

Draft

Best Practice Honouring of Safai Karamcharis - HISAR City

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Introduction

Besides the doctors, nurses and other healthcare professionals, sanitary manpower is another group of individuals at the frontlines of the warriors combating worldwide catastrophe caused by COVID-19. Day in and day out they put their life at great risk and play a pivotal role in averting the spread of the virus by ensuring that our neighbourhoods, streets, and public spaces like parks, essential utilities like sewers, septic tanks, public toilets are clean and sanitized. In the crisis like situation the society, local authorities and governments have also to ensure the safety and welfare of sanitation workers. Each one of us has a responsibility that millions of these public health and safety workers—who still run services despite the hazards of COVID-19 pandemic—are adequately protected and appreciated and their families do not suffer from any shortages.

Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, in his initial call for total lockdown, appealed all Indians to express gratitude to those who are working day and night to provide us basic necessities in order to prevent coronavirus, including public servants, health, sanitation, and civil supply workers and security personnel.

Hazards for Safai Karamcharis (Sanitary Workers)

Due to Corona pandemic, entire district population was at risk. In these circumstances, apart from regular cleanliness related work sanitary workers face health hazards for themselves and their family. The following activities make them as much vulnerable as the medical teams.

- Disposing of dead bodies, medical waste, human wastes.
- To sanitize the entire city and in particular the entry point in the district they face added hazard in sanitization of:
 - i. Main hotspots
 - ii. Quarantined houses,
 - iii. Containment zones
 - iv. Isolation centres,
 - v. Shelter homes, etc.

Moreover, long hours of spraying disinfectants and sanitizers at public places expose them to the chemicals whose effect of prolonged exposure on human beings is not yet fully studied and observed. But it has definitely helped in arresting the spread of Corona virus.

Initiative in Haryana

Taking inspiration from the Prime Minister, the elected representatives, resident welfare

associations and Non-Government Organizations honoured various Safai Karamcharis by presenting them with mementos, and showering them with flower petals. Due to contagious nature of COVID-19 the role played by sanitation workers in ensuring neat and clean surroundings plays crucial part in the fight against pandemic.

Safai Karamcharis along with Medical and security staff have been recognized as Corona Warriors by the society and hence it is only apt that their contribution is duly recognized by the administration. These warriors are working mostly without any protective gear and are seen moving around using only improvised face masks. While the people sitting in the comforts of their houses or those with limited mobility are washing their hands frequently and using sanitizer to keep them safe, it is alarming to observe the working conditions for these people. The sanitation workforce needs enough protection, appreciation and empathy for their devotion towards social responsibility. They are often working long hours, sometimes without proper breakfast or meals. Self-respecting like any other citizen, they shy away from free food distribution and depend upon either their own mode of transport, mostly bicycles, to reach their workplace. Women safai karmcharis are often seen walking the distances in absence of public or other means of transport.

In these circumstances it become a duty and responsibility for administration, government, local bodies, elected representatives as well as citizens to come forward to acknowledge the services of Safai Karmcharies. In Haryana, particularly Hisar district, a noble beginning of honouring them has been made. It started with distribution of masks, gloves, sanitizers, PPE kits to these workers besides packets of dry ration and cooked meals.

Implementation of the Practice

Hisar municipal corporation has taken a lead in this direction and urged people to honour the sanitary warriors' effort and dedication. Community leaders, particularly elected representatives to state legislators, urban and rural local bodies, civil society and non-government organisations, RWAs and political, cultural and religious bodies have also come forward to join this call. This awareness is being translated into expedient action at various levels across the city population.

The actual signal of recognizing and appreciating the 'Corona Warriors' started when people responded hugely to Prime Minister's call to give a round of applause to these warriors on 22 March by clapping or ringing of bells. Taking a cue from this various states, cities and localities have become active to show appreciation to medical, security and sanitation workers.

Hisar has taken this call further in letter and spirit. As a first step periodically regular health checkup is being done for safai karmcharies. At the time when the pandemic is so widespread, citizens are cooperating by segregation of domestic waste into bio-degradable and non-degradable themselves. They are being given quality masks, gloves and sanitizer bottles which people bought for themselves or their families. In some cases, this thankfulness is being displayed by offering, cash, valuables, clothes, gifts and food items.

People have expressed their gratitude and appreciation towards safai karamcharies by showering petals on them and offering them garlands.

Other major laudable initiatives by the citizens and organization can be seen as:

- The residents of Shanti Nagar honoured four of its Safai Karamcharis Shi Kumar, Sunehari, Pooja and Satyavaan
- In Mahavir Colony former Senior Deputy Mayor Shri D.N. Saini honoured Safai Daroga Pawan Kumar Ph9034609246.
- In Model Town Municipal Counsellor Ms. Kavita Kedia honoured Safai Daroga Rohtaash Ph 8684927403.
- Mayor Gautam Sardana honoured Safai Karamcharis in Madhuban Park.

Impact of the practice

Garlanding of safai karamcharies is a major symbolic act which inspires and motivates these workers with the wholehearted support and appreciation by the society. They no longer feel alone in this fight, particularly in view of the social mindsets which in certain sections look down upon their services. They no longer feel stigmatized but realize their importance as an equally valuable member of the society serving in their own right and manner.

This initiative of honouring the Safai Karamcharis has also taken the awareness among citizens to another level. This awareness is not limited only to hygiene and cleanliness but includes a sense of social responsibility, sensitiveness and empathy towards the workers around us. This consciousness can be witnessed by small acts that people have started practicing:

1. Increased awareness amongst public to show appreciation for a crucial and vital role played by Safai Karamcharis.
2. Subtle acts of motivation for the Safai Karamcharis who carry out their duties amidst lockdown despite the high risk associated with their work profile.
3. Three-way segregation of waste at the households' level will mean that the sanitation workers have to deal with less waste. Moreover, hazardous medical waste like (masks, inhalers, syringes etc.) are being disposed with extreme caution.
4. The door-to-door sanitation workers are being specifically apprised about the contents of the waste. People have started providing them with personal protective equipment such as gloves, masks, boots as a matter of duty for their important contributions to the society.
5. There is an increased awareness among people to separately discard used masks, gloves, tissues and other sanitary waste.

The fact that till now there are no active COVID-19 cases in the district is a testimony of the

excellent work carried out by the SafaiKaramcharis of the district and the proactive attitude of the people.

Conclusion

In the cities and towns where municipalities have weak regulatory capacity, and where workers are unable to effectively organize for improved health and safety protections, SafaiKaramcharis may face even further risks – especially if they are disproportionately represented by vulnerable or historically marginalized groups. WHO has also mandated through its interim guidelines that SafaiKaramcharis must wear appropriate protective equipment like gloves, boots, masks, goggles, etc. while doing their duties. A key component of pandemic-proofing societies is to invest in the capacity of Safai Karamcharis through all possible means, elevating the collective voice of sanitation workers, and engraining key hygienic behaviours. The citizens and government agencies at various level have an ordained duty to not only take sufficient care of this vulnerable workforce but also publicly recognize, accept and appreciate value of their work by an expressed act.

Sources

- Information collected by officer trainees in the district from District Administration and Municipal Corporation
- Newspapers

Some of the ceremonies honouring Safai karamcharis are presented as below:

6 (1) पूर्व सीनियर डिप्टी मेयर डीएन सैनी ने



6(2) ऑटो मार्केट एरिया में पार्षद कविता केडिया ने



6(3) माडल टाउन एरिया में पार्षद अमिता सिंह ने



6(4) भारत नगर में दीपक वाल्मिकी ने



6(5) सब्जी मंडी चौक पर पार्षद अनिल सैनी ने



6(6) आजाद नगर में रिटायर्ड कर्मचारियों ने



6(7) जयदेव नगर में पार्षद प्रीतम सेनी ने



6 (8) न्यू मॉडल टाउन में लोगों व पार्षद जगमोहन मितल ने



6(9) सेक्टर 16/17 में जितेंद्र श्योराण प्रधान वेलफेयर एसोसिएशन ने



6(10) सेक्टर-13 में पार्षद शालू दीवान ने



6(11) मधुबन पार्क में मेयर गौतम सरदाना ने



6(12) भारत नगर में पार्षद मनोहर लाल ने

