

Roadside Dwellers: A Corollary of Urbanization and Globalization

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Abstract: Like any other city dweller in India, the citizens of Agra want to make their city smart with all modern facilities and development. But most of them have not given their attention on the existence of roadside dwellers. When talking about Agra, Taj Mahal flashes immediately in one's mind. Despite many obstacles and hurdles, we call Agra as a developed city as it is visited by many foreign tourists. Has anyone ever thought about the impression which these foreign tourists take in their minds after visiting Taj Mahal? In fact, many people can't even manage their daily bread, basic necessities and a tiny roof over their heads. Roadside dwellers were always in search of some aid provided by some passersby.

These roadside dwellers and slum dwellers mostly Adivasis, keep migrating from place to place and from season to seasons. They get uprooted from their native places and temporarily reside on roadsides without having any identity of their own. The irony is that the workers, who construct buildings, are themselves roofless, homeless.

This paper is based on a survey undertaken by the investigator on the roadside dwellers of Khandari, M.G. Road, Agra. Out of the 48 families every alternative family was taken as sample constituting 6 to 7 members in each family. A structured questionnaire containing question on solid demographic characteristics like age, religion, income and occupation etc and questions regarding their future perspectives and survival was designed and tested on roadside dwellers was finalized and interviewed to collect information for the survey.

Key words: Urbanization, Globalization, Migration, Demography.

*“The little old house was out with a little new shed
In front at the edge of the road where the traffic sped,
A roadside stand that too pathetically pled,
It would not be fair to say for a dole of bread”*

- A Roadside Stand

Introduction

Nowadays everyone is talking about modernity, modern gadgets, good infrastructure, higher education, reservations, and tourism. No doubt most of the citizens of Agra want to make their city as smart city with all modern facilities and development. But most of them have not given their attention on the existence of roadside dwellers in the city. A large number of unknown people reside on roads also like squalors. Their number is not known to us.

When talking about Agra, Taj Mahal flashes immediately in one's mind. Despite many obstacles and hurdles, we call Agra as a developed city as it is visited by many foreign tourists. Has anyone ever thought about the impression which these foreign tourists take in their minds after visiting Taj Mahal? So, many people can't even manage their daily bread, basic necessities and a tiny roof over their heads. Roadside dwellers - so are they called, always in search of some aid provided by some passersby.

The roadside Dwellers and slum dwellers mostly Adivasis, keep migrating from place to place and from season to seasons. The duration of employment, quantum of work and arduousness differs from one extreme to another. They get uprooted from their natives and temporary reside on the streets of the cities anonymously without having any identity of their own. The irony is that the workers, who construct buildings, are themselves roofless, homeless.

National Scenario

According to the Indian Census 2011 there are 28 states in India. The total population of the country is 1.21 billion presently and the most populated state in India is Uttar Pradesh with a population of 19.96 crores. The least populated state in the country is Sikkim with a population of 6,07,688. The census of Indian states 2011 reveals that Kerala is the highest literate state in the country with 93.91 percent of literacy rate. Bihar is the least literate state with a literacy rate of 63.82 percent.

Situation at Agra

Agra has been growing very rapidly. In 2011, its temporary residents were 16,86,976 (Census). In comparison to the year 2001, there were 12,75,134 residents which suggest a 24.3 percent growth

in the city's population. Over 50 percent or about 830174 people in Agra live in its slum like settlements according to the Data generated by CURE. Many of these slums are in the hub city area called the Taj Trapezium Zone (TTZ). The city's current population density is estimated at 12,386 persons/sq km.

Table 1: Agra City Population (According to USAID-EHP. 2005)

| | Total Persons | Males | Females |
|-----------------|---------------|---------|---------|
| City Population | 1,585,704 | 845,902 | 739,802 |
| Literates | 1,014,872 | 575,475 | 439,397 |
| Children (0-6) | 197,468 | 106,315 | 91,153 |

Number of Slums in Agra

According to CURE in 2012, there are 432 slum settlements in Agra. Some settlements of slums in various parts of Agra have been identified. The highest number of slums is found in Bodla, whereas lowest in Rajpur (Cantt.).

| Area | Slums (%) |
|--------------------------|-----------|
| Transyamuna | 20 |
| Old City | 22 |
| Sikandra, Dayalbagh | 9 |
| Bodla | 23 |
| Kheria | 9 |
| Rajpur (Cantonment Area) | 7 |
| Tajganj | 20 |

The Study

This paper is based on a survey undertaken by the investigator on the roadside dwellers of Khandari, M.G. Road, Agra. Out of the 48 families every alternative family was taken as sample constituted of 6 to 7 members in each family. A structured Questionnaire containing question on solid demographic characteristics like age, religion, income and occupation etc and questions regarding their future perspectives and survival was designed and tested on roadside dwellers was finalized and interviewed to collect information for the survey.

The subjects were interviewed after the purpose of the study was personally explained. The subjects were also asked not to tell their names and identity in order to keep the replies confidential. Data contained in the questionnaires after interviewing were tabulated and analyzed to present the findings.

Socio Demographic Characteristics of the Sample

| | |
|---------------------------------|----|
| Age (100) | |
| Below 30 | 37 |
| 31-40 | 32 |
| 41-50 | 12 |
| 51 to above | 19 |
| Education (100) | |
| Illiterate | 81 |
| Primary School | 15 |
| High School | 1 |
| Inter | 3 |
| Family size (48) | |
| Below 5 | 8 |
| 5-9 | 23 |
| 10+ | 17 |
| Occupation (100) | |
| Ironsmith | 23 |
| Rag picking | 14 |
| Labour in Building construction | 5 |
| Unemployed/Begging | 46 |
| Working as petty workers | 7 |
| Family income (48) | |
| 100 - 500 | 16 |
| Above 500 | 12 |
| Not fixed | 20 |
| Religion (48) | |
| Hindu | 29 |
| Muslim | 19 |
| Caste | |
| Vaishya | 5 |
| Kayastha | 5 |
| Khatri | 2 |
| Brahman | 7 |
| Rajput | 2 |
| Others | 9 |

Findings

Age

The surveyor found that the people residing on pavements were moreover of young age. Entire family i.e. father, mother, son, daughter-in-law, their kids reside on pavements. Their age is generally from 10 percent of old people, 60 percent of youth and 30 percent of children.

Religion

Most of them are of Hindu religion. While enquiring about their religion, they could only intimate that poverty is their only religion.

Occupation

Generally 23 percent of them are involved in ironsmith occupation. 14 percent are employed in rag picking. 5 percent are engaged as a building construction labours. 7 percent are either busy in petty task like selling small articles or in rag picking etc. 46 percent of them are unemployed. In past, they intimated about their indulgence in farming and as a worker in any building construction.

Monthly Income

They don't have any fixed monthly income. Most of them live hand to mouth for their entire life. Sometimes they earn Rs. 50 to 100 a day whereas on other times they starve. While talking about their per day salary, the surveyor found 16 families which were earning Rs. 100-500 whereas 12 families could earn more than Rs. 500 and 20 families didn't have any particular fixed wages.

Native Place

While enquiring about their permanent residence surveyor found that 80 percent are migrants from village areas Earlier they possess their personal homes, which they have sold off or given on rent.

Purpose of Migration

23 percent people said circumstances forced them, 12 percent in search of jobs, 7 percent came in search of better life, and 6 percent people didn't have any specific reason to reside as roadside dwellers. Most of the roadside dwellers are residing at Khandari, M.G. Road for last 10 to 15 years.

Health

Health is another issue which was keenly dealt by the surveyor. It is found that 94 percent children are mainly victims of malnutrition. Sometimes children die due to lack of availability of medicines and lots of ignorance. Old people are unaware of any disease which they confront, but everyone was reporting about their regular coughing and body ache. Around 40 percent people die without any diagnosis of ailment.

As there is no availability of recreational sources thus around 60 percent of male roadside dwellers consume alcohol whereas 50 percent of female take pan masala, supari and other tobacco based products. Found 12 percent youngsters taking drugs in the form of thinner and other cheap drugs.

Food Availability

Generally food is prepared under the shade of tarpaulin on angeethi or Chula where these roadside dwellers reside. They spent around 85 percent of their income on food. Food is their basic requirement. Nothing else is more important for them.

Criminal Record

On the basis of survey, it is found that 35 percent of these dwellers have criminal record either for petty thefts or playing some cunning tricks.

Future Perspectives

While planning about future, they could not give any specific answer, but still most of them gave a positive response. They think to provide education to their children. Make them well employed. To lead a more stable and secured life. They think to get an aid from government for better survival.

Around 60 percent people accepted that they are benefitted by Government policies and organization. If they are provided free blankets, they often sell those blankets in market for petty gains

Migration

The pathetic condition of these roadside dwellers is a corollary of urbanization and globalization. Since from the beginning, migration

or mobility has played a vital role in the existence of roadside dwellers. They roam like minstrels' sometimes in search of food and other times in search of a shelter. They initiate their journey from villages to cities. Sometimes job hunt could be another reason for their migration. Migratory labourers are mainly employed by three sectors: A) Real estate (residential and commercial) B) Infrastructure (roads power) C) Industrial construction (steel, textiles, fertilizers, oil, gas, refineries and pipelines). Increasing urbanization has affected the socio-cultural scenario of the state. The industrial policy of the state of Uttar Pradesh has expedited the pace of urbanization thus, attracting the landless labourers from other states. The entire construction industry of Agra depends upon the migratory labourers. Agra has a strong real estate business relying on cheap labour. The tribes of Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, contribute to the construction activities of the state. In Agra more than million hands are engaged in construction activities and most of them are tribes. These roadside dwellers are mostly unskilled and uneducated with low bargaining power. They easily fall prey to exploitation and victimization of maltreatment.

Role of NGOs in Upgrading the Slums

“Model Property Right to Slum Dwellers Act, 2011” is brought by Central Government to make a slum free India. Following organizations or NGO'S are made for this purpose.

1. Valmiki Ambedkar Awas yojana “VAAMBAY”,
2. “BSUP in JNNURM”,
3. Rajiv Awas Yojana (RAY)
4. The Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation (MOHUPA),
5. Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM),
6. The Centre for Urban and Regional Excellence (CURE)
7. District Urban Development Agency (DUDA)
8. Citywide Slum Upgrading Plan for Agra (CSUP).

If we may be able to provide some homes to these roadside dwellers that starve throughout their life, we could, not only easily change the depleting picture of our city but also our country.

Problems Faced by Slum Dwellers

Worse Living Conditions: Demolition and eviction are the basic threats of Slum people. Rampu Ki Jhopri was destroyed and repositioned at some distance from the original establishment. Even the open spaces are utilized by urban poor for cow dung cakes and for cattle. Their living conditions are pathetic. It becomes really stressful process of adapting a new culture and new society for the migratory labours.

Poor Sanitation and Sewage: Majority of slums face the problem of sanitation. Non availability of individual or public toilet facility is very common problem of slums which leads into open drains. Public toilets are not regularly cleaned and remain dirty. People who live in slums like Nala Mantola, Nagla Bhavani Singh and Ghatiya Mamu Bhanja face a terrible condition of poor sanitation. All the roadside dwellers defecate in the open. Only 3 percent people use public toilets. Improper sewerage system becomes the reason for unhealthy environment and disease prone area.

The Ministry of Urban Development has declared Agra at 39.51 out of 100, on the basis of the survey. Even Agra stands on 113 out of 450 cities while indicating its poor sanitation.

Unhealthy Environment: Due to the lack of availability of resources in the slums, most of the children defecate in drains which create a dirty and inhuman atmosphere for survival. Generally, drains are open and narrow because of the deficiency of Municipal authority vigilance. In Takht Gumbaz Pehelwan, Rampu Ki Jhopri and Gopalpura, garbage is dumped in the open fields where these poor people stay under their tents.

Poor Drinking Water: Survival for slum dwellers becomes more critical when they face the shortage of water during summer. Mostly Public taps and hand pumps dry up. At such a stage they resort at ground water. Consumption of dirty water is another reason for their illness. As per the data 60 percent of families have municipal water connection in their premises whereas 96 percent of people still survive without municipal water taps. Some of them use polluted water of

Yamuna River. According to RAY Survey there are 40 percent families without drinking water.

Health and Nutritional Status: Most of the people, who stay in slum, come in city in search of a better life. But after coming in city they face many atrocities and suppressions. Garbage is gold for them they start earning their livelihood through rag picking or resort to petty thefts. They face extreme poverty and hunger. Most of them take birth and then die even in slums with no identity of their own. Due to malnutrition, and ignorance, they face maximum number of child mortality. Many diseases like diarrhoea, polio, and measles are common. Most of the mothers die on delivery beds because of unhygienic medicinal aids.

Suggestions

The poor situation of these roadside dwellers in Agra is exhibiting the sample of other cities in India. Despite their crucial role in country's revenue, they are not given the special privileges. Solitude is visible in these areas, which is a manifestation of disparity and societal segregation in urban areas.

It is important to study the problems faced by these roadside dwellers in Agra:

- One should classify the listed and unlisted areas of slums based on fact.
- Reinforce jobs for poor roadside dwellers both in private as well as public sector.
- Child labour and the consequences are widespread.
- Increased Demand of these people should be fulfilled by the service providers in abundance.
- These communities should organize a meeting with bureaucrats to bring about a change, collectively.
- Local governments should help in slum development by providing ample funds, facility and opening new perspectives for employment.
- Millennium Development Goals could not be achieved without following these remedies for people residing below poverty line in India.

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