Facets of Urbanisation

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Views from Anthropology

Edited by

Sumita Chaudhuri

Dedicated to the memory of

Parents	*Parents-in-Law*
Amiya Kumar Ghosh	Rajen Chaudhuri
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PREFACE

I

An International Conference on 'Mega-Urbanisation and Human Rights: Emerging Challenges and Opportunities' was organized in Kolkata (Calcutta), India, in 2011. It was jointly organized by Commission on Urban Anthropology, Commission on Human Rights of International Union of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences (IUAES) and the Department of Anthropology, West Bengal State University and sponsored by Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Manav Sangrahalaya, Anthropological Survey of India, Indian Council of Social Science Research, Indian Council of Medical Research, Indian Museum and Centre for Alternative Research in Development. We received 124 papers from Bangladesh, Chile, Mexico, USA, Canada, Greece, Turkey, UK, Nepal and different parts of India. These papers were presented in 20 sessions, organised on different aspects of urbanization and human rights. The present volume includes 11 articles exclusively dealing with different aspects of urbanization presented in different sessions of this international conference.

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The editor records with appreciation, the support received from Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Manav Sangrahalaya, Anthropological Survey of India, Indian Council of Social Science Research, Indian Council of Medical Research, Indian Museum and Centre for Alternative Research in Development. It was possible to organize the conference successfully only through the active support of students and faculty members of the Department of Anthropology, West Bengal State University and members of Centre for Alternative Research in Development. I am grateful to Professor Ashoke Ranjan Thakur, the then Honourable Vice-Chancellor of the University, for his keen interest, kind guidance, financial support, as well as active participation. We are also grateful to Professor Asis Kumar Banerjee, former Vice-Chancellor, Calcutta University for delivering the valedictory address and his keen interest and kind guidance. I am thankful to all the delegates from various parts of the world for their active participation. Special thanks are due to Dr Subir Biswas, Co-Convener of

the conference for his valuable help and contribution to organise the conference. I am grateful to Dr. Sovan Chakraborti, Mr. Ranjit Karmakar, Mr. Chandan Bej and Mr. Samik Ray for help and support in connection with the preparation of this manuscript. My husband, Prof. Buddhadeb Chaudhuri also helped me immensely in the context of this publication. The final manuscript and related materials were prepared while I was in Bridgewater, NJ, USA with our son, Soumyadeb, daughter-in-law, Chandreyee and our sweet, kid grand-son, Swapnil. I sincerely acknowledge their loving inspiration. Finally I am also sincerely grateful to Cambridge Scholars Publishing, UK for taking the responsibility to publish the volume.

Sumita Chaudhuri

INTRODUCTION

SUMITA CHAUDHURI

I

The International Union of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences (IUAES) is the highest body at the global level that concerns itself with all types of anthropological studies. There are several Commissions under IUAES that deal with the study, research, conferences and publications on different issues. The present edition is an outcome of an international conference organized by the Commission on Urban Anthropology, the Commission on Human Rights and the Department of Anthropology, West Bengal State University, in collaboration with the Anthropological Survey of India, the Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Manav Sangrahalaya, the Indian Council of Social Science Research, the Indian Council of Medical Research, the Indian Museum and the Centre for Alternative Research in Development. This successful international conference was held from February 14–16, 2011 in Kolkata, India. We received 124 papers from our valued participants in Bangladesh, Chile, Canada, Greece, Mexico, Nepal, Turkey, UK, USA and different parts of India. The theme of the conference was Mega Urbanization and Human Rights—Emerging Challenges and Opportunities. Irrespective of geographical regions and political boundaries, the papers addressed many contemporary topical issues concerning human problems today and we are publishing a few of these papers in the field of Urban Anthropology.

II

The trend of urbanisation started with the onset of industrialization in the late eighteenth century. The mode of production prior to urbanisation was mainly through rural agriculture and small-scale home-based farming. Industrialization brought in factories, which turned out to be the new means of production, drawing the attention of many enterprising rural people to migrate into the cities and seek available opportunities as factory

labourers to earn a living. However, as the communication network had not yet been developed, for many workers the commute from the countryside or outskirts of the city was either too far or too expensive, owing to which many of them moved closer to the factories. Some of the workers who moved in from their rural homes even lived in work dormitories within the factories themselves. This surely paved the way to urbanization in the years to come, covering a period over three centuries. Today, in any economy, cities are a major source of economic activities, employment opportunities and prosperity, due to which labourers continue to arrive from rural places.

The present volume covers the different facets of urbanization and includes cultural adaptation, migration and its various aspects, gender distinction in the context of urbanization, the growth aspect among the Scheduled Tribes in the urban population, slums, urban space, entrepreneurship in the urban context and the urban environment. We are grateful to all those who shared their experiences and observations with us and it would indeed be our utmost pleasure to include all of their papers in the present volume. However, owing to some obvious limitations, we are presenting only eleven papers so that the abovementioned issues concerning urbanization can be fully covered.

The pace of urbanization is fast in most developing countries, including India. To be precise, urbanization does have social, economic, political and environmental implications. There is no denying the fact that in developing countries today, it is primarily due to rapid urbanization that the increasing importance of mega cities and the gradual decline of small towns comprise the general global trend. Unfortunately, this trend has serious socioeconomic and environmental implications and needs critical analysis. However, there are exceptions to this general trend, and in some mega-cities the pace of growth has reduced to some extent, indicating significant rural development in the region. This raises a fundamental question—while dealing with the issue of urban development, should we restrict our observation only to the urban context, or should it be studied in a wider context, considering the regional perspective? Is it possible to conceive urban development in isolation from regional growth?

In the context of cities, where society is essentially heterogeneous or pluralistic due to the presence of many ethnic communities, the process of urbanisation is further complicated because for many of the immigrants residing in the city, the shifting base involves not only transcending large physical distances but also additional cultural barriers associated with alien languages and different regions.

The term "pluralistic society" denotes a society consisting of a number of communities. The lines of plurality may be drawn along one or several factors such as race, religion, caste, class, language, nationality, sub-regional differentiation and so on. All large societies have had to find ways of coping with these diversities in their compositions and the possible strains that they might have given rise to in the economic, social, political and religio-cultural spheres of life.

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The first chapter of the volume by Dr. Sumita Chaudhuri is entitled "The Marginal People in the Urban Context," wherein an attempt has been made to discuss a category of urban poor—the beggars. The problems faced by this class of people who are at the bottom of the existing socio-economic groups in India need careful attention from anthropologists, as they need the right kind of support to construct and preserve their own society and culture under extreme conditions of economic deprivation. The class of beggars is mainly the result of the creation of urbanization, which has helped in attracting greater numbers of people—especially the landless—from the rural areas where, with a population increasing with every passing day, there are less work opportunities for them. Usually, those that are illiterate and do not want to work as unskilled labourers take to begging as a profession. The purpose of this study is to understand the changing patterns of lifestyles and activities of the beggars over time in the urban context.

The next chapter by Professor Anjali Kurane and others is on migration and adaptation. In this paper, "Migration & Adaptation—A Study of the Padmashalis in Bhiwandi, Thane," the authors have examined the need to migrate from one place to another. It has been pointed out that in the wake of modern circumstances and life conditions, more and more people are required to migrate from their native homes to new places. As they settle after migration, they come across alien cultures and new conditions of life. However, if they wish to develop themselves and weave a new story of success, it would be in their own interest to adjust and adapt themselves to the new life situations. Only this adaptability will help them to continue in their respective spheres of life and activities in the new land. In this chapter, the authors present the case of the Padmashali community of Andhra Pradesh, discussing at length the reasons propelling their migration from their native land into Maharashtra and examining in detail how they have adapted to the alien culture of the people in the new habitat

while continuing to preserve their own socio-cultural, religious and occupational identity.

Urbanization is a continuing process in modern times and more and more places are coming under its influence. The next chapter, "The Onslaught of Urbanization on the Structure and Function of Family and Marriage," is an attempt to point out the ill effects of urbanization. The authors, Dr. Jesurathnam Devarapalli and Aritra Samajdar, show that urbanization has actually gained ground owing to the inrush of migrants from rural areas. They rightly point out that people from rural areas have been lured to the towns and cities by the innumerable job opportunities in the form of unskilled labour and daily wages. However, in spite of the money-earning opportunities, this class of migrants faces certain unforeseen problems which, in the long term, affect their personal lives. The authors conducted an extensive study on the changes that have taken place in the structure and function of (i) the family and (ii) the institution of marriage among the migrant rural settlers who now live along the railway tracks in Baidyabati, which makes for interesting reading. This study highlights the difficulties and problems of most modern-day migrants, many of whom are labourers and daily wagers without much educational background.

In the next chapter, "Paradise Lost—Mass Migrations of the Western Hemisphere," Professor Talbot Rogers, Alyson Lerma and Corina Escoto focus on mass migrations, pointing to the major immigrations into the USA from Europe, Asia and Latin America since the 1620s. The chapter is a study of the immigration patterns into the United States, particularly from the countries south of the Mexican border, and includes a discussion on the major problems that migrants confront after migrating here, which leave them disillusioned.

The volume also includes a chapter on urbanization and migration by Dr. Suchismita Sen Chowdhury, through which she identifies the prevailing gender bias against women. Even as the author explains urbanization and its rapid growth in India, in "Urbanization and Migration in India—An Observation through the Gender Perspective" she portrays the urgency of women migrating from rural to urban areas for, in most cases, work opportunities. In the process, the author analyses the extent of discrimination against women, especially in respect of payment of wages and other fringe benefits, and stresses the importance of regulating policies promoting women's causes and ensuring proper standardised wages for them.

The process of urbanization has been gaining ground in most places around the globe. However, the author of "The Percentage of Scheduled

Tribes in the Urban Population of Tripura 1961–2001," Professor Malabika Das Gupta, shows that there are still some places where the response to the call for urbanization is inadequate. She is referring to the tribal population of Tripura in northeast India, whose presence in the urban scenario is negligible even after sixty-five years of independence. The state does have a sizeable number of tribals among its population. However, although several development schemes have been launched in the state since independence, most tribals in the state have not been able to benefit much from them, mainly because the scheduled tribe population has opted to live in groups in the rural surroundings instead of relocating to urban places. In fact, there are many tribals in Tripura who have relocated their base from the city to rural places. It is true that there have not been any significant studies or research on this trend, either in Tripura or elsewhere in India, yet the author of the present study discusses the possible reasons behind this undesirable trend and urges the immediate need to address the situations that could have led to it.

The contribution by Dr. Thambi Durai Thangavel and Dr. Jesurathnam Devarapalli, titled "The Living Conditions and Struggle for Survival of Slum Dwellers at Indira Gandhi Nagar of Chennai," is equally interesting as the authors make an appeal to the government to take necessary actions for bettering the life situations of the slum dwellers. Earlier, the two conducted an analytical study on the living patterns of the people in a particular slum in Chennai, and in the process identified a number of important factors that have actually contributed towards the deteriorated lifestyles in slums in general.

In the next chapter "Colonized Physical and Mental Space and Conflicts in Cities," Professor Sanjay K. Roy discusses the shift in the basic utilization of modern urban space under the influences of globalization, wherein, as we promote the capitalist modes of development, the rights of the unorganised "semi-proletariat" in the urban informal sector are threatened. Drawing explanatory parallels from the theories of Simmel, Park, Lefebvre and many others, the author attempts to secure and further the rights of those that have been disenfranchised in the urban space. He also exposes the growing threat to our ecology owing to the unrestricted destruction of urban space in the name of development.

In "The Indian Family in the Urban Space," Dr. Mohit Rajan examines how the liberalization of India's economic policies has paved the way for globalization to take hold in the country, which has, among other areas, impacted the modern urban Indian family in attitude and lifestyle. The chapter is a thorough discussion through which the author lays bare the

common characteristics of modern living among working couples in particular.

Through the next chapter "Sustainable and Efficient Organizations—The Case of the Handcrafts Micro Business in Southern San Sebastian," Professor Jose G. Vargas-Hernandez explains his concern for conserving natural vegetation as this would, in the long run, be in the best interests of local people. The author has made an effort to explain the importance of conserving the tule grass which generates earning opportunities for hundreds of people living by Lake Zapotlán in Mexico.

In the last chapter entitled "Mega-urbanization of Eastern Kolkata—Vision and Reality," the authors, Dr. Jenia Mukherjee and Dr. Amlan Roy, project the hazards of ill-conceived plans of urbanization and development which not only cause irreparable damage to the environment but at the same time leave several groups of people without proper shelter, food and even avenues for earning a livelihood. It is an indirect appeal to the concerned authorities to look into the matter from the human angle and not only for economic gains.

The discussions in the volume are mainly the genuine observations of the authors, as experienced by them while dealing with the people at the grassroots level and becoming aware of their problems and difficulties. As such, we are confident that the present volume will make interesting reading and shed light on the solutions to the problems faced in the wake of urbanization. Like everything else, urbanization has pros and cons and it is hoped that the present volume draws the attention of the government and other responsible authorities to its disadvantages or demerits. This would certainly help the concerned authorities to work in coordination to address the gaps in the social and economic environment due to urbanization, and help to pave the way to better living for all.

THE MARGINAL PEOPLE
IN THE URBAN CONTEXT

SUMITA CHAUDHURI

Urban India, with the fourth largest population in the world, faces a crisis due to population overcrowding, poverty, scarcity of housing and space, scarcity of services, pollution, health and environmental problems. The proportion of the urban population in the country increased from 17.6% in 1971 to 23.7% in 1981, 25.7% in 1991, 27.7% in 2001 and 31.2% in 2011. Although there was a slight stagnation in the rate of increase in the urban population in the 1980s, even the smallest increase has to be considered substantial in absolute numbers. The growth of the large cities is of great concern in this country.

Urban areas are known to be consumers of population more than its producers. It is true that the population of a city grows due to both birth and migration, yet the latter alone accounts for the significant growth of the urban population. In fact, migration contributes a great deal to the growth of towns or cities. This migration to urban places is from other urban areas as well as from rural areas. The rapid growth of the urban population has suddenly added to the problems of the urban settlers, especially the poor. Slums, squats and other forms of substandard settlements come into existence very quickly, much faster than the pace at which the number of households is growing. Urban poverty, scarcity of housing and accessibility of services for the poor pose major threats to urban development. The economy has not been able to provide enough scope of employment and other income generating opportunities, and the supply of housing and services has fallen short of the requirement.

According to the global reports on Urbanization World (UNCHS 1996), two main features were noted during the last two decades: (a) growth in urban poverty, and (b) limited achievement in improvement of the housing conditions. Similarly, in India, the rapid increase in the urban population has led to a quick growth in the numbers of the poor urban population. It is true that poverty is not the only cause of begging in India, yet it cannot be denied that it is a major cause. Offering alms to beggars is

considered a way of washing away one's sin and an act of religious merit. This idea is commonly shared by both devout Hindus and Muslims in India, and is why many people there give alms not with the idea of helping the needy but with the motive of achieving *punya* (religious merit) and of washing away their *Pap* (sin). Thus, religious motivation seems to have encouraged begging and at different religious places a large number of beggars sit and beg in clusters, a practise that has existed for many generations. That is why, more than other public places, religious shrines and pilgrimage centres usually attract a large number of urban poor (both beggars and pavement dwellers). Thus, the religious tradition of earning *punya* through alms-giving provides a major cultural prop towards sustaining the institution of begging, despite the fact that the beggars signify human degradation to the lowest extent and that begging as a trade poses a menace to the healthy growth of any society.

Charles Abrams observed that it would not be too sweeping a remark to say that slum people and beggars have become an inevitable and growing feature of cities in developing countries. The poor people have always been allotted the worst of the city's quarters. The cities in developing countries are overcrowded, and overcrowding is not so much due to the natural increase in the city population as migration from rural areas and small towns where the proper means of livelihood are not available. Housing entrepreneurs, however, do not build for the poor as they cannot pay the rent determined by the market. A large section of people in city populations is thus outside the orbit of housing activity. These people have no other option but to sleep on the streets or live in slums, much exposed to insecurity and impermanency. The largest number of urban poor in India are in Maharashtra (78.7 lakh), followed by Uttar Pradesh (58.4 lakh) and West Bengal (51.9 lakh). In Kolkata, about one sixth of the total population lives in makeshift dwellings constructed on unauthorized premises and made of any materials that come to hand, like discarded sacks, flattened sheets of metal cans and paste board boxes. The occupants sometimes pay rent but to unauthorized individuals who extort it from them. Apart from those who live in such temporary shelters, there are several thousand who live on the sidewalks, in the perches and corridors of public buildings and in railway stations. This includes young children as well as adults and older people.

Studies on the urban poor have been conducted in some of the major cities in India (Iyenger 1957; Gore 1959; Moorthy 1959; Misra & Mohanty 1963; Ramchandra 1972; Mazumdar 1977; Shivarama Krishnan 1977; Singh 1980; Chaudhuri 1982; Desai 1985; Chaudhuri 1987; Chaudhuri 1990; Kundu 1998; Gooptu 2001; Chaudhuri 2003; Chaudhuri 2012).

These studies generally provide estimates of the different categories of the urban poor population classified into different groups, and indicate the causes of begging, the ecological conditions of beggars, access to shelters in the context of policy perspective in India, focusing on the role of caste, religion and national politics, and how the urban poor emerged as a major social and political factor in Southern Asia.

The growth of the big cities in India has been largely unplanned and haphazard, as can be seen from the fact that a vast majority of the urban population live in slums or squatter settlements. This profile of the urban population outlines the great urban challenge facing India and the other less-developed countries. Unfortunately, the problem has not attracted the appropriate attention of the civic authorities and society at large. The problem is serious from the social point of view. In a crowded city one has only to walk along the pavements on the streets strewn with people dwelling in shanties or temporary shelters to observe that many of them live an open life, with no privacy for bathing or sleeping, eating or relaxing. It would be a moot point to ask whether privacy is something that the pavement dwellers and beggars are really concerned about. From the health and sanitation viewpoints too, the unhygienic ways of pavement living pose a direct threat to the health conditions of these poor people.

The primary reason for rural to urban migration is economic and the rural poor migrate to the cities in search of employment rather than better employment opportunities. There are various types of migrants who come to the large cities in search of employment, such as seasonal and unaccompanied male migrants. The big cities can provide employment to the rural migrants, who are largely unskilled and illiterate. In the case of Kolkata, these migrants mainly come from Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Orissa. Different studies have indicated that rural poverty is carried over to the city by the mechanism of rural-urban migration and is most visible in slums and squatter settlements, which leads to environmental deterioration, substandard housing and low levels of health and nutrition. When the migrants reach the city they invariably find themselves pushed into the slums or squatter settlements. One of the more important reasons why the migrants to urban cities find themselves in squatter settlements is that they depend mainly on kinship, caste and their regional network for decisions regarding the choice of destination, their homes, selection of job and adjustments to the extreme impoverished situation of urban living.

In this chapter I would like to discuss the urban poor who, by profession, are beggars, residing in and around the Kalighat Temple in Kolkata. I conducted a study in the early 1970s on a small group of

beggars living here, and a more elaborate study was made in the late 1970s for my Ph.D. work. Since I have already conducted several studies on the same group in different periods, my observation reflects the changing life situation of this category of beggars. In fact, studying the same place at different times is expected to project the changing pattern of lifestyles and activities of the same group of people in different periods. In this later study I tried to examine the beggars, a marginal group, as a group of people at the margins of society who were trying to construct and preserve their culture and identity under extreme conditions of economic deprivation. Here, it may be mentioned that the beggars provide the scope for the understanding of the core universal norms of society, which people try to preserve in their cultures and identities under the extreme conditions of economic deprivation. The study of the beggars also provides an opportunity to gain an understanding of the special adaptive norms of a human group dealing with the problem of survival in a condition of marginal existence. I was particularly interested to examine:

(i) the persistence of traditional behaviours and practices,
(ii) the nature of modification or breakdown of traditional behaviours and norms
(iii) the crystallisation of new behaviour patterns and practices requiring adjustment in this limiting situation.

Since an important religious place provides the backdrop to this study, and, in Hinduism, "*dan*," or a cash gift, is an important practice which thrives or supports the profession of begging, I became interested in studying beggars in a public place without religious significance. Accordingly, a study was also conducted in the Howrah Railway Station area, which is one of the busiest railway stations in India.

Kalighat is one of the most sacred centres and *pithas* of the Hindu people in India. The beggars here hail not only from rural Bengal but also from different regions of India. I have observed that there are individuals and families among the beggars of Kalighat who were pushed into this situation primarily by conditions of poverty in their rural habitats. In a few cases, there are women who have been pushed into this situation owing to social ostracism. Again, it may be added that the absence of any social security measures by the kin group or community also "pushed" these people to this unique situation. Left with no other choice, they were compelled to find their way to these spots where there were still some possibilities for sustenance. This "pull" factor includes the scope of living at a meagre cost without having to make any serious endeavours, although

there were some distinct characteristics of life out of beggary. It appears that as one enters into this way of living, due to an interaction of the "push" and "pull" factors, the scope of exit from this unique situation is minimized. With time, the typical beggarly way of life underwent some modifications in its traditional, socio-cultural and religious ways. With the studied population living in crowded quarters characteristically lacking any privacy of proper shelter and with very little material belongings, the emergence of some distinct adaptive norms and a distinct way of life is noticed even as there is a decline in their sense of personal dignity. Thus, alongside the absence of the traditional norms and associated rituals with regard to life cycles, there are high incidences of alcoholism, frequent quarrels and violence, early initiation into sex, moral laxity in sex combined with the absence of proper or formal marriage in many cases, a relatively high incidence of the abandonment of children by mothers and a growing trend of single-mother families. In addition, there is a tendency for the dominance of maternal relatives, families breaking down and opting for nuclear families, the breakdown of family ties, little consideration of caste at the interaction level, a predominant concern about the present with hardly any thought about the future and the past, and a high level of tolerance for unconventional practices. All the aforementioned are striking features of beggars' ways of life which point towards the breakdown of traditional norms and customs among them, especially at the level of social institutions like family, marriage, kinship and caste. There is also a similar corrosion in matters concerning religion and rituals. The beggars indeed have a "thin impoverished" culture.

Impoverishment and the corrosion of tradition combine as one aspect of the situation. There is also a corresponding crystallization or emergence of distinct adaptive norms. The informal marriages may not be called anomic as there is neither any promiscuity nor incidence of incestuous conjugal relation with close relatives. However, a man and a woman living as husband and wife at a given point of time, without any formal social ceremony, are accepted by the local beggar community as well as the neighbouring non-beggar population. Social approval of a loose type for such marriages is sought from any influential person of the locality, which is indicative of a specific trend. The matrifocal tendency and the relative dominance of females in the family is another emerging trend. Encouraged particularly by religious-minded people and those with an inclination towards charity, this category of people known as beggars gathers around places of worship, centres of pilgrimage and in cities. Thus, begging has become an organized and lucrative profession.

In 1987–88, a review of beggars was made in the same area, following which a comparative study was made on the beggars from a public place—Howrah Station. The two groups of beggars showed considerable variation with respect to the modification of the traditional norms and the crystallisation of the adaptive norms. Even though they stayed here for shorter periods, the lack of norms was more conspicuous among the beggars of the Howrah station area. Perhaps the varied environments in the two areas impacted the studied population differently. In Kalighat, for instance, the neighbouring population is permanent and the beggars have frequent contact with them, which is why they may not always be at the receiving end. Whereas in the Howrah Station area the surrounding population is essentially a floating one and beggars only get alms from them, and there is no scope for regular contact. This may explain why the beggars of Kalighat sometimes inform the neighbouring population and thus manage to get social sanctions for their various ways of life, which might be different from the traditional norms and customs but may be considered as the distinct adaptive norms of this unique situation. This way of obtaining social sanction of any form is conspicuously absent in the case of the beggars from the Howrah Station area, perhaps due to the lack of social interaction with the neighbouring population.

A further study in 1999–2000 on the same group of people living as beggars and pavement dwellers in and around the Kalighat area demonstrated the three groups identified in the earlier studies (1971): (1) the Darbhanga group, (2) the Jainagar group and (3) a mixed group dominated by people from Diamond Harbour. The people in the Darbangha group were migrants from the Darbhanga District of Bihar and showed very strong group solidarity. The Jainagar Group had its origin in the Jainagar area of South 24 Parganas, West Bengal and also showed strong group solidarity. Though they were in more or less good relations with the neighbouring groups their closeness with the people of South 24 Parganas in particular stood out very clearly. The hutment settlement of this group was 40–50 years old. They migrated from time to time in a number of groups. The third group, which is actually mixed, was dominated by people from the Diamond Harbour area. Besides this, there were people from other places in the district of South 24 Parganas, West Bengal.

These poor migrants of the three groups, individually and with their families, live in small shanties on the footpath of the Kalighat area. The beggars usually keep their belongings inside these shanties which are so small that they cannot be slept in at night. People inhabiting these shanties have faced several problems from time to time, one of the most important

being sanitation, particularly for the women, as there are no proper toilets. Lack of privacy is a major curse in the lives of these people, and an important obstacle that gets in the way of the normal psychological growth of the children here. As every aspect of life is open to them from childhood, the children do not get a proper moral education. The worst of the problems they face is due to the rapid increase in land prices where their shanties are demolished from time to time, compelling them to seek other temporary shelters.

When the country is trying hard to spread literacy among all segments of its people, educational development for this group becomes difficult mainly owing to the environment they live in. Though at present there are a number of street schools educating these children, attendance is irregular and their progress still unsatisfactory. Due to the lack of proper shelter and environment, it is not possible to practice all that they learn in school.

As the studied group live in the open, to avoid the strong sunlight and extreme heat, particularly in summer, they have to find and move to places that are shady and cool. The same thing happens when it is raining, whether at daytime or night. One must add here that in spite of facing such difficulties, these people have a very strong psychological attachment to this place. They have remarked "*Mayer thane sabai khete pabo*," which means "all poor people will get food in this great religious site," where Goddess Kali is the ruling deity. Perhaps it is this belief that provides them with their daily meals, and so despite severe difficulties they cannot think of leaving this place. The beggars of Kalighat have a very strong group solidarity.

One of the few important characteristics of the urban poor is that a large number of them work in the informal sector where entry is easy and requires less skills, education and capital. Another point is that the urban poor do not constitute a separate world and maintain the link with the rural world through visits, remittances of money and continuity of the social-cultural and income-generating networks, mostly through recruiting people from their own families and rural areas.

Being neglected by the urban milieu, including those in power, in matters related to their efforts to grow and develop in the city environment, the urban poor have so far endured many of the hazards they are confronted with, including health problems. They not only bear the stress involved in migration from rural areas to the urban slums/streets, but also towards their subsequent participation in the workforce as beggars or in the informal sector. They are usually overworked and continuous stress induces them to indulge in vices. They are victims of pollution and have significantly higher rates of mortality and disease than the general

population. Given this, they are in no position to contribute positively to their eco-systems. However, the society needs positive contributions from all concerned and it is imperative that more efforts are directed towards achieving the well-being of the poor. The ecosystem based approach is an attempt in that direction.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have discussed my experiences and understandings about the ways of life of beggars, a major category of the urban poor. I identified the distinct adaptive norms required to adjust and articulate in the demanding situation. I was also interested in finding out whether there was any change, including any improvement in the quality of life, among the beggars. Actually, it was felt that at the initial stage of adjustment, survival would be the main consideration and, as such, the group of people following this profession would try to ensure the availability of food. All people, including beggars, look for means for better living and thus adopt other measures to improve their quality of life. This aspect is reflected in the life of the beggar community in the context of proper shelter, better sanitation and health facilities, and educational facilities for their children.

Even though no marked improvement in the quality of life of beggars was noted in all the cases, they could not be totally held responsible for such a condition. Apparently, the neighbouring populations also have vested interests in seeing this category of poor remain as they are, as through them they can ensure the availability of cheap labour. At the same time, most of the beggars did not try to improve their quality of life, and a few of them, being very old and disabled, are not capable of other kinds of work. Nevertheless, the group of beggars in Kalighat had to face considerable uncertainties even related to their abodes. When I first started the fieldwork in the early 1970s, I found that these beggars had constructed small hutments on footpaths and in open spaces. Apart from a few individual hutments, three distinct settlements of this kind were observed, based on their regional backgrounds. Over time, as this place is one of the prime locations in Kolkata, they have been evicted from their abodes and now live further apart. This has naturally affected their social relationships as well as their scopes of mobilization to protect their interests or even their bargaining power.

Alternative approaches

For the urban poor, urban agriculture is a rational way to improve the economic situations in the Third World Cities which, however, cannot guarantee them enough income to survive in the city. The prevailing situation is such that the rural people who are actually the food producers cannot take advantage of the market in their position as producers. They have to sell their products to middlemen at very low prices as, being poor, their access to the city markets is non-existent. It is the middlemen, on the other hand, who earn the major profit from selling the agricultural products to the city marketers. If the urban poor could take to agricultural practices and grow products , they could sell them off in the city markets and earn better livings as farmers. Urban farmers hardly use any expensive inputs such as artificial fertilizer. Instead, they bring some customs and practices from the rural areas, such as using dung for fuel and fertilizers, which may help in keeping the cities clean.

It has been noted that in all the large cities, the ecology of the settlements of the poor people is closely related to the economic functions of the city. In this context, if the poor people of any mega-city can grow vegetables in the fringe areas, they can provide fresh vegetables for themselves and sell them in the city markets. Even for women, urban agriculture is an important resource for providing their families with food production. Looking at things positively and into the future, agricultural activities are also a way to gain access to the commercial labour market. Instead of looking at the urban poor as liabilities for the authorities, they could be viewed as assets to the city.

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MIGRATION AND ADAPTATION: A STUDY OF THE PADMASHALIS IN BHIWANDI, THANE

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Introduction

Migration, especially in modern times, is a major indicator of basic social change. It is not merely a physical movement of people from one place to another; it also has social, economic, cultural and other dimensions. Hence, anthropologists, sociologists, economists, geographers, and demographers have taken a keen interest in the causes and effects of migration, including the related problems, and many have been able to throw new light on the various aspects of this phenomenon. Studies on migration indicate that the process, volume and direction of the people in their movement from one place to another are influenced by a number of factors such as geographical conditions, economic hazards, non-availability of regular and reliable work, educational opportunities and achievements, and several other social and psychological conditions. Studies from all over the world conclude that most people migrate for economic reasons. Many of these studies also point out that people migrate from one culture to another because of the operation of "push" and "pull" factors.

The term "migration" has been interpreted in a number of ways. Literally, it means the settlement of an individual or a group of individuals by shifting from one cultural area or place of habitation to another, more or less permanently. The term has been defined in the new Webster's Dictionary as "The act or instance of moving from one country, or region, or place to settle in another," or the "Act or instance of moving from one area to another in search of work." William Peterson (1958) defines free migration as "Movements motivated by the individual willingness to risk the unknown of a new home in breaking from a family's social universe for the sake of adventure, achievements of ideals or to escape a social system from which he has become alienated."

It has been noted that most of the migrants move from rural areas to urban centres to find better economic opportunities. A few well-educated, socially and economically better-off people are attracted by the vast opportunities of fulfilling their aspirations and to acquire better statuses and chances of further achievements in society. According to Helen I, Safa & Brian M duToit, (1975), "Migration is normally viewed as an economic phenomenon, though non-economic obviously have some bearing; migrants leave their area of origin primarily because of lack of employment opportunities, and in the hope of finding better opportunities elsewhere."

Migration is also a social problem. It may moreover be considered an act of individual or group choice. It reflects the attitude and behaviour of a group of individuals to certain other individuals and social conditions which are available or present in their places of origin and in the places they migrate to. Thus we find that in the present times, only a cross section of people migrate from one region, or place, to another. Bogue (1969) says that: "Migration is an adjustment to economic and social changes. It is a response of human organisms to economic and social situations in the environment." According to Bogue, the factors responsible for migration are of two types: Positive and Negative.

(a) **Positive factors of Migration:** The Positive factors are also called Pull factors. Pull factors are those which provoke migration by providing job opportunities and a luxurious life. Such factors involve better opportunities for employment, opportunities for earning a higher income, and a good environment.

(b) **Negative factors of Migration:** The Negative factors are also called push factors. Push factors are those which provoke an individual to migrate by providing an environment where they are unable to satisfy themself, either socially or economically. Such factors include lack of job opportunities, loss of employment, and alienation from the community.

In this way, the push and pull factors prompt an individual to migrate. Migration is classified into two types on the basis of these push and pull factors: Voluntary Migration and Non-voluntary Migration (International Encyclopaedia of Social Science 1968).

(i)   Voluntary Migration

Voluntary Migration is when an individual voluntarily migrates from the village to the city. Here, nobody forces them to migrate, e.g. an individual living in the village migrates to the city to increase their social, economic and educational status.

(ii)   Non-voluntary Migration

Non-voluntary Migration is when an individual does not migrate voluntarily; rather, some social, political, economic and natural factors force them to migrate. For example, in 1971 many people living in East Pakistan, now Bangladesh, migrated to India because of the socio-political crisis. Likewise, many times due to severe drought and other natural calamities, people migrate from the villages to cities.

Migration requires people to adjust and adapt themselves to the societies and cultures of the places they have migrated to. According to Ponsioen (1969), "[a]daptation is a behavioural term and means developing behaviour in accordance with the new situation," and "[a]djustment is a psychological term and means becoming acquainted with elements of another system." Beals and Hoijer (1966) defines adaptation as a "continuing adjustment to environmental conditions in such a way so as to permit the survival of the individual, population, species or cultural system." At the initial stage, it is very important for the migrants to psychologically accept and adjust to the new culture, which is reflected in their behaviour, rites and rituals. In other words, they adapt to the behaviour pattern in that society.

The problem and extent of adjustment of the migrants to the new cultures are important, both from the point of view of the preservation of their own values and practices as well as their contacts and adaptation to the new conditions.

Ponsioen (1975) says that on the one hand the migrants attempt to adjust and adapt in the new culture and on the other they attempt to preserve and maintain their own culture. This dualistic approach of the migrants gives rise to a new culture. In this new culture, the functional traits of the original culture are retained while the dysfunctional traits are rejected. He further says that the adaptation and adjustment with the new society is "never a colourless absorption of foreign elements but is essentially a creative process." New patterns are developed by the use of such elements.

The present study analyzes the causes and consequences of the migration of the Padmashalis of Andhra Pradesh to Bhiwandi, which is