

Times of India

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Dalit students protest against manual scavenging

TIMES NEW NETWORK

Yogesh Chawda

Ahmedabad: A huge number of Dalit students marched through the city roads on Monday. They were protesting against manual scavenging which is still practised in Gujarat. The rally started from Vadaj and ended at Gandhi Ashram, where a public hearing was held.

The students, who study in government schools are still being forced to clean toilets in their schools. Bhagwati Parmar, 13, a resident of Paliyad village in Botad taluka of Bhavnagar said, "I dropped out of school in 2004 when I was in class III and would go along with my father to dump garbage. But, now I live with my mother after my father died of kidney ailment. We live in utter poor conditions and so I have to go to clean or sweep when someone asks me to do so. I still go to Darbar-gadh for cleaning work, 2 to 3 times a month and also collect trash from the roads with other girls. For this, I get Rs 5 to Rs 15 with which we buy milk to make tea. It is necessary to make ends meet."

Gautam Dodiya, 15, who lives in Dhoda village in Umralla taluka of Bhavnagar district said, "I stay with my mother after my father's death, he was an alcoholic. I studied till class V and then left school because I was asked to clean urinals and toi-



Students participate in the rally on Monday. (Right) Foreigners join the procession



lets there. But, to earn a living I still go once a month to clean soak pit and I get Rs 200."

Similarly, Bharatkumar Chandubhai, 13, who lives in Aslali village in Matar taluka of Kheda district said, "I study in a government school in my village. Even I faced the wrath of being a Dalit. I am told to clean up urinals in my school once a week."

"Manual scavenging is a forced caste-based occupation where more than 1.3 million people in the country are affected by this practice," said Manjula Pradip trustee of Navsarjan trust.

Dalit children, mainly whose parents are scavengers, are forced to do menial works like cleaning toilets and classrooms and they are also discriminated in schools, she alleged.

The students, who took part in the rally accused school authorities of forcing them to clean rubbish. "Scavenging has been outlawed in the country but it is still practised in a developed state like Gujarat," said Martin Macwan, a social activist, alleged.



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Meet on manual scavenging by Dalit students

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A state-level meet on the issue of manual scavenging in Gujarat was organised at Gandhi Ashram in Ahmedabad on Monday by a city-based NGO, Navsarjan. The NGO alleged that manual scavenging is prevalent in Gujarat and has reportedly victimised nearly 1,000 Dalit students across the state.

The programme included a talk on the issue and an



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interactive session where young Dalit children of 47 talukas from 12 districts in the state spoke about their lives and work, followed by a rally to oppose the practice in a developed state like Gujarat.

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Navsarjan Director Manjula Pradeep said: "The first incident of manual scavenging took place at Ranpur village in Dholka on August 17, 1996. Since then, Dalit students have been doing the job of cleaning toilets at schools and also rag-picking, picking up animal carcasses, among others. The practice has left nearly 1.3 million people in India in a helpless situation."

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The NGO has now planned to take up the issue with the state government through the Urban Development Department and the Gujarat State Human Rights Commission.

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18/08/09

KIDS ALLEGE DISCRIMINATION BY TEACHERS

Outcaste children lament prejudice in govt-run schools

PARAS K JHA

■ Dharmistha Harijan, 9, and Hetal Harijan, 10, both sisters from Bharathari village in Kheda are studying in std 4 and 5, respectively, in the village's government primary school. However, they have different class tasks than their counterparts in the same school, as their schools curriculum also includes cleaning the school lavatories!

■ Still others like Rahul Parmar, 11, from Ramgadh village in Surendranagar, a class 5 student is not allowed to take part in the school's cultural program and is forced to sit in the last row in the classroom.

No, they aren't naughty but their fault lies in the fact that they belong to the socially ostracised class - the untouchables. More than 1,000 children like Rahul, Dharmistha and Hetal lamented their fate while in their lamentation opened the Pandora's box at the Gandhi Ashram on Monday with their stories and the pains hidden in them. Many of these children have left their



studies because of the rampant discrimination and the forced practices like cleaning school toilets and manual scavenging.

A public hearing of young boys and girls belonged to the lowest caste social strata, was held by Navsarjan — a non governmental organization active in human rights and issues of discrimination against the Dalits. The public hearing was the result of a study done by the NGO, which found that the Dalit children

and mainly the scavenger community children who are called as Valmikis are forced to do menial work like cleaning class rooms, toilets and urinals in the school where they go to study.

The public hearing was made in front of Panel of eminent citizens of the state like Justice RA Mehta, former acting Chief Justice of Gujarat, Amrut Modi, secretary of Sabarmati Ashram, Ishwarbhai Patel, former member of National Commission for Safai Karmacharies, Martin Macwan, Dalit leader and founder of Navsarjan, Mari Thekakara writer and journalist and Prof Ghanshyam Shah, political scientist.

Manjula Pradeep, executive director of Navsarjan said, "The study has been done in 12 districts of the state and the plight of children comes out right from their mouths. We want to bring this issue to the notice of the state government." Another panel member said that the court should take up the statements of these children as suo motu.

DNA - 18/08/09

NGO to hold public hearing today of children from lower castes who are forced into manual scavenging

'I get paid Rs8 for clearing animal carcass from roads'

PARAS K JHA, AHMEDABAD

The stink from carcasses of animals that die in road accidents and which are not cleared by the civic authorities is often nauseating. One can only imagine the plight of people who have to move these decomposed road kills to other places. Despite several attempts by development organisations to curb manual scavenging, it is common to see dalit children drag the carcasses.

Navsarjan - a social organisation that works on issues of discrimination against Dalit children has found out that more than 1,000 children from several districts of the state are involved in manual scavenging.

Thirteen-year-old Umesh Vegad from Vallabhipur taluka of Bhavnagar district says he is

made to sit on the floor of the school while others get to sit on the benches. "Teachers and children from Patel and Darbar community are treated us differently. I clean my class twice a month and urinals once every week. I get work of moving dead animal bodies from the roads to other places and I get paid Rs8 for that," says Umesh.

Such children, who have left their studies because of discrimination in schools, will share their plight and pain of being born in a dalit family in a public hearing organised by the NGO today at Gandhi Ashram between 12 to 4 pm.

Manjula Pradeep, executive director of Navsarjan said, "We want to put forward this

issue to the government. Even today, there are people who believe there is nothing wrong in cleaning toilets by children from lower castes, especially dalits. We want, dalit children to be in the mainstream just like other children. They should also attend schools and get to study. The public hearing will help kids from Valmiki community."

Talking about discrimination with children of Valmiki community in schools, Has-mukh Adhia, principal secretary state Education department said, "If such cases of discrimination would be brought to our notice, we will put the children in main schools."

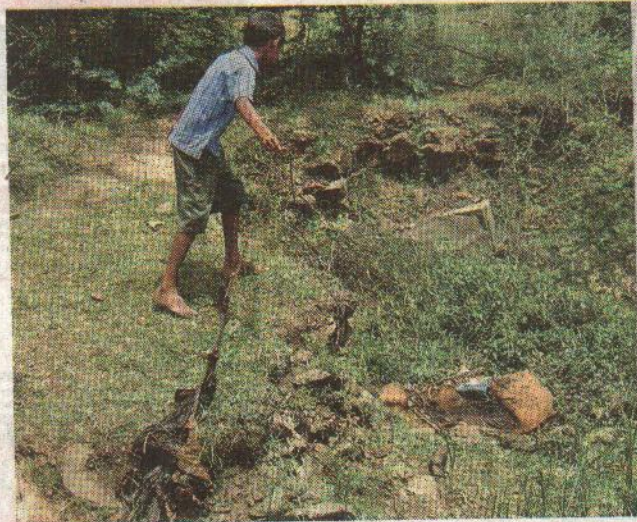
Gautam Valmiki from Harij town of Patan district tells no different story. "We face discrimination during mid-day meals at our school. The students from other community abuse and treat us in a bad way.

I am made to clean my classroom daily. My father earns Rs1,500 every month and everyday, I go to Ambikanagar to collect leftover food. We get Rs10 ff we drag carcasses from the roads and move it to other places.

Manjula Pradeep said that eminent people will attend the public hearing as a jury. It includes Justice RA Mehta, former acting chief justice of Gujarat, Kamlaben Gurjar, member of National Commission for Safai Karmacharies, Ishwarbhai Patel, former member of National Commission for Safai Karmacharies, Martin Macwan, founder of Navsarjan and dalit leader, Mari Thekakra, writer and journalist and prof Ghanshyam Shah, political scientist.



A child removes a dead dog from the road



SOCIAL APATHY

Thirteen-year-old Umesh Vegad from Vallabhipur taluka of Bhavnagar district says he is made to sit on the floor of the school while others get to sit on the benches. He cleans his classroom twice a month and urinals once every week. Umesh gets Rs8 for clearing dead animal bodies from the roads