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### Urban Poor and Education: A Study of Schooling of Slum Children

KAPIL K. GAVSKER

#### INTRODUCTION

THERE ARE people who live in inhuman conditions and are vulnerable to several heart-rending consequences. These are the very places where the future of our society and country also lies. Children are shaped by the social or family environment and the education we provide them. If the education is not effective and easily accessible, children may not develop mentally. They may not be able to carry on their education for longer. The stability of attending schools is determined by sectors, the family and schools. It has been widely accepted that poverty is the major cause for leaving and dropping out of the children from the schools. But, here the role of schools and its teachers cannot be denied and underestimated. If the public educational places and its masters are not playing a good role then the children are affected by both family and school environment.

The family environment is influenced by the locality and the area where the people live. The slums are places where physical infrastructural, social, economic and environmental circumstances are found in deteriorated conditions. Lack of facilities, amenities and services is due to economic positions and mostly dependent on the public service providers. The public service and amenities providers do work as per specific parameters. All these conditions have more or less influence on the physical and mental condition of children.

According to Census 2001, the urban population of India increased from 62.4 million in 1951 to 285.3 million in the last census, which is about 27.78 per cent of total population of the country. Migration is the major cause for the growth of urban population. In a long process it gives space to spatial fragmentation of people on urban land. The localities of low income group and socially excluded and marginalized have developed into slums. For the first time Census of India, 2001 conducted a survey about the slums and their population at the country level. There are 607 towns with a total population of about 178.3 million which report the existence of slums. The slum population of these towns is around 40.29 million which is 22.58 per cent of the total population of the reporting towns. The percentage of slum population in Municipal Corporation Regions in the seven largest cities of the country is; (Mumbai-48.88 per cent, Delhi-18.89 per cent, Kolkata-

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32.55 per cent, Bangalore-8.04 per cent, Chennai-17.74 per cent, Ahmedabad-12.51 per cent and Hyderabad-17.74 per cent). There are studies which report that:

A large portion of Indian population still lives largely in rural areas. However population in urban areas is growing faster than that in rural areas. It has been predicted that nearly 50 per cent of India's population will be urban by the year 2030. India's mega cities have the highest percentage of slum dwellers in the country though not all the poor in the urban areas live in the slums.<sup>1</sup>

The million plus cities are called as 'metropolis' and are the hubs of commercial, economic, administrative, information and services. In post globalization period, a lot of multinational companies have established, especially in the large cities and million plus cities, which experienced high growth rate. The private sector started to play a significant role in the urban economy. Now, the metro cities are facing problems from urban sprawl, over-crowding, housing, unemployment, increase of slums and squatter settlements, transport, sewerage problems, crimes and pollution etc. on a large scale.

Nagpaul (1996) writes that the conditions prevailing in our slums have been the subject of several committees and surveys in the past four decade. Despite volumes of recommendations, it is debatable if conditions have improved in any substantial way. Not only the physical layouts including sanitary conditions are poor, but life in the slums depicts stark economic poverty and social improvement of inhabitants.<sup>2</sup>

The next part of the article provides a brief detail about the study area and methodology adopted to conduct the study. The objectives of the study are mentioned below. A survey was carried out during May, 2008 in slums of Hyderabad City. The focus was on to understand the relation between socially discriminated and marginalized sections and educational development of the children. Here, the role of parents in terms of expenditure on education, time spent on the children, on their school related work, perception about both private and public schools and the their opinion about the role of teachers is given importance.

The socially and economically marginalized sections of population have been facing exclusion and lack of amenities and services which are not affordable to them. The tangible factors are visible to have a look on the living environment of slums, but invisible aspect also marginalized simultaneously. Here, invisible aspect is associated with educational facilities available and elementary education of children.

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## Area of Study

The present study is related to and emphasizes on the educational conditions of the children in the slum areas. In many urban areas, the children lack proper basic amenities, including basic education. This condition forces them to leave schools and leads to destruction of the basic social-fabric, as well as of a healthy neighbourhood. The present study focuses attention on the elementary education of the urban poor children and the condition of their families in terms of income, employment, location of educational centres in the area, number of drop-outs of these children, role of the teachers and school infrastructure, all of which influence the attitude to education. Two types of objectives are framed for better understanding their condition:

The major objective of the study is to understand the correlation between literacy, drop-out rates and dalits. Specific objectives are: (i) to study the socio-economic aspects of the households in the selected slum (ii) to map out the availability of both the government and private primary educational facilities for slum children, (iii) to study the role of teachers in schools where the slum children study, (iv) to study the perception of parents of the slum children on government and private schools, (v) to study the cases of drop-out children and their consequences, (vi) to document narratives of drop-out children.

The area of the study is a selected slum which is one of the oldest slums of Municipal Corporation of Hyderabad from the 'Old City of Hyderabad'. As per the recent latest Census (2001) Hyderabad is the sixth largest metropolitan city of India. Rapid commercialization has been taking place in and around the old city which is changing the occupational structure of the city. Poverty is more visible in many parts of the old city because the economic growth of city is not shared by the people of this area.

The field study is based on the case study method. Data on slums and urban poor population for the all India, state and district level is obtained from the secondary sources like, Census, National Sample Survey Organization, books, academic articles, reports etc. Primary data pertaining to socio-economic parameters is obtained by administering a structured interview schedule and required data was collected from the Municipal Corporation office. Generally, three slums were visited and only one of them was selected to carry out an in-depth study. The sample size is 20 families out of 120 families of the slum. Generally, the origin of squatter settlements started in Hyderabad in early 50's when the Muslim elites fled the city. The era of industrialization and making Hyderabad the Capital of Andhra Pradesh state, were the other events that triggered sudden growth of population, particularly poor. The excerpts of a development report say that:

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"The performance of Andhra Pradesh in terms of improvement in literacy and schooling is one of the best among the Indian states in the recent period. Given the trends, the state can achieve universal enrolment soon. But it is the large stock of adult illiterates that makes it one of the laggard states in literacy".<sup>3</sup>

## Exclusion and Education

The Dalits are socially excluded and economically marginalized. The discrimination against them is still continuing and can be read and heard from several parts of the country via media and news. The exclusion is found in the area of educational development. The children from this section of society face discrimination which is not so visible but it takes place. The financial position of these people forces them to be dependent upon the public bodies. Education is one of them. Dropping out from the schools and leaving the schools is quite common among them.

There are about 59 Scheduled Castes in Andhra Pradesh of which the important ones are Mala, Madiga, Relli, Adi Andhra and others. There is no equal access to education across social groups. In the state as well as in India, the SCs and STs are the most backward in terms of education. Andhra Pradesh is known for high drop-out rates of school going children among Indian states. In Andhra Pradesh the drop-out rate is found to be as high as 39.16 per cent for classes 1-5 and 58 per cent for classes 6-7 for the year 1999-2000. "Teachers who are frontline service providers and critical in service (education) delivery, are often absent from the school. Another problem is that the presence of teachers *per se* does not ensure that they are working".<sup>4</sup>

About the educational facilities in the capital city, according to recent education scenario in year 2003-2004, there were 1345 primary and 464 upper primary schools in Hyderabad Urban. Number of schools has been increased further within a year. In 2004-05, number of primary schools was 365 whereas it was 462 in case of upper primary. The enrollment in the primary schools was 116.74 per cent and 117.54 per cent respectively for year 2003-04 and 2004-05. For upper primary classes it was 84.36 per cent and 91.11 per cent respectively.

Hyderabad city is divided into five zones (North, South, Central, East and West) and 17 Circles to provide better services. The area of the city has grown from 175 sq. km. to around 650 sq. km. The selected slums for study are located in Ward No.22 which comes under Circle No.4 of Municipal Corporation of Hyderabad.

The total population of Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation was around 5.75 million in 2001. As per Census of India 2001, the MCH area

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shared around 63.13 per cent of the total population of Hyderabad Urban. 'More than one-third of Hyderabad's population resides in slums, squatters and other poor settlements. Their contribution to the city's economy has been growing over the period. As per MCH sources, in 2001 the number of slums was 1119 in Municipal Corporation area. Out of 1119 slums around 779 were notified and 340 non-notified slums. The City Development Plan (2001-02) mentions about 1142 slums in MCH of Hyderabad area.

Three slums namely, Kali Kabar Relief Camp (395 population) Jag Jiven Nagar (605 population) and Raja Rao Ramba Devdi (221 population) respectively are chosen for the present study. These slums are selected based on literacy rate which is low (40 per cent), medium (75 per cent) and high (90 per cent). The majority in the Kali Kabar slum is of Muslims, in Jag Jiven Nagar is of Scheduled Castes and mix of Scheduled Caste (23), OBCs (148) and Muslim (50) are in Raja Rao Ramba Devdi slum. Second criteria for the selection of these slums was based on physical, infrastructural, housing, amenities and others conditions which are tangible factors. In comparison to Kali Kabar Relief Camp and Raja Rao Ramba Devdi slum, the physical and infrastructural, road, housing conditions and amenities in Jag Jiven Nagar slum are not good which was observed during the visit period. So, the study was chosen to intensively focus on Jag Jiven Nagar slum.

## Slum—Jag Jiven Nagar

The origin of the slums can be traced back to 1935 and lives of two bonded labourers called Mysiah and Chinnabaliah from the Mehboobnagar district in Telengana, a poor, under-developed region in Andhra Pradesh. This slum is selected for intensive study because it is one of the oldest slums of walled city. Other slums have roads, proper water supply, etc., but this slum does not have these facilities though it is an old slum. Its population is also more compared to other slums.

For the socio-economic study of this slum, 20 families out of 120 are selected purposively for the detailed study. Therefore sample size is 20 households. With these 20 families intensive interviews were conducted pertaining to their social, physical, cultural and environmental milieu. For qualitative measurement three-point scale adopted i.e., good, satisfactory and non-satisfactory respectively. Age of the respondents, religion, caste, present occupation and educational status, family size, monthly family income, types of houses and ownership etc. are the variables included in socio-economic profile. Most of the respondents are between the age group of 30-40 followed by 40-50 and 20-30 years respectively which constitute 35 per cent, 30 per cent and 15 per cent.

All the respondents belong to Hindu religion and to the Scheduled Caste category. This locality before being named as Jag Jiven Nagar was called "Chammar Baste". This is because tyre cutting work has links with leather and leather is derived from skin, for shoe making, *chappal* making and other works. So, this work is performed only by the lower caste people.

The Table 1 shows that of the total respondents and their educational profile, one is illiterate but has enough awareness to understand the question second one is a primary pass, eight have upper primary education, four have High School, and remaining four have Senior Secondary education respectively. Only two respondents have degree education but are unemployed. Table 2 shows the occupational status of the respondents, where most of them are engaged in informal economic sector. The informal sector work which is not under control of organized sector gives place to urban poor for earning their livelihood.

TABLE 1: EDUCATIONAL STATUS OF RESPONDENTS

Education	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Illiterate	1	5
Primary	1	5
Upper Primary	8	40
High School	4	20
SSC	4	20
Others	2	10

Source: Field Survey, April-May, 2008, Kapil K. Gavsker.

TABLE 2: OCCUPATIONAL STATUS

Occupation	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Government Employees	0	0
Private Employee	4	20
Informal Sector	12	60
Others	4	40
Total	20	100

Source: Field Survey, April-May, 2008, Kapil K. Gavsker.

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Low education of parents, high informal sector occupation which is uncertain and risky and poor living environment are factors that affect the economic status. Of the total respondents, 30 per cent of the respondents belong to family income group of Rs.2000-3000 per month. Family income group ranging from Rs.3000-4000 constitute 20 per cent of respondents. Family income ranging from Rs.4000-5000 per month also includes 20 per cent of respondents, and high family income ranging from Rs.5000-6000 includes 20 per cent of respondents. Only 10 per cent of respondents come under family income group of Rs.1000-2000 per month. It is considerable that, 'The occupation level is also affected by their education level'. Table 3 depicts the type of housing where respondents reside.

TABLE 3: TYPE OF HOUSING

Type of House	No. of Families	Per centage per cent
Pucca	14	70
Semi-pucca	3	15
Kutchha	2	10
Thatched	1	5
Total	20	100

SOURCE: Field Survey, April-May, 2008, Kapil K. Gavske.

A lack of basic amenities has important implications for the quality of life of ordinary people and their health. There are 75 per cent of families having toilet/lavrine facility. These toilets are unhygienic and made of makeshift materials. The rest 25 per cent go outside the slum to a 'Sulabh Shachalya'. Kids of such families use the holes of sewerage line for defecating which flows in subsurface. It affects the natural air and environment which in turn have consequences on the health of these dwellers.

## School Facility for Children

In the vicinity of slums at distance of one and 1.5 km., there are two government schools. One is upper primary or elementary school and another government high school. In both schools language is Telugu. Name of the School is Mufed-ul-Annam Government High School. It is near Aitbaar Chowk in walled city. There are seven teachers in the schools. From Class I to V the language is Telugu and English starts as subject from Class VI-X. Number of students from Class I to VIII is more than 250. In this high school only seven teachers including headmaster run the school. Infrastructural conditions are

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not very poor. In the upper primary school, there are five teachers in Urdu section and seven in Telugu. There are five class rooms in the school with five black boards. Total number of students is around 170 in class I to VIII. Out of 170 at least 80 students are in Urdu section and 90 in Telugu.

Apart from government schools there are private schools. There are four private schools located near the slum. These private schools have their own reputation in the area. Most popular among them are Indo-American High School, Royal Mission High School and Crescent Girls' High School respectively. Infrastructural development and facilities are well off and in attractive conditions but most of the urban poor families cannot afford the fee structure of these schools.

The families and parent's perception on the role of teachers at government schools is very poor. Only 50 per cent respondents submit that the role of teachers at government school is good. Thirty per cent regard the role of teachers as just satisfactory. All of the 20 surveyed families vote for private schools with regard to good infrastructural facilities and amenities. In comparison to government schools, they are of opinion that private schools have good facilities related to educational and infrastructural needs of children.

Out of 19 families, around nine families which constitute 47.3 per cent say that there is good effect of education on their children. Seven families (36.9 per cent) say that the effect is satisfactory only on their children who go to government run schools. The families who are satisfactory with government education say that our poverty forces us to admit our children in government run schools, because private education is expensive. But, all twenty families support that education in private schools is good. These families argue that private schools have intelligent teachers and English medium syllabus is there from class I onwards.

Table 4 reveals that out of 20 families around 55 per cent families have perception that education among government schools is good and cheap.

TABLE 4: PERCEPTION OF FAMILIES ABOUT EDUCATION IN GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS

Perception	No. of Families	Percentage (per cent)
Good	11	55
Average	5	25
Not-Good	4	20

SOURCE: Field Survey, April-May, 2008, Kapil K. Gavske.

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Such respondents think that government education is good because they also had their basic education from these very schools. 25 per cent says that education in government schools is average. About the available facilities, out of 20 families, 19 families say facilities at government schools are good.

## School Attending Children

This section provides a profile of children from the surveyed families attending the schools. As per Table 5, children from the surveyed families included, most of children attending school are from Class II, V and VIII respectively and these constitute around 52 per cent of all children. Another group of children who go into Class VI constitute around 14 per cent. This is followed by Class III, VII and I respectively.

TABLE 5: SCHOOL ATTENDING CHILDREN FROM SURVEYED FAMILIES

Class Wise	No. of Students	Percentage %
Class I	1	3.57
Class II	5	17.8
Class III	3	10.7
Class IV	2	7.14
Class V	5	17.8
Class VI	4	14.2
Class VII	3	10.7
Class VIII	5	17.8
Total	28	100.00

SOURCE: Field Survey, April-May, 2008, Kapil K. Gavsker.

If we look at gender wise enrolment around 75 per cent of school going children go to government schools. Only seven per cent of children attend private schools. Larger proportion of children attend government school because of low or less fees and support from government given to them for being in slums such as free school uniforms. It is noticeable that most of students going to private schools are girls (Table 6).

Only 50 per cent families spend between Rs.100-300 per month on the education of their children; 25 per cent spend between Rs.300-500 per month. There are only two families who can afford to spend more than Rs.500 per month on the education of their children. Children from such families go to

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TABLE 6: GENDER OF CHILDREN ATTENDING SCHOOL

School	No. of Children	Percentage (%)	Gender	No. of Children	Percentage (%)
Government School	21	75	Boys	15	53.6
Private School	7	25	Girls	13	46.4
Community School	0	0			
Total	28	100		28	100

SOURCE: Field Survey, April-May, 2008, Kapil K. Gavsker.

private schools. The expenditure also determines the quality of education. If they pay more to private, the quality is good and effect on student is high, as they say. Another factor is that parents do not spend enough time with the children to help them in their home work.

Out of 20 families, children attend schools from 17 families only. There are a total of 28 children who attend different schools in different classes. Out of 17 families, there are four children from four families who dropped out from government schools and they are all boys.

These four children fall under the age group of seven to 12 years. These children dropped out in different classes of elementary education. Three children dropped out from primary education system and one from upper primary. When asked about the reasons which forced children to drop-out from the schools, parents simply reply that children are not interested in studies at all. Seventy five per cent of respondents say that children are not interested in study and do not want to go to school. These parents did not try to understand the actual problems behind the drop-out of children.

To understand the reasons for the drop-out in more details, the four children who have dropped out were interviewed. They were interviewed at locality itself in their parents' absence. They answered independently and freely. Prem (12) - He lives in Jag Jiven Nagar slum. He left school from class IV when he was 9 years old. He says, "education was good in school, but I was not able to understand and learn whatever teachers teach in class. I was not working on my home work properly because of lack of understanding and knowledge. So teachers used to beat me up. Most of the time teachers waste on talking with each other and about other matters, but when we play in school they beat us up. Due to this situation I dropped out of the school"(interview with an open ended question was put by the author). About his parents' support at time of his school days, he tells, "My parents deposited fees, purchased bag, text books, etc. but my father never spent an hour to

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teach me at home". At present, he knows that education is very important for everybody by which one can achieve many opportunities in life. When asked if given a chance would he like to go back to school. His answer was positive. However, he adds about his father's wish, "Now, I realize the importance of education but I cannot go back to school. Because my father would not give a single chance to admit me in school. He engaged me on a 'Wholesale Cloth Shop' where I work about 10-11 hours daily. My father takes alcohol and disturbs family. He refuses my desire to go to school" (interview with an open ended question put by the author). When asked about his future plan, he says, 'I do not know, but only know if I had good education there would have been openings to gain something in my life'.

Niranjan Babu (13) – He works in a '*Kiarana Shop*' and gets Rs.600-700 monthly. He left school when he was 11 years of age from class 7<sup>th</sup> from nearby government school. He narrates, "Teachers in school beat me up and tortured me. I would not study and do home work at home because my father drinks alcohol daily and disturbs the family. Most of the money earned by my father is spent on himself for the sake of alcohol. He did not go to my school and provide the required fees and books. My mother is not much educated. My father daily creates problems at home and abuses, and beats my mother. Because of such problems I stopped going school" (interview with an open ended question put by author). When questioned about what was the role of teachers in his school he says, 'Teachers were mostly engaged in conversation with each other and paid less attention to us about teaching subject consequently almost all children make noise in class. So, teachers start to beat and scold us' (interview with an open ended question was put by the author).

Shrawan (13) dropped from government school at the age of nine years without completing 5<sup>th</sup> class. About why he dropped from school, he responds, 'I was not following class work and would not understand lessons. My father and mother helped me but sometimes I felt the lack of money. My father has a habit to take alcohol daily'. My father used to abuse, beat, scold and torture me' (interview with an open ended question put by author). He adds that his father never sat with him and asked him politely to read and learn lessons at home.

Ashok (12) - He lives in Jag Jiven Nagar slum. He dropped out in class II from school when he was seven years old. His one younger brother and one sister go to government school. At present he works at a 'cloth store shop' in Pathargatti area in walled city of Hyderabad the distance from his house to work place is about half km. Monthly he earns about Rs.600 only working for 10-11 hours daily. He says his father only beat him but did not understand my situation and take right action to send him to another school.

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Now, he totally ignores, when asked, to go back to school. Thus most of slum dwellers pay less attention on education of their children because of their own low educational attainment. This may be associated with poverty, but it creates an environment for children which affects them. Such circumstances keep off their children from school and continue them to live in deprived living conditions. Here, this situation questions the role of public education and schools towards their accountability and responsibility.

## CONCLUSION

The findings from the study are that socio-economic conditions have direct link with the education of the children. Level of education of parents plays a role to promote the child to attend the school and carry on study. Availability of basic amenities affects the quality of life of people in space which has several implications of the children. The slum families lack access to basic amenities. Water is the major problem, other problems also are there, in the slum, and children are ordered by the elders to fetch water from outside. Access and quality of school play an important role in education of children, quality of school important rather than access to school. Quality of school is the out come of hard work of teachers and availability of facilities in school-most of the respondents report that there is not quality education in government school. These conditions also affect the regularity of children. The behaviour of father at home has some negative impact on the children. Drop-out of children leads to child labour.

The education is very crucial for every child of the society. But, when society is fragmented and has exclusion to some section of population, it has direct influence on the future (children) of that society. Already, socially marginalized, discriminated and vulnerable to several problems, this section of population has been suffering from exclusion and still continues. The physical development must be associated with the economic development of the people. If economic conditions are well, automatically social and community environment will improve. Such improvements are necessary for the "overall development of a nation". The urban development must give priority to the public education sector in urban poor localities. Since, these people and children are in a democratic nation, the policies and programmes should give priority to their economic improvement. There have been policies and programmes, but now need is to have transparent implementation with accountability and efficiency which has to give positive outcomes.

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