became significant in Durkheim's work. His persuasion was founded less or more on the forte of bonds formed by social harmony and solidarity among people. (Durkheim, 1984).

One of the drawbacks of Indian society is the divide of people on casteism and categorizing specific individuals as Untouchables. Ambedkar demonstrated that various persons, including Gandhi, protected caste framework on numerous grounds, like the division of labour as fundamental for a civilized society. In any case, Ambedkar said that "caste framework is not merely a 'division of labour', but it is a 'division of labourers'. Moreover, it is a 'hierarchy' in which the 'divisions of labourers' are graded one above the other." Therefore, Caste framework is unnatural: In such a framework, the work division not unconstrained; such a frame not based on a person's choice. Person sentiment and inclinations have no place in it, and it based on the doctrine of predestination. (Ambedkar, 1937)

Theorizing Dignity, Self-Respect and Humiliation:

Self-respect is an essential part of human life. Without self-respect, human life cannot be possible and complete in any sense. Thus, self-respect is required for the overall human development and to survive meaningfully. The history of the world leftovers as the history of the struggle for existence, but existence with substantial aspects, such as respect, dignity, rights, justice, equality, liberty, and honour are essential for a meaningful existence. The mere existence of beings without substantial aspects makes life meaningless. Human beings struggle to achieve significant aspects of life make them conscious of their meaningful survival. Human life's

history is the history of the struggle for substantial parts of human life, such as positive recognition. Self-respect is a core dimension of meaningful survival. However, the self-respect is the element which makes human beings conscious about their equal worth.

Massey argues that Kant concluded that "servility shows an absence of self-respect", he includes all immorality and all miscarriage to treat oneself as a means but not as an end itself, reflecting an absence of self-respect. Massey argues it is not sufficient to comprehend the Kantian conception of self-respect only by confining his outlook that only respecting oneself contains considering oneself to ensure fundamental equal rights. (Massey, 1983)

As Margalit suggests "dignity is similar to pride and pride is the manifestation of self-esteem". He further explains the dignity is the expression of respect when feels and considers themselves as human beings. Dignity consists of the outside aspects of self-respect. (Margalit, 1996). When a person's honour is hurt deliberately, then a person's self-respect is attacked during that time. The violation of any one's rights contains a reduction of self-respect. Dignity represents the expression of self-respect. Human rights are essential for human beings because of their virtue of humanity. The defence of human rights can be doing on the grounds to protect the dignity of humanity.

At last, Annihilation of Caste is one of the profound works of Ambedkar, well recognized in society. He has given extraordinary arguments and explanation on the Caste system. Moreover, he has provided solutions which are related to rationality. In his philosophy, a human being is a focal point; the human being is both subject and object of his analysis. He established a dependable trust in human being and confirmed the completest compassion towards humans living in society. He resists that "every individual should have an equal right to live a dignified life with an equal opportunity". He emphasized that "self-respect is such an essential element to live with honour in the society because in case, an absence of self-respect in life; life is full of disgrace". (Ambedkar, 1937). Humiliation is an undesirable attack on human dignity; this type of assault can be predestined by a spectator and by those who are the victim subject to it. (Palshikar, 2009).

A conceptualization of Stigma with Labour.

Goffman clarified that stigma as an uncommon kind of relationship between attribute and stereotype. However, Gopal Guru amplified his conception of stigma by defining, stigma is a social development maintained by an auxiliary act of creation of the other and which at that point relegate a specific ethically obliterating attribution to this as 'other'. Stigma as attribution comprises of an expanded list of explicit words such as disgust, disgrace and derogation. (Guru, Two Conception of the Dignity of Labour: Gandhi and Ambedkar., 2014). Here, further extending the Gopal Guru argument that stigma is a social construction, constructed in society against the other community or individual to restrain their freedom and choices; with some assigned hostile demeaning, limiting their agency to achieve or gain dignity and self-respect.

Moreover, in the Indian setting, caste tends to stigmatize because it does not point an eccentric character. Still, it marginally makes a settled point or a pecking order of stigmatization. In Indian settings, particular labour works are a disgrace source that underlines a few castes under the

offences. There is an Unalienated form of work through which we can claim on the ethical ground for respect. In the contemporary era, work which is competitive and feasible makes space for respect. In the advanced west, factory work or some forms of agriculture work, in the informal sector absences respect and dignity. While in the Indian setting, specific caste profession like scavenging, leatherwork and waste picker and rag pickers work creates the concept of stigma and humiliation. Especially, contemplations of purity-pollution concept generate the idea of work that, in turn, produces shame. A Conception of labour and its attachment to caste creates stigma, which is rigid like a caste system. The stigma is linked with unfreedom because it attributes to someone with a negative connotation and removes flexibility and impose rigidity creates the atmosphere for exploitation.

Gopal Guru specifies that stigma is not a constraining but a paradigmatic concept. In reality, it is a paradigmatic concept involving an over-the-top hermeneutic capacity to impact concepts, bodies, institutions, and localities. (Guru, Two Conception of the Dignity of Labour: Gandhi and Ambedkar., 2014). To lead a life of respect as a collective asset is to appreciate the freedom of appearing in the public domain without an impression of stigma. Valerian Rodrigues contends that the public space, which could be called the bourgeoisie social arrangement, at the possible level, guarantees individuals a sense of respect and dignity. It is so primarily since this modern sphere allots equal status to individuals. The matter that Rodrigues raises is, 'has this space developed in India'. Servile state of mind and slave mindset which destroy a person symbolically may not see best to self-respect. Space for self-respect cannot be grown up without a struggle. (Rodrigues, 2009).

So, the public space gets to be vital to control the dignity and integrity of self-respect. However, the bourgeoisie social arrangement did not construct in India on similar lines like the west. Moreover, public space is not freedom sphere for lower caste. Also, conventional works related to caste do not allow lower caste to exist in the open without a sense of shame. Gopal Guru notices that leather labourers could not unreservedly walk in the public spaces, and would not shake hands with others since their fingers were harmed. There is a social and cultural stigma attached to leatherwork. In Jammu, the sanitary worker, rag pickers, and construction labourer from Mahasha and Valmiki community are remained unimportant in the public space. There is a shame associated with their work based on caste chain of command. Their work recognized as rotten, grimy, and no address of nobility and regard included in their work.

Gopal Guru described in his article 'Two conceptions of the dignity of labour', Gandhi looked for to conceptualize dignity in setting a division of work that customarily given. It is the dialect of obligation that looks for to shape one's sense of dignity. The nobility of work in Gandhi opinion gets characterized regarding the morals of 'Dharma Shastra.' On the other hand, Ambedkar distinguished disgrace with unfreedom is caught on nearly regarding the failure of specific groups to appreciate the superseded frame of life satisfying the 'self-esteem', self-respect, and respect of choice is conceivable. Ambedkar's conception of the dignity of labour centrally connected to the principle of purity and pollution that stamps disgrace on mental and physical work. The upper caste intellect looks to stigmatize not only the body but the intellect as well. (Guru, Two Conception of the Dignity of Labour: Gandhi and Ambedkar., 2014)

From the above conception of Ambedkar, this paper can argue that freedom and choice are essential elements to gain dignity and respect from the purity and pollution conception. However, there is still a problem to achieve the dignity of labour because the birth conception regulates Indian life. To Born in a lower caste, restraint the agency to obtain the dignity of labour due to caste identity and like Ambedkar also mentioned that upper caste stigmatizes a lower caste's body and mind.

As Gopal Guru argues that there is a need to understand the concept of humiliation on two different grounds, one is the Hegelian master-slave relationship, and the second is the theory of karma. In the Hegelian concept, that is the fear related to death which diminishes the moral capacity, which is so essential for the assertion and explains humiliation. Thus, we can understand the humiliation is a struggling concept connected with the self and the others. On the other side, the attitude and the karma theory based on the submissive fate are inexplicable and hampers the growth of moral vision into the knowledge of humiliation. The karma theory manipulates those at the servility and repulsion condition and ensures this condition is the natural social prearrangement share. (Guru, Introduction : theorizing humiliation, 2009).

Informal sector: Waste worker and the notion of dignity and respect.

Cultural and social values are deeply attached to waste work. Moreover, constructed negative approaches appear to the extent to those working with waste (waste picker, scavenger, rag picker) in almost every society, with the assigned position at the bottom of the social hierarchy. Especially in the Indian scenario, cultural and caste-based value accredited, and those are working with the waste they stigmatize and placed at the bottom of social and caste hierarchy. Those working in public and formal sectors receive the salary and are not aware of the prevalent hostility related to waste enterprises suffering from discrimination because of their work, which is considered repulsive and unclean. In the Indian case, the lower social positioning of the waste worker group institutionalized through their caste status and hierarchy, which connects with conventional occupations that are considered physically distasteful, unclean, and contaminating. Due to the caste obstructions and cultural hierarchy, it constrains access to alternative work opportunities within the informal sector.

A noteworthy study on waste picker and collector operating in Delhi tacitly acknowledge the importance of caste question. "With a Broader, multidimensional view of poverty and resultant deprivation, with its host of tangible and intangible concerns, such as dignity, self-respect, and freedom are including, also the freedom to participate in markets." (Gill, 2012). The social underpinnings of the scrap market of waste based on the vibrant relationship between poverty-caste, status, and engagement in the informal sector in modern India. The waste picking work in Delhi specially belonged to a particular caste group (Khatik Caste). Their caste considered lower status in society.

The Khatik caste group is a migrant group in Delhi, even though they have raised their financial status and some community members came out from their conventional occupation. Some of them are still in their traditional Occupations like pig-breeding and butchery. Furthermore, a little change has occurred in their overhauls status by moving into processing and recycling

comparatively clean plastic waste. However, their social position still weakened due to their work, which considered contaminated by the upper caste. (Gill, 2012)

Further, the study explored that other castes also include gradually like Banias and Jats, their upper status in the caste pecking order is considered upper in both fronts in the social front and caste front. On the other hand, Khatik considered lower in the caste progression; hence, they regarded as lower in the social and cultural hierarchy. The intangible elements such as dignity, respect, choice and freedom are not regulating for them, and there is a stigma attached to their labour because of their lower caste status. Some Khatik improved their economic status, but dignity and self-respect are missing in their life. This study revealed that Banias and Jats of that location, from the same profession, keep the perception that Khatiks, are from lower caste status people.

This paper argues that only the economic upliftment cannot alone remove the stigma attached to some waste work and those works that are always traditionally associated with lower caste groups, works such as (scavenging, ragpickers, leatherwork). These works assign some attribute such as disgust, a disgrace with the identity of lower caste which creates an institutional and cultural barrier to achieve their agency through which they can gain dignity and self-respect for their labour. As mentioned above, the study of the waste worker helps us understand that their social relationship ties with their community and transformation of work through the 'hereditary' process are very much complicity within the community. However, it creates unfreedom to this particular community because there is no rotation element in this work. The hereditary transformation in traditional work restrains an opportunity to rotate from this work to another.

Diverse studies on Scavenger, Sweeper and Rag-picker.

As we know, the Indian state has provided the constitutional preventions on 'untouchability' and manual scavenging. Still, many women and men from the lower caste are engaged in manual cleaning of human excrement from gutters, septic tanks, open defecations sites, and sewers. They typically get on upon traditionally caste-based roles only because of the flawed policies and improper implementation not prohibiting these practices. Traditionally, economic, civil and social life has been regulated in India by the caste system, designated by the social stratification and confined to specific occupations. Caste has been operated in India through custom and enforced the social and economic structure. In India, caste regulated by the hereditary mode.

One profound study on waste and waster worker has done by Kuruva Syamala Devi, Arza V.V.S. Swamy, Ravuri Hema Krishna. This study reflects the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) rag pickers' susceptibility while concentrating on the occupational, social-economic, and health aspects. Further, this study also produces the ragpicker's database regarding the socio-economic contours, including their problems, working conditions and expectations. This study also argues that the ragpicker plays a vital role in waste management, but they remained unrecognizable in society and institutions. (Devi, Swamy, & Krishna, 2014)

The organization works for informal worker name 'Women in Informal Employment: Globalising and Organising' explained about waste picking, in the urban informal occupations, waste picking keeps the lowest ranks in the hierarchy. The larger part of this occupation consists

of the children and women. Unskilled persons, illiterate and migrants who contain the lowest ranks in the caste hierarchy and the 'poorest of the poor', are chiefly involved in the waste picker work. Moreover, they contain stigma with their lower caste identity, illiteracy, and poverty; they do not find other employment sources. One more report of WEIGO named, *', Integrating Waste Pickers into Municipal Solid Waste Management in Pune, India*, provided the database consist of the waste picking job in Pune area. As per the report, nearly all the waste pickers belonged to Schedule castes and women are 90%. (Chikarmane, 2012).

Dalits relegated to the bottom of the caste hierarchy. They have traditionally limited to livelihoods viewed as deplorable or deemed too menial by higher caste groups, including manual scavengers, leather workers, and cobblers. Their caste designated also renders them socially polluted or untouchable and is used to justify discriminatory practices. Therefore, Dalits even located at the bottom of the caste hierarchy. Many Dalits have pushed away from their conventional disgraceful menial work, such as manual scavenging, cobblers, leather works and many others.

One more relevant study was conducted by the 'Dalit Bahujan Resource Center (DBRC)' in 2014 on 'waste-pickers' to investigate the community's socio-economic profile. This study conducted in four cities, such as Vishakhapatnam, Vijayawada, Hyderabad, and Guntur. This study identified many issues related to waste pickers, like lack of house sites and improper housing, they reside in thatched houses without drainage, water, electricity and toilets. They faced constant health issues, and their children do not get proper education and many times goons and police harass them. Many of them live without any social security, and they are more prone to infectious diseases, and due to their profession, they often fall sick. (DBRC, 2014). Therefore, this study revealed the lack of basic amenities and poor living conditions of waste pickers and the invisibility of their presence in the state's eyes. The lack of basic amenities from the stateside make them invisible and taken their 'right to life with dignity'.

B.N Srivastava tracked the scavengers' origin in the Indian context, cultural heritage, social and economic status, caste organizations, and territorial distribution in research work. He provided the exciting findings in his study that the sweepers in a large number from northern India have abandoned Hindu religion and converted to other religions. However, no noteworthy change has come about in their occupation or social status. (Srivastava, 1997).

During M.Phil. Fieldwork and PhD fieldwork, I observed the negative conception against the waste worker in Jammu district. In Jammu Dalits population consists near about 7 per cent of the total 29 per cent of the Hindu population. Dalits are divided into 13 different castes, and each caste has its own culture and traditional occupation. Though with the help of reservation changes have been taken place in their profession, the caste-based occupation has changed. Still, the large population of Dalits remains in informal and traditional occupation. Communities like Valmikis who were brought in Jammu and Kashmir from Punjab during the 'Raja Times', are engaged in scavenger, sweeper work is out of the state's reach. Even they are politically invisible and socially excluded from society. Although after the abrogation of Article 370, at the institutional level few changes have been taken place, like they got a Domicile certificate and became

resident of Jammu and Kashmir but on the other side at the substantial level, the changes yet to occur to gain dignity and self-respect.

Moreover, there is a stereotype with their identity, which based on the purity-pollution concept. As Gopal Guru argues in his article "Liberal democracy in India and Dalit Critique", a significant portion of Dalits community has become invisible to the state in a liberal democracy. These labourers are construction workers, rag pickers and scavengers.' (Guru, Liberal Democracy in India and the Dalit Critique, 2011). They are politically invisible because they are not part of the state agenda in India. They also become politically invisible because of their inability to stake any claim and control over the state. Due to invisibility, these Dalit waste workers do not possess rights related to moral interest, such as self-respect and dignity. Primarily, the 'language of respect' does not exist in the sphere of activities (scavenging or rag picking) that they engage in it. The scavenger and sweeper belonged to Valmiki caste in Jammu; they were politically invisible in state discourse, but recently the debate on their existence has taken place, and some transformation has been going on. However, on the other hand, they are pro-actively visible in the social sphere because of their labour work (sweeper work) which measured as not dignified as other works considered. Their exclusion from every area social, economic and political put them in the category of 'others', and their labour considered waste or dirt.

Furthermore, the issue of dignity and self-respect remains unanswerable in the Jammu society for the Valmiki community. The situation by and large same for Mahasha community, their traditional occupations were basket making, drum beating, and sometimes worked as a sweeper. However, there is a shift in occupation by the small section of Mahasha community, but still, a large population of Mahasha consist of labour work as 'Mazdoor'. There is always an association of their labour with inferiority concept. Mahasha community is the most stigmatized community in Jammu; all the inferior tags have given to this community because of their occupation and birth in a particular caste. Mahasha caste considered inferior in status by other upper caste groups, and there is no question of self-respect and dignity of their labour.

Conclusion:

In the Indian context, some specific labour attached to the traditional occupation system based on the hierarchical caste structure. Moreover, as per the castes, the occupations are divided. Due to the caste system labour assigned with graded ranks, this does not generate dignity and self-respect for lower-caste Dalits. Furthermore, caste stigma with labour cause institutional and cultural hindrance to achieving the 'dignity of labour'. However, lower caste's economic upliftment by turning into different occupations cannot remove the caste identity stigma attached to them. After 72 years of independence of the Indian state, labour work consisted of waste remains invisible in the state discourse. The intangible elements and moral interest rights like dignity, self-respect, freedom, and choice stay out of reach with lower caste labourer.

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