

Slums in India: A challenge to society

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Abstract

The rapid growth of urban population poses serious challenges in terms of provision of basic minimum services. Slums are an outcome of an imbalance in urban growth resulting from over concentration of economic resources. Slum is a deprived human settlement, which is demographically, economically and environmentally vulnerable. Extreme overcrowding, high density and high levels of morality and typical demographic features, a large unorganized sector, low levels of productivity and extreme poverty are the usual economic feature and the lack of acc basic services like water, sanitary, electricity are the common features of slums. City attracts migrants from all the social and economic strata of the rural society but among these migrants, mostly those who are at the lowest economic ladder make slums as their abode. According to the 2011 census, 17.4 percent people are living in slums. The present paper is an attempt to discuss slums, their causes of emergence. An attempt has also been made to analyze the different programmes stated for slum improvement.

Keywords: slum, urbanization, poverty, policies

Introduction

The word slum is derived from “slumber”, as slums were once thought by the majority to be “unknown, back street or alleys, wrong presumed to be sleeping and quiet”. The slum has been described as a street, alley, court, etc, situated in a crowded district of a town or city and inhabited by people of a low class or by the poor; or district of squalid wretched character. Other term for slums is blighted area, renewal area, deteriorated area, gray area, lower class, low income area. The term ‘slum’ came into existence in the beginning of the 18th century. It was squatted housing in densely populated areas of industrial cities. UNSECO defined “Slum is a building, a group of building or area characterized by overcrowding, deterioration, insanitary conditions or absence of facilities or amenities”.

There are three types of slums identified by Census:

(i) All notified areas in a town or city notified as ‘Slum’ by State, Union territories Administration or Local Government under any Act including a ‘Slum Act’ may be considered as

Notified slums

(ii) All areas recognized as ‘Slum’ by State, Union territories Administration or Local Government, Housing and Slum Boards, which may have not been formally notified as slum under any act may be considered as Recognized slums.

(iii) A compact area of at least 300 populations or about 60-70 households of poorly built congested tenements, in unhygienic environment usually with inadequate infrastructure and lacking in proper sanitary and drinking water facilities. Such areas should be identified personally by the Charge Officer and also inspected by an officer nominated by Directorate of Census Operations. This fact must be duly recorded in the charge register. Such areas may be considered as Identified slums

The NSSO defined “a slum is a compact area with a collection of poorly built tenements, mostly of temporary

nature, crowded together usually with inadequate sanitary and drinking water facilities in unhygienic condition. Socially, slum is a way of life, a special character which had its own set of norms and values reflected in poor sanitation health values, health practices, deviant behaviour and social isolation and legality (Jain, 2009) [6]. The Encyclopaedia Britannica defines slums as “residential areas that are physically and socially deteriorated and in which satisfactory family life is impossible. Bad housing is a major index of slum conditions. By bad housing is meant dwelling with inadequate light, air, toilet and bathing facilities, overcrowded the land, leaving no space for recreational use”. UN-HABITAT defines “A Slums is a contiguous settlement where the inhabitants are characterized as having inadequate housing and basic services. A Slum is often not recognized and addressed by public authorities as an integral or equal part of the city”. According to the report of the Committee on Slum Statics/Census 2011, Slum household is a group of individuals living under the same roof that have the one or more conditions (a) Insecure residential status. (b) Inadequate access to safe water. (c) Inadequate access to sanitation and other infrastructure. (d) Poor structural quality of housing. (e) Overcrowding.

Slums are considered as cradles of crimes and breeds grounds of all sorts of vices. Slums are conducive to gambling, prostitution, anti social look and activities. Slums are black spots on the city. The 1991 Census has 45.7 million slum dwellers accounting for 21.5 percent of the population. According to the 2011 Census, about 17.4 percent people are living in slums. The socio-economic substandard denote an area of degenerated living “an adobe of half starved”, a place of poverty, the house of criminal and so on. The slum and squatter lack basic services and pose enormous risk of disease fire and range of social problems. In general, the smaller the town, the less likely it is to have a wide coverage of amenities

and the poor in such towns a face correspondingly higher deprivation (Thudipara, 2007). Out of 4041 statutory towns in 2011, slums reported from 2543 towns (63%). Among total 137.49 households of slum, notified slums were 49.65 lakh households, recognized slums 37.96 lakh households and 49.88 lakh households were identified slums (Table 1).

Table 1: No. of slum households in Million plus cities, 2011

Indicator	No.
No. of households(In lakhs)	
Total(slum)	137
Slum in million plus cities	52
Slum in other cities	85
No. of households (in %)	
Slums in million plus cities	38.1
Slums in other cities	61.9

Source: census of India, 2011

Table 1 indicates that about 38 % of slum households are in 46 million plus cities.

The appearance of slums may be seen as a byproduct in the process of urbanization in a developing country like India. Cities are a part of the fundamental changes in the society leading to socio-economic development and modernization. The cities, irrespective of their size, provide possibilities of varied occupations and collective services, such as health, education, cultural, technological, commercial or industrial services and thus act as focal points of development opportunities. Rao (1974) [8] admitted that congestion of building and people created opportunities for the emergence of low environmental quality and unsanitary conditions, which breeds contagious diseases and infections in such deplorable parts of urban area.

Table 2: India: Slum population by states, 2011

State/Union Territory	% of slum population to total slum population of India
Maharashtra	18.1
Andhra Pradesh	15.6
West Bengal	9.8
Uttar Pradesh	9.5
Tamilnadu	8.9
Madhya Pradesh	8.7
Karnataka	5.0
Rajasthan	3.2
Chhattisgarh	2.9
NCT of Delhi	2.7
Gujarat	2.6
Haryana	2.5
Odisha	2.4
Punjab	2.2
Bihar	1.9
Other states/ union territories	3.8

Source: Census of India, 2011

The highest slum population is found in Maharashtra followed by Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal. On the other hand, Jammu and Kashmir, Uttarakhand, Jharkhand, Assam, Kerala, Tripura, Puduchery, Himachal Pradesh, Chandigarh, Sikkim, Nagaland, Mizoram, Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh, Goa and Andaman and Nicobar Islands have slum population less than 1 % share of total slum population of India (Table 2 & 3). Bose (1995) [1] defines a slum “as a deprived human settlement, which is demographically, economically and environmentally vulnerable. Extreme overcrowding, high density and high levels of morality and typical demographic features, a large unorganized sector, low levels of productivity and extreme poverty are the usual economic feature and the lack of access to basic services like water,

Table 3

Top five states with slum population		Bottom five states with slum population	
State/UTs	Proportion of slum HH,s to urban HH,s	State/ UTs	Proportion of slum HH,s to urban HH,s
Andhra Pradesh	35.7	Chandigarh	9.7
Chhattisgarh	31.9	Gujarat	6.7
Madhya Pradesh	28.3	Jharkhand	5.3
Odisha	23.1	Assam	4.8
West Bengal	27.9	Kerala	1.5

Source: Census of India, 2011.

Table 4: Slums: Source of drinking water, 2011

Source	Urban (%)	Slums (%)
Tap	70.6	74.0
Well	6.2	3.0
Hand pump	14.9	12.7
Tube-well	8.9	7.6
Other source	2.5	2.8

Source: Census of India, 2011.

Table 4 indicates that in urban areas, about 70.6 percent households use tap for drinking but in slums the figure

reached to 74 percent households. In context of well, tube-well and hand-pump, the large number of households use these sources of drinking water in comparison to rest urban households .Slum houses are usually permanent or semi-permanent structure built on government land. The residents’ source of livelihood is usually near their homes in the city centre; men often work as labourers in small and large industries, while most women serve as domestic help in nearby middle class houses. Families living in slums typically make a significant contribution to the economic activity of the city (Chandna, 2011) [3].

Table 5: Slums: Literacy and work participation rates, 2011

Slums	Literacy Rate (in percent)		Work participation rate (in percent)	
	2001	2011	2001	2011
Persons	72.2	77.7	33.1	36.4
Males	80.1	83.7	51.1	54.3
Females	63.2	71.2	12.8	17.1

Source: Census of India, 2011

During 2001 and 2011, both literacy rates and work participation rates have increased among slum population. However, females are lag behind in literacy and work force due to deplorable conditions (Table 5). Three common points emerge from various attempts of several scientists in defining a slum. First slum refers to an area or a situation which does not constitute an isolated building. Secondly, it can be identified by a combination of a physical attribute and not with reference to any single attribute. Thirdly there is a considerable range of variation in regard to the manifestation of each one of the physical attribute. The unhealthy physical environment leads to sickness, demanding for continuing medical treatment, which means reduction of workdays and economic loss. Majority of the slum dwellers belong to lower socio-economic class and have migrated to the city with the hope of better means of livelihood. Having basically low education, skill and work experience, they pick up lowly paid jobs such as construction labourer, domestic servants, casual factory workers and petty trading business. With their low income, they are forced to live in slum areas in the most unsanitary and unhygienic conditions.

Causes for emergence of slums

Various factors influence the creation of slums in most of the developing countries of the world. Some of the major factors responsible for the growth of slums are summarized as follows;

1. Housing shortage due to low level of income among the economically weaker sections of the society, underprivileged sections of the society in urban areas
2. Proximity of their houses, close to the source of employment for economic reasons especially due to the low level of transportation cost was another factor for the creation of slums.
3. A majority of migrants being as unskilled workers and not able to pay for urban infrastructural facilities such as water, sewerage and drainage, start to live on vacant public land near the place of work, erect huts and use public facilities.
4. The deterioration of a group of buildings in the older part of the city due to congestion and overcrowded also leads to the slum condition increase.
5. Absence of comprehensive development planning is also responsible for slums
6. The failure of India's family planning programmes, contributed to the growth of slums.
7. Large-scale migration to the cities due to employment opportunities and other community facilities and advantages offered by the city, which were absent in majority of the rural areas of developed countries of the world
8. The poverty of the migrants forced them to find refuge or to squat on the unused land located near their work places, resulting into slum formation.

Programmes for slum development

In India, government has started several policies for slum improvements such as Urban Community Development Programme (1988), Environment Improvement of Urban Slums (1972), Integrated Development of Small and Medium Towns and Integrated Child Development Services, The Urban Basic Services Programme (1985-90). In the 1970s and 1980s, the Indian Government had a policy of 'no slums cities' that warranted forceful resettlement and rehabilitation of slum dwellers. In 1972 the Government of India started a programme "Environmental Improvement of Urban Slums" under which priority to drinking water and sanitation was given. Again in 1996 Government initiated the National Slum Development Programme with substantial fund allocation with a specified focus on providing drinking water and community toilets. It was estimated that 46 million slum dwellers were benefited from it. In 2005 Government started the Jawaharlal Nehru Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM), an initiative to enhance integrated development of infrastructure services; accelerating the flow of investment into urban infrastructure services; planned development of cities including the peri-urban areas and universalization of urban services to ensure their availability to the urban poor.

Although, Government organizations have passed some acts on social security benefits like 'Minimum Wages Act', 'Equal Remuneration Act', 'Building and Other Construction Workers Act', and 'Contract Labour Act', Unorganized Workers Social Security Bill' which security of the informal sector too, wherein it covers many social security schemes like pension, maternity insurance, general insurance, welfare scheme for artisans and weavers and health insurance.

Some Central Government sponsored Programmes are mentioned here.

1. National Slum Development Programme
2. Balika Samrudhi Yojna
3. Special Nutrition Programme
4. Individual Latrines- Low Cost Sanitation Program
5. Swarna Jayanti Sahari Rozgar Yojna
6. Some State Government sponsored Programmes

Conclusion

Slum problems are widespread and multidimensional in nature. They can be solved by infrastructural development and civic amenities. Environmental degradation is general phenomenon in slum. It can be reduced by making proper arrangement for garbage disposal. Improved hygienic conditions with increased awareness on preventive social medicine can reduce the health hazards in slum residents. Govt. should provide a community managed programmes than administration managed programme to improve slum areas. There is need to emphasis and strengthen institutions at the community level in the form of neighborhood committees and to support nongovernmental efforts –either individual or institutional or else.

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