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Urban Poverty and Slums

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NO DEMOCRACY is sustainable if large section of its people remain poor, underfed, uneducated, unhealthy with poor resources and assets, human and material, to obtain a decent living standard.

It is a well known fact that development leads to urbanization; it also brings with it the evils of urban poverty as its negative effects.¹

Today's world is both very rich and very poor. Around 2.8 billion people—more than half the people in developing countries—live on less than two dollars a day—of these, 1.2 billion people live on less than one dollar a day. The challenge of reducing these levels of poverty, while the world's population continues to grow by an estimated three billion people over the next 50 years, is enormous.²

Indian cities are very fast decaying, some cities like Varanasi and Madurai are the one of the oldest cities of the world, some are founded by various kings, sultans, badshahs and even English men, French and Portuguese³. More or less all these cities are lacking in various civic amenities such as-sewage disposal, drinking water supply, pollution, slum, garbage collection, sanitary maintenance overpopulation etc., are faced by every city in India. In many cities the position of the poor is getting worse than better. Nevertheless, we need to challenge some of them more, dire prognostications of the poverty pessimists who claim that whatever happens, the poor always end up worse off.⁴

The 2001 Census enumerated 40.3 million persons comprising 22.6 per cent of the total urban population in slums. A large proportion of slums are illegal and therefore unlisted in official records. Most urban slums reside in unrecognized squatter settlements, pavements, construction sites and urban fringes and part of the floating population⁵.

The 21st Century is going to witness not only a rapid population growth but a greater degree of urbanization in India. Due to lack of maintenance of cleanliness and orderliness, this urbanization will be converted into slums.

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Slum population in urban areas i.e., Municipal Corporations is heterogeneous in character—with Hindus, Muslims and Christians migrated from different neighbouring districts. Slum settlements have multiplied over decades and the living conditions of the poor have not improved. Environmental decline, vehicular pollution, inadequate basic services and infrastructure in the urban poor settlements hit the poor hardest. The poverty in slums is ineluctable, irreversible, irremovable unless there is strong consciousness and consensus among the people in favour of the public-private-participation. The phenomenon of rapid urbanization in conjunction with industrialization has resulted in the growth of slums. The shortage of developed land for housing, the high prices of land beyond the reach of urban poor, and a large influx of rural migrants to the cities in search of jobs are some of the factors responsible for unwanted growth of slums in the peripheral areas the cities. The existence of urban slums is one of the major problems faced by almost all the metropolitan cities throughout the world and Indian cities are no exception. The basic characteristics of these slums essentially remain the same i.e., dilapidated and infirm housing structures, poor ventilation, acute over-crowding, faulty alignment of streets, inadequate lighting, paucity of safe drink water, water-logging during rains, absence of toilet facilities and non-availability of basic physical and social services.⁶

The World now lives in cities. According to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) report released recently, the World population has decisively turned urban; about 3.3 billion people live in urban areas and by 2030 that would increase to about five billion which amounts to more than half of the World's population. The level of urbanization in India, in comparison, appears much lower. Urban India accounts for about 30 per cent of the total population and its share is expected to rise to about 40 per cent by 2030.⁷

Indian cities cannot take comfort from the UN's observation that urbanisation is a positive feature and cities offer the best opportunity to escape poverty. Urban poverty, housing deficit, poor quality of city planning and weak governance are challenges to be addressed. As of now, the list of unfinished and unattended urban agenda in India is long and daunting. This still remains a far cry.⁸

In spite of a National Slum Policy and a number of other housing policies, the housing deficit in Indian cities is on the rise; in 2007, the housing shortage was about 24 million units and it is expected to touch 26 million by 2012; about 99 per cent of this deficient pertains to lower income groups.⁹

What are Slums?

Slums are neglected parts of the cities where housing and living conditions are appallingly poor. Slums range from high density, squalid Central city tenements to spontaneous squatter settlements without legal recognition or rights. Some are more than 20 years old, some may be just few years old. Slums have different names such as *Katras* or *Jhuggi-Jhopari* in Delhi, *Jhopadpatti* or *chawls* in Mumbai, *Ahats* in Kanpur, *Bustees* in Kolkata, *Cheris* in Chennai and *Karis* in Bangalore.

The environmental conditions in some slums are very poor and lack basic civic amenities like dust proof roads, drainage, protected water supply, street lights and adequate number of community toilets. The slums face severe problems of basic infrastructure, of water supply and sanitation but the following problems are common in all slums:

Slush-mud roads, no paved access; poor sanitary conditions; no sewerage connections no arrangement for solid wastage disposal; bad condition of buildings; no community toilets; poor drainage system and weak social infrastructure.

Urban India now accounts for about one third of our population and two thirds of our GDP. However, the quality of life in the Indian cities is among the lowest in the world. Suburbans of the big cities are the new economic hot spots, without viable mass transit linkage urban development had traditionally been a low priority area at the political level.

"Poverty is like heat, you cannot see it, you can only feel it, so to know poverty you have to go through it".

- A Poorman, Adaboya, Ghana

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, while inaugurating the Metro Rail Project in Mumbai on June 22, 2006 said, it is not just about flyovers, meters, high-speed buses, and subways. It is basically about improving the quality of life of all citizens in urban areas, especially the poor. The report of the "State of the World's Cities 2006/07", released by UN Habitat at Vancouver focuses largely on the issue of urban poverty and slums. It notes that in the last 15 years, the growth of slums has been unprecedented, the number of slum dwellers in the world rising from 715 million in 1990 to about 998 million today. [2006]. It estimates that at the present rate of growth, there will be 1.4 billion slum dwellers by 2020, confirming roughly 80 per cent of the world's population.¹⁰

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Needless to say that the majority of the world's urban poor are in Asia [581 million] followed by sub-Saharan Africa [199 million] and Latin America and the Caribbean [134 million] India alone has 170 million slum dwellers. Today 71.8 per cent of its urban population lives in slums.

The rapid urbanization and population growth have resulted in the depletion of its environment. The urban poor have lived in the most polluted slums of cities since urbanization began. The poor suffer disproportionately from such negative environmental conditions on the sitting of toxic and highly polluting units or garbage dumping in or near their communities.¹¹

Poverty in urban areas is defined by the consumptions expenditure equivalent of 2100 calories of food intake and other essentials for physiological survival of an individual, equivalent of monthly income per capita of Rs.198. Thirty to 35 per cent of the urban population is in slums.¹²

In all over towns water supply has become a major problem and government is unable to provide even safe drinking water to all.

One can see no ray of hope for the urban poor till the government changes its approach and the babus become more sensitive towards

TABLE 1: PERCENTAGE OF HOUSEHOLDS WITHOUT SELECTED BASIC AMENITIES IN ANDHRA PRADESH

Facility	Rural	Urban
No electricity	40.3	10.0
No toilet	819	210
No Tap water	59.7	28.1
One or No Room	55.5	36.9
No Drainage	58.6	17.7
Tradition Fuel	87.3	31.4
None of the specified assets	53.2	24.0

SOURCE: Census 2001 (A paper presentation by Sri. M. Jagadeshwar, IAS in the National Workshop 25-26th July, 2008, Regional Centre for Urban and Environmental Studies, Osmania University, Hyderabad)

Note: 1. Assets specified in Census 2001 are banking services, radio, transistor, television, telephone, bicycle, scooter, motor cycle, car, jeep, van.

2. Traditional fuel includes firewood, crop residue cow dung cake/and charcoal.

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the problems of urban poor. If the above is not done we shall end up spending more money without getting any results. Our population of urban poor shall keep on increasing.

TABLE 2: SHOWING THE TOTAL POPULATION AND SLUM POPULATION

State/District	Total Population	Slum Population	% of Slum Population
Andhra Pradesh	75727541	5149272	6.80
Adilabad	2342803	198453	8.47
Karimnagar	3477079	190852	5.49
Medak	2662296	62622	2.35
Hyderabad	3686460	621295	16.85
Rangareddy	3506670	621295	11.85
Mahboobnagar	3506876	51481	1.47
Nalgonda	3238449	106610	3.29
Warangal	3231174	230190	7.12
Khammam	2585412	173487	7.00
Srikakulam	2528491	48632	1.92
Vizianagaram	2245103	67525	3.01
Visakhapatnam	3789823	196990	5.20
East Godavari	4872822	170372	3.50
West Godavari	3796144	267592	7.05
Krishna	4218416	399120	9.46
Guntur	4405521	406766	9.23
Prakasam	3054941	87969	2.88
Nellore	2659661	190327	7.16
Cuddapah	2573481	81415	3.16
Kurnool	3572266	253341	7.09
Aanatapur	3639304	343378	9.44
Chittoor	3735202	208266	5.58

SOURCES: Census of India Report, 2001.

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The state of Andhra Pradesh came into existence on 1st November, 1956. The first Census after formation of Andhra Pradesh was conducted in 1961. But, it is wonder to say, for the first time an attempt has been made during the Census of India 2001, to collect some demographic details about the slum areas in the country.

Municipal Corporation, Kadapa : Methodology

In an attempt to study the slums in this corporation the Researcher collected information regarding slums through personal visits to slums and made personal interviews with slum people on random sampling. Kadapa, one of the oldest municipalities in Rayalaseema region and district quarters, was constituted as a municipality in 1868. It covered an area of 6.84 sq km. It was upgraded as Municipal Corporation in 2004 through G.O Ms, No. 481, dated 17th November 2004. Kadapa Corporation area became 64.86 sq.kms with the merger of erstwhile panchayats as per G.O. Ms. No. 125, dated 17th March, 2005. The population of the city as per 2001 Census is 2,56,436 and the estimates put the present population at 3,35,000.

Slum Areas at Kadapa City

There are 29 notified and 58 non-notified slums with a total population of about 91,715. In order to improve the slum conditions of the slum dwellers, the Andhra Pradesh Urban Services for the Poor project is implemented, 29 slums already improved by providing infrastructural facilities like roads, drains, water supply and street lighting under basic MAPP and C-MAPP. The remaining slums will be covered under subsequent cycles of C-MAPP. The corporation has taken steps for identification of non-notified slums and submitted the same to the concerned authorities³⁹.

As conducting the intensive process in all the locations of the town would prove difficult, 11 localities have been selected for the intensive study, identification of these 11 localities was done so as to cover all the categories of issues and vulnerable communities of the town. Some of the criteria used in identifying the localities include the density of population, occupation/groups, vulnerable groups and access to basic amenities.

The information collected by the Researcher of the field study after triangulation was compiled slum-wise and issue wise. This would facilitate the population of the micro plans.

Impact of Slums on Cities

The slum localities present a poor picture of hygiene and basic amenities. The slums are located on the banks of Kurnool-Cuddapah canal, Kundu River and in shallow tank beds as most of the localities do not have proper drainage systems. Drainage water flows openly through the slums. Certain slums are located on the fringes of the dump yards of solid waste of the town. The slum people stay in an unhygienic and polluted atmosphere without proper sanitation, waste disposal and health facilities. Almost all the slum dwellers suffer from chronic diseases without any medical help from authorities.

In Sionpuram I, none of the households have toilets or bath rooms. The men and women have to go to open areas for defecation. Bathing especially for women is very difficult. Every house has a pit just by their house to hold water from both rooms and for cleaning the utensils. They have to carry this water from the pits in buckets and pour it into the drainage a distance of one furlong.

Most of the slums have one or two water taps and often these are the only source of water, access to drinking water is a great problem. Water for other purposes can be accessed in the tube wells in the adjacent colonies at a distance of half a mile.

Street lighting in the slums is very poor in Sionpuram-I, Ghouse Nagar, Kummurakunta and Khaleenager. The existing lights often do not function. As slums are located besides the dump yards and in *kuntas* in the darkness, stepping on broken bottle pieces is a common sight. In some of the slums snakes and scorpions move freely and bite the locals.

Owing to the unhygienic conditions, often defecation, inability to take regular bath, have their impact on the health of the individuals in the localities. Mosquitoes are a great menace in these localities. Malaria, typhoid, chicken gunya, dengue, diarrhoea and other health related problems are common in slums.

The women do not have decision-making ability. Among Muslims the women become dependents upon men. The women in Cuddapah, have to face issues such as domestic harassment, bigamy, destitution, desertion, etc.

Among rag pickers women have to work in the house as well as have to go for rag picking with their children, especially girl children. There 30-40 families were beggars, among them every man married two women, but they did not follow the family planning. The beggar

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woman told that wife beating was high among her fellow beings. Men beat and force children also to beg and collect money.

The women work for the welfare of their children, support to their husbands or some of them to run family responsibilities. While the men enjoy extra marital relationships with other women, the children are the sufferers and neglected ones.

Recommendations

Some of the recommendations made by the poor across the various locations to make their living conditions better and lives comfortable are given below.

Rural Migration

Due to inadequate infrastructure, unmanageable unemployment, unbridled population, failure of agricultural remunerative prices, minimum educated, uneducated, agricultural labourers, women, were forced to go to urban areas for the sake of employment and survival in the society.

It is suggested that the government should take stern steps to fix remunerative prices for agriculture products and create pro-agriculture atmosphere and also provide livelihood opportunities to the poor by providing skills for income generated activities that are viable on the basis of local conditions and individuals choices.

Failure of Animal Husbandry

The failure of agriculture is the cause for failure of animal husbandry. Once upon a time milk, butter milk were free of cost in the villages, which was disappeared with failure of animal husbandry. This is the main cause for the poor people's migration to cities and forming slums over there.

It is duty of the government to provide required facilities to strengthen the animal husbandry, which will be done by providing free of cost grass and another facility like medicines with qualified doctors to look after animals.

Failure of Town Planning

This is also one of the causes for formation of slums. There is no proper scrutiny before construction of houses in urban areas. When there is no shelter for rural migrants, they occupy illegal land for construction of huts. When town planning is effective there is no scope to occupy illegal lands or encroachments of public places.

Use of Plastic

It is another important element for dirtiness in the society in general and slum areas in particular. The use of plastic leads to diseases, foul smell. This should be banned by the government. This will be done by bringing continuous awareness among the public.

Prohibited Social Evils

The widespread use of alcohol, tobacco, illegal traditional games like various kinds of gambling (playing cards) *metca*, belt games should be stopped by effective implementation of prohibited policy with severe punishments and bring a sort of consciousness and consensus; awareness among the public, otherwise the poor people will be addicted to these evils.

Lack of Basic Amenities

The migrant slums do not have basic amenities as they suffer from a number of diseases which occur as a result of seasons' vagaries.

Poor Health

There is lack of a primary health care services as well as poor quality of health care, in slum areas. The doctors and mobile medical vehicles should visit slum areas at least twice a week and provide medicines free of cost to them.

Most of the slum areas are not notified in official records. These are called as **Hidden Slums**. These should be converted as notified areas by the government.

In most of the notified, non-notified slum areas, there is a lack of organized community efforts among slum dwellers. The non-governmental organizations should come forward to create a sort of awareness among them and to sensitize the community on gender discrimination.

- > Increase the number of old age pensions and widow pensions so as to cover all the needy people in slums;
- > Repair houses for all those who lost their houses during floods in slums;
- > Increase the number of schools and improve the quality of education in schools;

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- > Ensuring that all the poor get ration cards under the Public Distribution Systems and also facilitate them with application credit facilities from the relevant financial organizations viz. SC, ST, BC and other minority corporations.

CONCLUSION

The quality of life in the Indian urbanized slums is among the lowest in the globe. If we try to visualize the roadmap for better life in slums in near future, based on these words of Nelson Mandela-

'Overcoming poverty is not a gesture of charity. It is an act of justice. It is the protection of a fundamental human right, the right to dignity and a decent life ...I say to all those leaders: do not look the other way, do not hesitate, recognise that the world is hungry for action, not words. Act with courage and vision. Urban slum development had traditionally been a low priority area. At this juncture the required relevant infrastructure to be managed with much greater clarity of vision and efficiency to get green signal towards a sustainable urban slum future.

The future we have been told is urban, and the cities of the future will be largely populated by the poor. Even if steps are taken today, this reality will not change. If facts could shift policy, such facts should. Unfortunately, the process of setting priorities in many of our countries is based on factors external to the facts and the objective reality.

Ignorance, inequality, indignity of slums will be disappeared, if every one in the society treats by each other that one's tragedy is every body's crisis and also governments have tendency to work for the poor not with the poor.

Footnotes

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