

# **SLUM : WORKERS COLONY**

**Lokshahi Hakk Sanghatana**

**BOMBAY**  
Maharashtra State.

**Rs. 3-00**

# **Fact Finding Committee on Slums Organised by Lokshahi Hakk Sanghatana**

## **Frame of Reference :**

It is widely known that a major proportion in all our cities and towns live in slums. In fact, because such a vast majority of our urban people live in frightfully unhygienic crowded conditions, we in India have popularly begun to use the word 'slum' in a much more restrictive sense i.e. Jhuggies, zhopadpattis, bastis.

These are legitimate, but usually illegal or semi-legal structures. They are 'non-established' in that they are shelters put together with any thing their inhabitants can afford to pick up or buy. They lack the most obvious facilities of water, sanitation, roads, and clear legality. They are kept in illegal or semi-legal status because it leaves the municipal and city authorities the freedom to demolish or move them out according to the needs and fancies of 'the city', meaning thereby the wealthy whose 'aesthetics' require a good view. Nevertheless, the zhopadpatties are allowed to come up because they are inhabited by workers whose labour and services are thus cheaply available to the city.

Therefore, depending upon how desperately the people need jobs and would go to any lengths to reach them, and according to how vast is the reserve army of labour, these lowest of slums that are so easily demolished (as against the pucca chawls of the '20s and '30s) get gradually shoved to the outskirts of the metropolis as the city grows in industry and splendour.

It is, widely known that apart from the sizeable number of unemployed, a vast majority of the city's *Workers* live in these lowest of inhabitations

There are two prevalent approaches to this problem of what further in the East foreigners call 'shanty-towns'. Both approaches are mechanical and are based on an unquestioning acceptance of the present pattern of economic, material and social development of the country.

One approach is the charity approach—to see the the shanty-towns as an unavoidable (though tragic) consequence of industrial (and hence 'urban') development. People pour into the city for jobs beyond industry's capacity to pay them a fair human wage, and so they have to live in the abysmal conditions which they and 'society' can afford. Following from this is the formal 'social workers' approach of trying 'to fix', through the bureaucracy and the politician's hierarchy, the minimum of facilities for the poor living there. This involves a process of haggling and lobbying and rubbing shoulders with high-ups with a view to getting some amenities.

The other approach is much more shockingly nineteenth century *laissez faire* and intellectually parochial. It takes the view that such slums are the manifestation of the marginal value of 'labour-surplus' economy. That, in any case, these people would lack work and starve in the countryside where they come from. Here, in the urban industrial centres, they provide cheap labour and hence make industrial development possible by making possible the generation of profit which can be ploughed back as further investment. Moreover, these 'agglomerations' create a 'market' for goods and services, such as consumer products and transport services, and thus lead to further investment and job creation (the multiplier effect). The implied conclusion is that, as industrial development takes place, unorganised industry and shanty towns will disappear as the fruits of growth percolate down. Town planners have to take the sweet with the bitter, and strike the optimum balance at each stage of urban development.

The Lokshahi Hakk Sanghatana believes that both these approaches are out-standing for their narrowness of understanding, and that while the first is thoroughly servile and bureaucratic the second is brashly anti-democratic. In any case, over 30 years of industrial development in this country, have multiplied, not reduced, the slum problem. We condemn both these approaches towards the existence and alleviation of slum conditions.

roots directly in the undemocratic, anti-national development (rather under-development) of our economy. Both the overall potential of economic development and the living conditions of the people would be far greater and better, if investment in industry and agriculture were directed with two things in mind: (a) quickest national self-reliance in the structure of industry and agriculture and (b) maximum employment of our rich *labour power* as a concrete goal requiring a discriminating choice of technologies.

But maximum growth of neither national product nor of employment is possible (even with the multiplier effect thrown in) unless there is redistribution of income and assets which alone can create conditions for investing in correct lines and widening the market. Today, the choice of lines of investment and technology are dictated not by the needs of the people but by the purchasing power of the few who are wealthy through controlling the means of production (capital and land) or through trading with high stakes.

Hence our backward poverty-stricken agriculturists Hence the flow of human tide into ugly cities to do any cheap jobs. Low wages make cheap products available to other poorly-paid workers as well as to industry, which can expand profits by the sweated labour of unorganised workshops and contract labour.

We must emphasise that behind this lopsided pattern of growth is the imperialist path of development. By this we mean that the main departments of the growth pattern here are foreign interests and foreign influences. They work by creating a small section of people in this country whose aspirations, life-styles, and preferences are modelled on those in the foreign countries. To fulfil these powerful preferences in such products and services, matching capital and technology has to be imported for their local manufacture (import substitution). Foreign aid and loans also pour in to create through budgetary operations, the infrastructure necessary for setting up such industry. Why does foreign capital come here? Because, all the genuine complaints about bureaucratic red-tape, marginal returns on capital invested here are greater than



their own countries, and the cheap labour here makes possible re-exports or outflow through the various forms of return on capital. In the name of producing internationally competitive goods or services, our country in real terms subsidises the trade and income of foreign countries.

This is by no means a divergence from policy. We must understand the root causes of uneven development; who benefits from such unevenness; and what are the generic forces that must therefore be countered in order to solve the very specific problem of slums.

The Lokshahi Hakk Sanghatana believes that the only way out of this morass is for workers, who are the slum-dwellers, to organise and assert their right to civilised living conditions. We maintain that the right to work for a living, to gain greater control over their destinies, and to determine democratically their share in the product of their labour, is an inalienable right of working people. Flowing from this, the right to live within the city near their places of work is elementary. Workers also have the right to better and better living conditions. By contrast to this, the demolition of their homes, often built on land reclaimed over decades by them, is the most ferocious attack on the workers' democratic right. Evictions are barbaric—even more barbaric than the selfish shortsightedness that leads to industrial growth with slums.

We believe that trade unions, as organisers of the workers to promote the interests of the workers, have grave responsibility to protect and improve the shelters of workers. We believe that genuine social workers have a responsibility to make slum-dwellers aware of their rights and organise themselves democratically to obtain their rights from the authorities. Only amenities obtained by the people, through proud and self-reliant struggle can remain securely theirs and provide a step towards further improvement.

### **Terms of Reference**

We are conscious that this is a vast problem. We are setting up the Fact Finding Committee on Slums consisting of

slum-dwellers, social workers, lawyers, doctors, trade unionists, journalists, town-planners and intellectuals. This is in order to find out various aspects of this problem.

I. Bombay is the biggest growing metropolis, the main gateway of India to foreign influences, and the city that draws to it labour from all over the country. That is why such an attempt here is more pertinent. In Bombay :

- a) What is the magnitude of slums ?
- b) What proportion of the city's population live there ?
- c) What are the levels of amenities available to them ?
- d) Where have the inhabitants come from ?
- e) What is the range of their earnings, living conditions and consciousness ?
- f) What has been their historical experience in settling down in this urban jungle ?

II. It is necessary to understand what it is that stands in the way of slum-dwellers democratic mobilisation on their own behalf in the present conditions, so that the way may be paved to understanding and mobilising other urban centres. In this context :

- a) What kinds of jobs do they do ?
- b) What are the conditions at their workplace and what are the terms of their employment ?
- c) What is the condition of their health, mortality and family life ?
- d) Where do they feel they belong ?
- e) To whom and to what do they have loyalties ?
- f) Whose authority do they observe ?
- g) What is the position of women and children in the slum setting ?

III. Slum-dwellers have mobilised innumerable times to drive their demands into the attention of the government and the rest of society. Usually it is difficult to tell whether it is marches and agitations which have got them their demands to some extent, or horse-trading in the corridors of power by the politicians and leaders. We feel that slum-dwellers as slum-dwellers lack striking power which workers have when they go on strike and halt production. We therefore strongly feel that until slum-dwellers as workers organise themselves through their unions, to assert their right to housing and atleast to their present homes, slum-dwellers' organisations by themselves cannot be fully effective.

- a) What has been the law in relation to slums, and what has been the trend in legislation? To what extent have workers' and slum-dwellers' agitations influenced this legislation?
- b) What has been the trend in evictions in the past 30 years?

**Lokshahi Hakk Sanghatana**

# **Report of the Fact-Finding Committee on Slums**

## **I. Plight of the Labouring People in the Villages**

Hutment dwellers are villagers who have been forced to come to the city in search of survival. Hundreds and hundreds flee to the city every day as they have no means of subsistence and employment in the villages. The majority of these people had some land to begin with which they have lost to landlords, money lenders, and others over the years. Some of them may still hold the land in the village land records, but the right to cultivate has been expropriated by the landlord or the money-lender to whom they are indebted. They incur debts to buy foodgrains, to cultivate their piece of land, for medical treatment, or to fulfill religious or social obligations like dowry etc. The yield from their small pieces of land can hardly support the family for the whole year, nor can the low wages which they earn as farm workers. Perpetual indebtedness and mortgaging all their meagre possessions land, house, gold, cattle, even utensils, etc, is, therefore, the only way for them to survive in the village. The majority of them accumulate debts which they can have no hope of paying back, just as they can have no hope of redeeming all that has been mortgaged over the years. Thus they lose their meagre possessions for ever. All this after toiling hard on their small pieces of land and working on the landlords' lands for low wages for any number of hours. Sooner or later, often hastened by a drought or some other natural calamity, the labouring people's battle for survival reaches a hopeless point, when they cannot cultivate their small pieces of land, and there is no employment on the landlords' fields. Even in peak employment seasons they find there are too many workers waiting to work for low wages. The only alternative, therefore, is to leave the villages in the hope of finding employment elsewhere and so they reach the cities and towns in large numbers.

The above picture is fully borne out by available statistics on the pattern of land ownership, earnings of agricultural

of small and poor peasants and agricultural labourers. 51 per cent of all land holdings in the country are below 1 acre. Holdings upto 5 acres account for 70 per cent of all holdings, though the area of these holdings is only 21 per cent of the total area. At the other end of the scale, the big landlords who constitute a mere 4 per cent of rural households own one-third (33 per cent) of all land.

The same picture of sharp inequality between a small number of rich households and the mass of the rural population is presented by data on the distribution of all rural assets including land. These data have been collected by the Reserve Bank's All India Debt and Investment Survey conducted in 1961-62 and 1971-72. In 1971-72, 80 per cent of rural households between them owned only 23 per cent of all rural assets, whereas the richest 10 per cent households owned 62 per cent of assets. What is more, between 1961-62 and 1971-72, the share of the bottom 80 per cent households in total assets had come down (from 26 per cent to 23 per cent), whereas the share of the top 10 per cent households had further gone up (from 59 per cent to 62 per cent.)

The other side of the same picture is the phenomenal growth in the size of the agricultural labour population. According to the Census, the number of agricultural labourers\* rose sharply from 28 million in 1961 to 48 million in 1971. The proportion of agricultural labourers to the total work force rose from 17 per cent in 1961 to 26 per cent in 1971. Between 1961 and 1971, while the total work force rose by 9 per cent the number of agricultural labourers shot up by 70 per cent.

Some light on the condition of agricultural labourers is thrown by the All-India Rural Labour Enquiry. One of the most significant finding of the Enquiry is that, while in 1964-65, there were 6.7 million agricultural labourers who owned some land, by 1974-75 the number of agricultural labourers with land had

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\* Agricultural labourers are those who earn a larger part of their total money income from agricultural labour on others' holdings.

shot up to 10.2 million or by 52 per cent. This sharp rise in the number of agricultural labourers with land suggests that more and more small farmers are being pushed down into the ranks of agricultural labourers those who, even though they own small plots of land, are compelled to depend on agricultural labour as their main source of livelihood.

The Rural Labour Enquiry has also shown that the average number of days of employment available to agricultural workers has been going down. Thus the average number of days of employment available declined from 208 in 1964-65 to 185 in 1974-75 in the case of male agricultural labourers, from 138 to 129 for women agricultural labourers and from 167 to 145 for children. After making adjustment for the rise in prices between 1964-65 and 1974-75, the average daily real earnings of agricultural labourers actually *declined* from Rs. 1.43 to Rs. 1.26.

The picture of the destitution of agricultural workers is completed by the facts about their indebtedness brought out by the Rural Labour Enquiry. In 1964-65, 60 per cent of all agricultural labourers were indebted; by 1974-75 this proportion had gone up to 66 per cent. Further, the average amount of debt more than doubled from Rs. 244 in 1964-65 to Rs. 584 in 1974-75. The Survey also showed how, during this period, contrary to the government's proclaimed policies, the agricultural workers' dependence on money lenders, landlords and traders for loans had actually gone up quite significantly. And, despite the much-publicised programmes of the nationalised banks and co-operatives to displace the 'usurious private money lenders by meeting the credit needs of the poor, in 1974-75 these agencies accounted for less than 10 per cent of the total loans taken by agricultural labourers.

It is very clear, therefore, that the process of immiserisation of all the small peasantry and agricultural workers has proceeded apace, indeed accelerated—even as the government has been spending thousands of crores of rupees annually on the so-called green revolution, as the use of modern agricultural inputs like fertilisers and pesticides and improved seeds by landlords and rich farmers has been expanding rapidly

and as agricultural production by this small section of farmers, together with their own incomes and prosperity, has registered impressive gains.

Apart from the immiserisation of the peasantry, another major cause of the continuous human flow from the villages into the cities and towns is the steady loss of employment by traditional village craftsmen like handloom weavers, potters, blacksmiths, etc, because of competition from goods manufactured by large-scale capitalist industries. Since there is absolutely no scope for their absorption in agriculture, eventually they too join the track to the towns in search of a livelihood and survival.

## **II. Plight of the Urban Workers in the City**

The majority of those who come to the city bring their families with them. Most often the whole family becomes jobless in the village, or they all need to work to sustain themselves in the city. Sometimes only the male member comes to the city. After he finds some stable source of livelihood he brings the other members of the family to the city. Another group of migrants leave behind the family as they cannot afford to maintain the whole family in the city and call them periodically to the city or go back to the village periodically. A small section of workers leave behind their families in their village to cultivate their small pieces of land, maintain their cattle, etc. A very important deterrent even for those with stable employment to bringing their families is their inability to secure housing, the high cost of living, the lack of facilities for the education of their children, etc.

Even after acquiring some industrial skill, there is little likelihood of the worker improving his income. This is because of the existence of a large number of unemployed workers who are willing to work for starvation wages. This makes it possible for employers to exploit workers in a variety of ways. Thus, for instance, even after 10 years or more of working at the same job and becoming skilled at it, a worker may still remain 'temporary' — living constantly under the threat of losing his job at any moment, and, of course, without

his minimum legal rights as a worker. The condition of permanent workers is only marginally better, in that, they cannot be laid off so easily. The myth has been propagated by employers, by government as well as by a section of academics that the industrial working class constitutes a "labour aristocracy". The utter falsehood of such anti-people propaganda is exposed by the fact that the proportion of these workers to the total labour force is a mere 10 per cent, and further that even the best paid worker manages to exist scarcely above the subsistence level because of the continuous rise in the prices of the necessities of life and because of the need to support a growing number of unemployed dependents, who, given the worsening employment situation, can have little hope of finding jobs. Worst of all is the position of those and their families, including small children, who are forced to do work like mud-sifting and rag-picking for 6-8 hours a day at the cost of their health. They are always on the brink of starvation.

What has been the role of trade unions in this chaotic situation? As stated, a mere 10 per cent of all workers are in the organised sector. And not even all of these are organised in trade unions. Badli and temporary workers have no place in unions even if they have worked for five and six years. These workers, 'recognised' as 'temporary' by employers and unions alike, have no organisation to demand fair wages or working hours. But even for relatively small number of workers who are members of trade unions, the role of the union as a protector of workers' rights is largely a myth. To take one example which concerns us here, the issue of workers' housing has never been taken up by any trade union so far.

Even unions which enjoy the status of 'recognised' unions and which boast of large memberships, remain totally silent on the workers' basic human right to a place to live in. They do not raise the demand for provision of minimum amenities in the chawls and slum colonies in which their members live. Is this because, their members, the workers, are not concerned about the conditions in which



they live? Certainly not. It is because the workers have no say in the working of the unions. The bureaucratic leaderships of the unions, who remain in control for years and even decades, just do not allow any ordinary worker-member to raise issues or to participate in the union in any real sense. The only participation desired from the members is in the form of obeying union directives, such as participating in strikes decided upon by the leaders on issues again decided by these leaders. The worker is thus in the position always of obeying and accepting—first his employer and then his union.

Most of the migrants from villages who seek employment in the city are illiterate and unskilled. They are not equipped for most of the jobs that the city could offer, except unskilled ones requiring hard manual labour. Their skills in traditional crafts, farming, etc., are of no use in the city. Hence they are ready to do any work for low wages. Often only one or two members of the family get some employment and they have to support the rest who are permanently unemployed or only partially employed. To survive in the city with meagre income they can get by doing odd jobs, they have to let even their six year old children work at odd jobs.

As soon as the villagers enter the city, they get involved in a frantic search for a place to sleep, or, if they have brought their families with them, for a place to leave the families and belongings while the male members of the family set out to look for employment. Those who have relatives or friends in some squatter colonies go there and put up with them till they find accommodation of their own. When only one member of the family comes to the town, they often go to so-called 'sleeping rooms' in chawls or hutment colonies, when they do not have friends or relatives. There are many who are forced to make this a permanent arrangement as they fail to find employment, or cannot ever afford to move out of these places and bring the family to the city. This type of arrangement takes care of many newcomers to the city since they often go through long periods of total unemployment.

There are others who have no co-villagers, friends or relatives to go to, and those who don't know where they are in this urban jungle. Nor do they have any knowledge about the squatter colonies. As they are absolute strangers, they initially live in and around railway stations, or markets, and pavements. As they come in touch with people who give them information about possible jobs and living sites, they move from place to place. Often they spend many years like this before they find a squatter colony or a hutment colony an already existing one or one newly coming up, to put up their own hut with all the resources they can manage.

A squatter colony can be anywhere-along railway stations, in the open space along railway tracks, below highway over-bridges, at the side of a compound wall, or on any pavement. In any of these places, people make a living place to cook and sleep. Their need for a home is often met by 4' x 4' to 6' x 6' space. When their place of employment changes, they too shift, hoping to find open space nearby to put up their hut. Many stay in such places for years, even for generations, provided they do not come under attack by the police and the municipal authorities. Even if they are removed periodically, they come back to the same place as no alternative exists. For, to be uprooted is not merely to be left without a place to stay, but is also a threat to whatever menial employment they may be engaged in near their living place.

Those who are fortunate enough to find some open space to put up their hut may do so in a corner of the city or suburbs far from their place of works. They are thus forced to undertake long and costly travel to their place of work. And, at their place of residence in the hutment colony, there is total absence of the minimum facilities. They have to struggle for a source of drinking water. Most often they manage with well water; sometimes they manage to get water, by tapping the water connections to nearby buildings or colonies. There are slum pockets which have existed for 15 to 20 years without a single public water tap in the vicinity. Despite all the Publicity and propaganda, the fact is that the Municipal Corporation has provided hardly 20 per cent of the hutment

colonies with the so-called 'minimum facilities' including drinking water taps.

According to the official slum census survey report of 1976, there were 415 slum pockets with 89,751 huts and a population 4.48 lakhs in state government lands; 309 slum-pockets with 1.18 lakh huts and a population of 5.07 lakhs in Municipal Corporation lands; 47 slum pockets with 58,061 huts and a population of 2.62 lakhs in Maharashtra Housing Board land; 120 slum pockets with 39,404 huts and a population of 1.97 lakhs in Central Government land; and 780 slum pockets with 3.22 lakh huts and a population of 14.50 lakhs on private land. However, these figures cannot be relied upon too much. How seriously the slum census was taken by government can be judged from the fact that the entire enumeration was completed within a single day by putting 7,000 persons on the job.

Those who come to the city in search of job, often prefer to live with people of their own caste, religion and region. So one finds many of the slum colonies functioning as replicas of the original settlements in the villages. Another type of grouping of populations in slum colonies is based on employment. Thus quarry workers, scrap pickers, scavengers, fishermen, municipal workers, etc, tend to be grouped together. In this way, different segments of urban hutment colonies tend to be homogenous entities in a highly heterogeneous city surrounding. This arrangement also makes for the traditional control of the caste and religious systems. The divisions along religions, castes and regional groupings also make for fights and clashes among the groups. At the root of these clashes is always some underlying economic interest and competition like control over liquor business or establishment of shops or other trade, or occupation of a piece of land for use as meeting place or place of worship or for other purposes. Often, political elements operating in the area who can rally round muscle power and take care of the legalities and the police side with one group or the other in order to get a foothold for themselves which can be exploited at election times. If the situation is such that both sections' support is required, they choose to play the role of peace-makers or mediators.

Though in the slums the migrants from the village are relatively free of the rigid caste hierarchy of the village set-up, they are subjected to types of authority and control which are not all that different. In fact, the objective conditions of the urban industrial setting do not change their basic relationships at their living and work places all that much. In the process of entering hutment or squatter colonies, they establish a relationship of dependence on a single person or group. This person or group has a say in a new entrant acquiring a hut, the payment for it, all transactions relating to huts, including extensions of huts. In the bigger slums, there are many persons and many groups. But the significant fact is that one finds hardly any hutment colony directly under the control of the municipal authorities who are supposed to regulate hutment colonies and related activities.

It may be useful to sketch here the predominant pattern of control and authority in hutment and squatter colonies. The control is always exercised by a person or group who has a higher material and social base than the others-including the ability to acquire and impose gang-power over the residents. When it is a single individual, he may be an old resident or the first occupier of the place; or it may be a few persons who hold the land, put up huts and sell them to other at anywhere Rs. 50 and Rs. 500 for the right of occupation and an unofficial rent deposit or donation ranging from Rs. 5 to Rs. 20. Occupation of vacant lands in the city in this manner by groups of people and allotment of tiny parcels to people in desperate need of living space is an on-going menace in the city. Most of the time, these gangs have the blessings of local municipal authorities and politicians. All they need to do is to gather information and locate vacant lands on which space for hutments can be allotted or huts can be built in a short time. A carefully laid-down plan is followed. The first step is to persuade, the local civic authorities by bribing, to serve demolition notices for the huts located on that particular survey number plot. The next step is to move the court for stay orders on such notices. Once these are secured, the land is parcelled out and allotted and huts put up and 'sold'. Sometimes people who have their own huts in other places invest in such adventures to make quick money.

The majority of cases of occupation of vacant land, however, take place in a less organised manner without the initial involvement of such "illegal" owners. People build clusters of huts in a particular vacant land. As the days go by, and as the squatter colony attracts more homeless people (mostly outsiders with the help of some locally powerful person or group), the locally powerful person or group succeeds in establishing authority over the existing occupiers and acts as their "protector", as well as regulates new-comers and controls all alteration and expansion activities of existing hutment dwellers. These individuals always function through "committees" or "organisations" of the local people with the help of muscle power and civil and police protection, which they can buy with a small part of their regular collections or their receipts from established business in liquor, matka and other such enterprises. People fall in line with the activities of these powerful individuals and groups since they need homes and want to protect their homes against the onslaught of the owners of the land, including state government, Municipal Corporation, or some Central government agency.

The "committees" are invariably composed of a few literate persons, some persons with muscle power and some persons with money power and political connection at the local and regional level. They do get done some essential tasks for the people, like securing ration cards, getting people released from the local police station, getting water connections, resisting eviction threats by the owners of land, sometimes securing admission to children to the municipal school, protection to carry on petty businesses, building common places for worship, putting up organisations for regional, caste and religious festivals, arranging recreation like dramas and film shows, sometimes organising bal-vadis and milk and bread distribution centres, setting up common study places, reading rooms, recreation clubs and medical clinics and settling of disputes. All this makes people reluctant to oppose the largely self-appointed leaderships of the committees.

In some cases, the contractor or the supervisor of the work place extends his authority and control to the hutment colonies. He establishes himself as leader by controlling his

subordinates living there. The family members and relatives of the "leaders" are directly in control of the area in terms of committee affairs (like collection of rent, subscriptions, and donations), and own tea shops, liquor distilling or distribution centres, provision shops, etc. Whenever the committee or individuals feel that their control over the hutment colony or a particular section of it is slipping, they reinforce their declining hold with gang power. Attacks on persons who question the established groups or persons are very common. At times, the punishment takes form of burning the huts in a whole area or of the 'trouble-makers'.

Another type of committee or individual leadership is established on the basis of trade and business in and around the squatter hutment colony, like construction work, large-scale liquor distilling and distribution, paper and scrap collection centres, quarry work, mud-sifting, metal breaking, etc. Workers who live around the site of these occupations are directly controlled by the mukadams or contractors or owners of these businesses since they depend on them for their daily bread.

There are also committees which are strictly religious, caste or regional based — like jammats, harijan sangams, etc — which are in effect village caste panchayats with very little difference in their functioning. They sit in judgment over family disputes, impose fines, collect regular subscription for religious bodies, settle marriages, divorces, adoptions, inheritance, ostracise people from caste or religious groups, places of worship, etc. Thus they become supervisors of customs and rituals from birth to death. People cannot have even a place in the burial ground of a particular community if they do not practise the observances prescribed by the committees.

### **III. Legislation Relating to Land, Housing and Evictions**

The flow of newcomers to Bombay city has been going up in the last two decades, so much so that it is now esti-

mated that about 350 migrants are added to the city every day. The migrants settle down on any vacant land and, with their toil and meagre earnings, build their homes there over the years. Thus the growing number of squatter and hutment colonies, on the one hand, and expansion of industries, public and private, and trade and business, and the demand for housing of the well-off sections, on the other, compete in their demand for land. Governments at the Centre and in the states have been constantly pressurised to provide and protect land for "public purposes", which means for use of the affluent section of society.

Nevertheless, the growing hutment and squatter colonies have become a market for goods and services as well as a reservoir of labour for low wages to provide the innumerable goods and services demanded by the well-off sections and for the export market, through multinational companies and other exporters.

The large workers' colonies are important also as vote banks at election time. To secure their votes, parties and politicians offer minimum facilities to the residents of slum colonies at the appropriate time and through appropriate channels. For the same reason, parties and candidates are keen to enlist slum residents in the voters' lists. The number of slum colonies and the voting population in these have so increased over the years that, in many of the constituencies, these colonies have become primary centres of campaigning as their votes would decide the fate of candidates.

The growing importance of votes from workers' colonies has resulted in greater involvement of party workers and party-supported committees in these colonies. This involvement generally takes place through the existing committees and individual leaders, as discussed in Section II earlier. They willingly assume the task of mobilising votes for parties and function in the parties' names, since this gives an additional image and stature to the local politicians. Indeed, such persons have come to be known as "social workers" and "leaders". Any programme for the hutment colony is invariably implemented

through them. When they fulfill the demands of a political group, they become the agents for providing minimum facilities to that area. That is why the small number of hutment colonies which have certain minimum facilities have always received these as gifts prior to elections or rewards after the elections.

The other group that puts pressure on the government about slums consists of land-owners and organisations sponsored by them, purportedly to safeguard environment and health. They constantly demand clearance of hutment colonies to far-off places so that they can use the land for private housing, business, recreation, etc. The large number of evictions effected every year and the use to which the land is put bear witness to this. The government responds to these pressures with legislative measures to support evictions on the one hand and on the other] with eye-wash programmes of resettling the victims of eviction. The myth is spread that the unhygienic conditions and overcrowding in workers' colonies are the cause of deteriorating health conditions' that they thus pose a threat to the citizens of Bombay — in which category the tens of lakhs of residents of the workers' colonies are evidently not included. The enormous health hazards forced upon the workers themselves in their places of living are not treated as an issue at all. Land-owners, businessmen and other sections of the rich succeed in exerting pressure for implementing Central and state laws to regulate the workers' colonies in their own interest.

Prior to 1971, facilities to workers' colonies were made available mostly through "local committees". These collected rents, subscriptions and provided some facilities to a small section. By and large, workers' colonies remained without any facilities and landlords with co-operation of the police, municipal authorities, and 'local leaders', could clear any land they required. As workers' colonies gained the patronage of different political groups, however, they attempted to procure some basic facilities at least. This is evident from the 1971 election manifestoes of different parties, which stress the need to provide basic amenities to hutment dwellers. In



fact this became the main election promise of the ruling party at that time. As a follow-up, in 1972, the Centre provided funds to the state under the minimum needs programme. Greater Bombay received an annual grant of Rs. 2.5 crores. The same amount was also provided in the budgets of 1972-73 and 1973-74.

Against the above background came the first piece of legislation, titled The Maharashtra Slum Areas (Improvement, Clearance and Redevelopment) Act, 1971. This act was framed in line with the already-existing National Slum Clearance and Improvement Act of 1956. The Act empowers the government to declare particular hutments or colonies as unfit for human habitation and as dangerous or injurious to public health. This certification was widely used to demolish and remove slums whenever the land was required for some so called public purpose or for business and trade. With hundreds of thousands of people living in appalling health and sanitary conditions, the Act speaks of this large section of the population as posing a threat to the 'citizens', containing the point made above that in the government's eyes the large number of workers in the city are not 'citizens' of the city.

The other objective of the Act was 're-development', which simply means provision of some basic amenities to some slums, which are certified as not dangerous or injurious to public health and 'fit for human habitation'. The basic amenities include street lights at the rate of one pole for 100 families evenly spread over the area, one latrine seat for 20 to 50 persons depending on availability of space, one water tap for 150 persons, approach lanes to houses, common pathways and streets to be laid by realigning huts and relaying gutters and drains. The last provision of realignment is hardly implemented, because if it were the hutment colonies would occupy more land. The other facilities have been provided only to around 20-25 per cent of slums till date. Even here, with the further growth in population since the facilities were first provided, these no longer conform to the minimum standards laid down. So the position is that, while the so-

called minimum is far below the requirements for basic healthy living condition, even this minimum is seldom achieved.

As a result of the Act, moreover, all those in old buildings and in new buildings were given tenancy rights, while the rest of those in workers' hutment colonies were called 'occupiers'. Those who were provided with so-called minimum basic amenities were to pay service charges to the Municipal Corporation.

The other radical provision of the Act relating to removal of all 'offensive or dangerous trades' from the slums was nullified by the allotment of tenancy rights to the buildings and land occupied by those carrying on such trades. All that they needed to do was to convince the authorities that their trade posed no danger to the public. The legal tenancy right provision helped such trades to multiply. Consequently, hundreds of industries, small and big, are located in slums. They are hardly required to follow any safety regulations and are free to dump their waste anywhere in the area. The prosperous tanneries, small-scale metal works, soap making, metal breaking, warehouses for scrap metal, paper and plastic, printing, etc, prosper in and around workers' colonies. Besides causing health hazards, they are able to draw very cheap labour from the colonies.

Another important purpose of the Act is to procure land for public purposes. But these 'public purposes' do not include housing for the workers. Till today, no land has been acquired through any legislation to provide housing for workers. Under the pretence of re-development this Act has helped land-owners—who otherwise would have had to take up the task of directly evicting slum colonies—to get the law and the State do the job for them. Those who had a hold on the political leadership at different levels, got the job done faster. Many chawl and building owners in the slum areas were able to carry out arbitrary and summary evictions and to implicate workers in a number of never-ending legal suits and proceedings for refusing to vacate chawls or for refusing to

accept raised rents or for failure to pay arrears. Most of the time they could obtain distress warrants from courts and evict workers.

There is another interesting part of the story. Eight years after the passing of the Act, an ordinance was issued which stated that "legal proceedings for evicting an occupier from any building or land in a slum area cannot be taken without the permission of the 'competent' authority". Though this ordinance was passed as 'progressive' and as intended "to give protection to the slum dwellers from arbitrary and summary eviction, in fact, having to obtain the permission of the competent authority adds a strong plus point to the landlord's argument in a legal case for eviction or even makes it possible for him to directly evict workers from their homes without any alternative accommodation.

It is not surprising, therefore, that following this legislation, widespread evictions took place, whereas programmes for 're-development' were hardly seen. To conceal this and to further confuse the people, another piece of legislation was introduced. The Maharashtra Slum Improvement Board Act, 1973. This gave birth to a body to implement works but only for hutment colonies on municipal land and that too only those which are not earmarked for eviction according to the City Development Plan.

The most difficult problem, however, was finding alternative sites and facilities for the residents of colonies which were demolished under this Act. Hence, the 'site-and-services' programme was devised. According to this programme, pitches with open drainages, street lights, main approach roads, public toilets, and water taps were set up in areas like Shivajinagar, Govandi and Malwani. Hutment-dwellers evicted from some of the densely populated pockets in the city were forced to go to these areas. Those who could not do so were rendered homeless. Those who did, were issued identity cards which say that they have no right to the land they occupy and that they can be evicted whenever the place is required for some higher purpose than their housing. These

workers were provided with 'spacious' 15 ft. by 20 ft. pitches and 4 ft. to 5 ft. lanes between houses with the 'mori' (drain) in the centre of the lane. One main road 3.65 metres, i.e., about 12ft. wide, was built in every area to provide access for police vans, fire engines, sewage cleaning vans, ambulances, etc. The per capita expenditure (revised) limit is Rs. 120. The Municipal Corporation started collecting Rs. 20 as service charges even when all the promised services were not provided. Part of this amount goes for the land and part of it is reserved for future eviction expenses. As only 18 to 20 per cent of the people were able to pay this Rs. 20, the amount was reduced to Rs. 11 in 1979.

These 'planned improvement works' have been mostly far-away, low-lying, and often mosquito-infested areas from where the people have to travel many hours to their work place. Often many have had to look for new jobs. After eviction, a minimum of 15 to 20 days have to be spent in gathering material to build a house all over again. As a result people are not able to go for work — thus losing their wages and in many cases even their jobs. Even in the best circumstances, most of the services provided become functional only a month or two after people actually settle down. Of course, thereafter, too they go out of operation regularly. Then starts the regular running from pillar to post to get them in working order.

The site and services programme also covers provision of primary school, municipal clinics, and maternity home. However, so far it has been seen that these facilities appear if at all seven to ten years after the population has been settled in a particular area. Indeed, the only 'service' which is provided to the site before the people come is the police station. For example, Cheeta Camp, consisting of people evicted from Janata colony in 1975, with a population of around 5,000 people is still waiting the inauguration of a 20-bed maternity home. The pathways and lanes were laid after the first monsoon; and to cement them took another year. Another basic requirement, considering the far-away areas chosen for the

site-and-services programme, is transport and it is provided only after years of agitation and struggle. In fact, agitating becomes a part of daily life to get anything done such as obtaining a ration shop, water taps, sewage cleaning, etc. And it is these hutment colonies set up in low-lying mosquito infested areas, with all types of diseases rampant, that the government calls 'model settlement area'. These are the sites provided for human habitation, where normally 6 to 9 live in 15 ft. by 20 ft. huts which have hardly any ventilation. To put up huts on the pitches provided to them, the settlers have to incur a minimum expenditure of Rs. 1,500. This money usually borrowed at very high rates of interest. Often, they rent out these 'houses' and go back to other slums in order to keep their job and get some additional income. The rent charged is any where between Rs. 30 and Rs. 60.

The 1971 legislation involved too long a process when the Central and state authorities and landlords wanted to remove slums and procure land for business and industry and upper-class housing. Also, the growing resistance of workers in the hutment colonies against eviction called for another piece of legislation. At the peak of the Emergency, another black law called 'The Maharashtra Vacant Lands (Prohibition of Unauthorised and Summary Eviction) Act, 1975', was introduced. The purpose of the Act was to prohibit unauthorised occupation of 'vacant lands' in the urban areas in the state and to provide for summary eviction of persons from such lands—on the ground, once again, that they were causing grave danger to public health and sanitation and disturbing the peaceful life of inhabitants in the concerned areas.

By this Act all the land on which hutment and squatter colonies have come up are declared vacant for the purposes of law and those who occupy them are deemed unauthorised occupants. The Act gives arbitrary and summary powers of eviction to the government. The courts cannot be moved against these evictions and resisting eviction is a cognisable and unbailable offence. Private landlords are prohibited from evicting any slum from their lands – the State is there to do it for them. Before the ordinance even became

law, there was the most exemplary eviction of 55,000 people from Janata Colony and their forcible removal to Cheeta Camp a marshy low-lying area near Trombay, with armed police intervention and hardly a month to go before the monsoon set over Bombay. The land was in this way 'freed', for housing just a few hundred people and for putting up a park. These latter were deemed as justifying the throwing out of a population of 55,000 just before the rains. The eviction of Janata Colony is not an isolated event. The same Act has been used to shift thousands of people to far-flung areas. During the Emergency, in Bandra East alone, the state government 'cleaned up' 29,000 sq. metres of land of workers' hutment colonies. The land was re allocated to the Maharashtra State Electricity Board, Indian Oil, and the Oil and Natural Gas Commission, for office premises.

Before the monsoon of 1979, a total of 7,500 huts were demolished in different parts of the city, including hutments from Cuffe Parade from where people were thrown out to Malwani (the distance can be gauged from the fact that Malwani is half an hour's journey from Borivli suburban station). The story was repeated again: before the people could build their shelters, monsoon set in. Soon after the monsoon, demolition of another 45,000 hutments was authorised, but the fortunate arrival of the municipal and Assembly elections spared the workers.

Large scale evictions do not mean that thousands of huts are demolished on a single day or two. Pockets are chosen and the demolition spread out over a period so as to avoid organised resistance. The recent eviction of the Bainganwadi slums in Gowandi, was resisted by the people living there, but their hutments were burned down — an easy and quick way to demolish 4,000 huts in record time. The Municipal Corporation had already announced the formation of permanent squads in order to demolish hutment colonies that come up in every municipal ward. The total cost of maintaining these squads — each manned by five municipal staff members, two sub-inspectors, 25 constables and 25 labourers and provided with two lorries — is estimated at Rs 10 lakhs per month or

Rs. 1.20 crores a year. The Municipal Corporation which pleads lack of funds for providing the basic requirements of human existence like drinking water and sanitation to the workers' colonies is prepared to spend this large sum to destroy tens of thousands of hutments every year and throw lakhs of men, women and children on the streets.

Some landlords in the city had meanwhile challenged the validity of the Maharashtra Vacant Lands Act in court. They questioned the government's right to collect rent from their private property and declare private land as vacant land. The Bombay High Court passed a verdict in favour of the landlords, in February 1980, and held that the Act was unconstitutional and confiscatory in nature, since the real owners have the right to use their property as they like for any purpose. The whole incident is an example of a fight between two landlords — the State and the private owner of the land — with the working class receiving no benefit under the law. Since the elections were approaching, different political groups rallied round the hutment dwellers to protest against the judgment which was followed by a spate of evictions. The landlords were now able to evict slum dwellers on their own. This enabled the government to start propaganda that it would "protect" the slum-dwellers from the landlords and issue an ordinance reinstating the main provisions of the Maharashtra Vacant Lands Act, restoring to the government the power to carry out summary evictions. The Maharashtra Vacant Lands Ordinance was issued by the Government on March 6, 1980. It is significant that, within less than two weeks of this measure supposedly intended to protect slum-dwellers, the Bombay Municipal Corporation carried out a massive demolition operation in Bainganwadi in north-east Bombay, ruthlessly burning down 3,000 to 5,000 huts. The Ordinance notwithstanding, those living in workers' colonies thus remain totally at the mercy of the state government and the municipal corporation. Private landowners have again challenged the Ordinance before the courts. Thus the tussle between two sets of landlords — the government and private property-owners—continues, with the tens of lakhs of people living in Bombay's slums as mere pawns in the game.

The next progressive measure of the government tried to deal with the question of land for housing 'weaker sections'. The Urban Land (Ceiling and Regulation) Act, 1976, was passed in order to take over surplus land and make it available for housing the weaker sections. The Act provides for a series of exemptions which, rather than its substantive provisions, better explain the purpose of the Act. The competent authority is empowered to permit a person to retain his excess vacant land for construction of dwelling units for weaker sections. Units with a plinth area of upto 40 sq. metres are regarded as for weaker sections, and these have to be completed in five years. These dwelling units can be sold, or given on hire-purchase, or rented out. Though limits are prescribed on the sale price and rent of the units, it is obvious that no worker would be able to live in such houses since he would not be able to afford them on his wages. According to official sources, under the Act, 154,784 hectares of land have been declared surplus. However, out of these only 1,357 hectares have been acquired. Exemptions have been granted in respect of 17,488 hectares. The exemptions have been growing over the years. Industrialists have been permitted to retain one-half to two acres of surplus land with the permission of the State Industries Commissioner or the Maharashtra Industrial Development Corporation (MIDC). They can retain even more land, if they can convince the state authorities with a 15-year perspective plan, to be divided into three phases, that the extra land is needed for expansion schemes. Nevertheless, there has been strong pressure from landlords, industrialists, and business concerns for the total scrapping of the Act. The reasons given are that the Act has "brought commercial and co-operative housing activity to a virtual halt, affecting development and employment". In response to these pressures, the Centre has obligingly agreed to taking a second look at the Act since it had thrown up some "practical problems" in its implementation.

Besides the workers living in squatter and hutment colonies, there is a very large population of workers living in chawls and one-storey structures in parts of the city. These are part of the first attempts to improve the Bombay Improve-



ment Trust and the Bombay Development Directorate (B I T and B D D), which were built to meet the shortage of housing already prevailing in the city. These chawls were located, far away from the work places, where land was cheap and construction was also of a poor type. They remained unoccupied at that time due to lack of transport facilities. It was only under threat of having their house-rent allowances stopped that these quarters were occupied by class IV government employees. Today these haphazardly built chawls and other dilapidated structures, built by big house-owners, accommodate migrant labour and make a profit. They constitute 61 per cent of the total dwellings in the city. A 1972 study on the housing situation in Bombay found that 40 per cent of the chawls do not have any bath facilities, 47 per cent no lavatories, and about 86 per cent are not electrified. There is every reason to believe that the situation in 1979 is undoubtedly worse than it was in 1972.

The old buildings and chawls in different parts of the city are constantly in danger of collapsing. Every year, there are well over one hundred house collapses in the city. In 1979, the Bombay Building Repairs and Reconstruction Board (B B R R B) introduced an Act which stressed the need for a government agency to undertake repairs and reconstruction of dilapidated buildings. In that year, it was estimated that there were over 22,000 buildings in need of repair or rebuilding. Of these 8,000 were stated to need urgent attention. However, by 1979, the B B R R B had identified only 486 dilapidated buildings, with about 8,550 tenements to be taken under its custody. Of these, it had planned to pull down 254 buildings with 5,050 tenements by August 1979. The Board had also indentified 123 buildings for repair, out of which by May 15, 1979, only 37 had been brought to a 'safe stage'. The above details speak for themselves about the 'efficiency' and 'speed' with which the problem is being tackled.

In 1977, the Maharashtra Slum Improvement Board of 1978, the Bombay Housing Board of 1948, and the B B R R B of 1969 were dissolved. A new body came into

existence with the introduction of the Maharashtra Housing and Area Development Act, 1977. The new body, Maharashtra Housing and Development Authority, with its planned effort and centralised control, will serve the interests of landlords, industrialists and business houses, first, as have done its predecessors.

## VI. HEALTH

The severe health problems and ill health of people living in slums are the result of the dirty and filthy conditions in which they are forced to live, their abysmal poverty, the lack of medical facilities and, last but not the least, the conditions of their employment or work which make it most difficult for them to take timely medical treatment for their illness.

Nearly 90 per cent of Bombay's slum population lives in temporary huts which are nothing more than pieces of metal, cardboard or wood tied together with strings. What is noteworthy is that despite the concern so frequently expressed by ministers and municipal corporators, Bombay Municipal Corporation's efforts to provide basic amenities in the slums have been actually declining. Thus the Corporation's approximate expenditure on these amenities in 1974-75 had been Rs. 1.71 crores, but in 1978-79 it was only Rs. 1.30 crores. Because of the rise in prices, the decline in terms of the actual physical facilities provided has been far more sharp. Thus in 1974-75, 1,171 new taps were provided compared to only 115 in 1978-79. The number of new AP/WC seats provided was 2,896 in 1974-75 and only 448 in 1978-79. In 1974-75, 1,71,087 running metres of drains were laid, but in 1978-79 only 43,700 running metres; and compared to 73,575 square metres of passages built in 1974-75, only 31,640 square metres were constructed in 1978-79.

Given the conditions of their existence, ailment of one kind or another is the constant experience of people living in slums. Undernourishment and inhuman living conditions are the immediate causes of illness. Unequal distribution of

resources and perpetuation and aggravation of this through the political, economic and social system is the basic cause of this state of affairs.

Diseases like gastroenteritis, influenza, malaria and respiratory infections and skin ailments of various type are very common in slums. Leprosy, tuberculosis, Asthma and typhoid are other serious sicknesses prevailing in slums. A correct understanding of the seriousness of the health problems of slum dwellers demands that we view this problem from the angle of their living environment, occupation and economic standard. On the one hand, their living conditions, occupation and economic standard takes them closer to, and makes them fall victims to, all kinds of diseases; and on the other hand, it keeps them far removed from the medical remedies made available by the progress of modern science. It is a tragic paradox that, while people from all over the country and even abroad flock to Bombay for advanced medical facilities, for people living in the slums of Bombay these facilities are unapproachably distant.

Unhygienic living conditions in slums, and low income and consequent undernourishment, affect the health of the people. The relationship between unemployment and health problems is often overlooked. Most workers living in slums fall in the category of casual workers, temporary workers, badli workers and self-employed workers. There is no sick leave or medical facility for these workers. Most of them live hand-to-mouth and they do not have any savings to meet expenses on contingencies like sickness and accidents.

Slum dwellers' reluctance to make use of even such medical facility as are available at an early stage of a disease is often attributed to their ignorance. In fact this shows the ignorance of those who draw such conclusions. Slums are often far removed at the extreme limits of the city, whereas most of the municipal hospitals are situated in the heart of the city and are overcrowded. One visit to these hospitals means loss of one full day's wage and additional travel expenses. Moreover, patients are often asked to purchase costly medicines from outside. Worse still, temporary workers

face the constant threat of being removed from their jobs for absenteeism. Self-employed workers are under contract obligations to complete their work (embroidary work on sarees, piece-work from factories, furniture work etc.) within a given time and they cannot afford to displease their contractors because their job is at stake. Casual workers cannot pick and choose; they must work whenever there is work for them. Going to private doctors is not a viable alternative, because their fees are very high. In these circumstances, people will not make use of medical services unless it become an absolute necessity. In other words, unless the illness becomes really serious. This is not because the people are illiterate or ignorant but is a reflection of the horrifying conditions in which people are forced to live.

And yet, when there is serious illness — aggravated because slum dwellers are not able to resort to timely medical treatment — even the poorest family spends all the resources it can muster to save the lives of their beloved ones. In the event of sickness, especially if the sick person happens to be the bread-winner, the family exhausts all its "liquid" resources in no time. The slum-dwellers are deeply attached to their meagre possessions like gold chain, ear-rings, brass utensils, radio, watch, etc. Though they may be badly in need of money they do not wish to sell these possessions. So they borrow money at exorbitant rates of interest of upto 120 per cent, by keeping their meagre possessions as security, cherishing the hope that soon they will be able to salvage their precious possessions by hard work and saving. In the case of prolonged illness, however, all their hopes and calculations are shattered. The poor borrower will not be able to pay even the exorbitant interest. In a short time, they will be forced to part with the precious articles they have pledged. The net result of the transactions is that the poor family in distress gets less than 50 per cent of the value of its article, the rest being appropriated by the moneylender by way of interest. In this way, a prolonged illness could be the grave-yard of an entire slum family and a great boon to the moneylenders who operate in slums.

The health problems of women in slums deserve special attention. When there are competing claims on the meagre incomes of poor families in slums, the health needs of women get very low priority. The prevailing culture expects mothers to sacrifice their needs for the sake of the rest of the family and women are taught from their young days that this is their sacred duty. This attitude becomes very dangerous for the health of women when it results in denial of their basic needs like food, medical care etc. The reluctance of husbands to accompany their wives to hospitals and medical centres is again a reflection of the same culture. Often men are led by the inhuman living conditions and frustrations to alcoholism. As a consequence, women are denied even the meagre incomes of their husbands for subsistence. This is an important cause of the physical and mental suffering of women in slums, and of the deterioration of their health.

Because of lack of conveyance and inability to meet all the incidental expenses, women do not generally go to municipal maternity homes for their confinements. Besides the physical inconveniences of a slum hut, the unhygienic condition and reliance on untrained *daies* places their lives in danger during child-birth, giving them no more than a fifty-fifty chance of survival.

The fate of T.B. patients and their families is specially horrifying. They generally belong to the category of casual labourers, temporary workers and self-employed workers, they go for treatment, only at an advanced stage of the disease. The reasons for this we have already considered above. They exhaust all their 'liquid' resources during their first course of treatment and even their valuable possessions are by then pawned to moneylenders. If a patient is lucky, his health would show some slight improvement by this time. He would resume work to save himself and his family from starvation. Under the pressure of circumstances, he neglects to continue his treatment and does not undergo regular check-ups. His doctor and the neighbourhood social worker may warn him of the seriousness of the problem. But the problem is not that the patient is ignorant. It is that he is the victim of oppressive

working conditions—no leave facility, no sickness allowance, no saving. Even free x-rays and free medicine, when they are available, are not of much help to people like him. They are destined to die inch by inch, leaving their family to suffer starvation and misery—and, of course, the agony of the impending death of their bread-earner.

The health problem of slum-dwellers is thus not basically related to medicine, doctors and hospitals. It is the product of their living environment, working conditions, and economic poverty.

## V. CONCLUSIONS

The review of workers' colonies in Bombay and the condition of those who live in these colonies points to a number of conclusions :

(1) People who regularly flock to Bombay in search of a livelihood do so because of the intolerable conditions in the rural area. In the rural areas, the large investment in agricultural development is benefiting only the landlords, rich peasants, traders and moneylenders. The overwhelming majority of the rural people, consisting of landless agricultural labourers, poor and middle peasants and artisans, are being progressively impoverished. Small peasants are unable to eke out a living from cultivation and are joining the ranks of agricultural labourers. However, even as the size of the agricultural labourer population is increasing rapidly, the volume of employment available in agriculture is shrinking. As a result, the earnings of agricultural workers in real terms has been going down. The ranks of the rural unemployed and underemployed are being joined by a growing number of artisans who are being displaced from their traditional occupations by competition from the products of modern industry. All these sections of the rural population constitute the vast and growing reservoir from which come the migrants to towns and cities like Bombay.

(2) These migrants to Bombay are particularly susceptible to oppression and exploitation in addition, owning no resources of any kind, and having only their labour power to offer; because of their illiteracy and lack of industrial and urban skills, and because of their isolation. Their exploitation is manifest in their economic condition. The overwhelming majority of them are unable to secure regular employment and are forced, together with the other members of their families including little children, to engage in activities like mud-sifting and rag-picking. Even the fortunate few who find employment of some sort remain temporary or 'badli' workers for years on end, despite in course of time acquiring skills. In short, they constitute a reserve army of cheap labour to bolster the profits of urban industry, trade and services. Reflecting their economic condition, the migrant workers from the rural areas and their families are forced to live in slums of appalling congestion, dirt and squalor.

(3) The myth has been propagated that workers in cities like Bombay are forced to live in slums because of shortage of vacant land. This is totally false. Our study shows that, even in the supposedly "over-crowded" city of Bombay, there are very large areas of vacant land owned by private landlords and industrialists as well as by the Central and state governments through bodies like the Port Trust and the Railways. It is equally false that the state government and the Municipal Corporation do not have the resources to provide the basic facilities for a minimum level of human existence in the workers' colonies. The appalling conditions of the workers' colonies and their residents are not the result of shortage of land or resources but of the government's basic attitude to them. The government regards the immigrants who continuously flow into Bombay as a source of cheap labour so necessary to sustain the industrial, commercial and other activities, both in the private sector as well as in the government and the public sector. For the fulfilment of this objective, it is essential that the population of the workers' colonies be kept in a perpetual state of fear and uncertainty and disorganisation and that the expenditure of public funds on them be kept to the absolute minimum.



(4) In view of the above, it is inevitable that the various laws supposedly for the 'protection' and 'welfare' of the people of workers' colonies are an eye-wash. For instance, the Maharashtra Vacant Lands Act, which seemingly protects the people of workers' colonies from eviction by dadas or private landlords actually only concentrates the power of eviction in the hands of the government. Government exercises this power in the interests of the private owners of land more efficiently, effectively and ruthlessly — as was so clearly demonstrated by summary uprooting of 75,000 people from Janata Colony where many had been living for more than a generation.

(5) It also follows from the above that demands and actions which are now undertaken by the people of workers' colonies, such as against eviction or for some improvement in facilities like drinking water and sanitation are bound to fail, though in special circumstances, such as on the eve of elections, some crumbs may be thrown to a small section of people living in workers' colonies. The crux of the problem of the workers' colonies is the people's right to own the land on which the colonies stand. In the case of housing for the rich and industrial and business accommodation, the right to undisturbed occupancy, amounting to ownership, is explicitly recognised through the device of long-term leases. In stark contrast to this, in dealing with workers' colonies — even those sponsored by the government under site and services schemes — it is clearly stipulated that the people are liable to eviction at the government's sweet will.

(6) The question is how are the people of the workers' colonies to be organised and how are they to conduct their struggle? The existing organisation and 'leadership' of these colonies cannot undertake this task. These so-called 'leaders' are nothing more than 'dadas' who act as brokers or agents for the government and the established political parties, in return for which they are given a free hand to terrorise and extort money from the people in various forms and to carry on activities in the colonies, such as petty trading bootlegging,



and prostitution. Clearly, the struggle of the people of the 'workers' colonies can be undertaken successfully only as part of the larger struggle of the working people. It has, therefore, to be undertaken by workers' organisations and trade unions. So far, however, trade unions have not at all touched the issue of workers' colonies, even though the majority of their own members and their families live in these colonies. To change this attitude of the trade unions, the workers have to strive, within their unions, to impress upon their union leaders to take up the demand for the right to a place to live as among the basic rights of the working people.



# Some Case Studies

The 13 case studies of people from workers' colonies (10 male and three female) given here basically meant to substantiate the facts stated in the report. The communities covered extend from those in Bombay proper (Worli and Tardeo) to those in suburbs such as Kurla and Ghatkopar and further to those in extended suburbs such as Malwani. The individuals range from workers in the organised sector such as mills to the self-employed, including those engaged in activities such as rag-picking and mud-sifting.

Without exception the case-studies serve to illustrate the inhuman conditions in which these people are forced to live. They clearly reveal that the people living in these urban slums are villagers who have been forced to come to the city for survival, with a load of indebtedness which grows heavier with each passing year.

Each study is meant to bring out certain salient features in the life of a worker. An attempt is made to trace, very briefly, the person's reasons for leaving the village, his experience of settling in the city, his actual living conditions in the workers' colonies, the power structure that controls his life and, finally, his awareness of the exploitation which is his perpetual condition.

Loss of land and indebtedness are invariably the reasons for leaving the village. Almost without exception all those interviewed have lived in two or more places before coming to their present location. Lack, in some cases complete absence of basic amenities such as water, toilets, etc. reveals the true nature of the people's housing and living conditions. To add to the physically unhealthy setting is the equally unhealthy exercise of power and authority by so-called 'committees' and slum lords. About 50 per cent of those interviewed are able to pin down their exploitation at their work-places. But the same number are not able to see, and consequently fight against, the injustices at their place of living. It is the basic insecurity of their existence that makes them cling to whatever

little they have and to try and make the best of the exploitative terms which they are forced to accept, whether at their work place or in the slum colonies where they live.

### **Ameer, Ramanmama, Nagar Govandi**

Ameer comes from a village in Tamil Nadu. He is one of five brothers and two sisters, because of which his father's small landholding could not provide a living and employment for all. In the village he therefore took up bidi-making, in which trade his wife and four children were also employed. Their daily earnings were Rs. 4 out of which Rs. 1.50 went towards bidi leaves and tobacco. The family of six found it impossible to subsist on Rs. 2.50 per day. Neither were his brothers in a position to help him.

The family had no choice but to leave the village in search of employment. They travelled to Bombay in stages without tickets. On the way they stayed at Adoni in highly unsanitary conditions. One child, a girl, died of worms during the stop-over. On reaching Bombay, they went to Ameer's mother-in-law's place, a pavement slum near Sandhurst Road station. He found employment in a relation's hotel, where he got only food and clothing. The rest of the family had to fight for survival. Within three years, the whole slum was demolished by the municipal authorities. The inhabitants were not provided alternative accommodation. Once again homeless, they joined a stream of people who were settling down on the garbage dump of the BMC in Govandi, near an already existing slum called Bainganwadi.

Ameer and his wife and five children now work for the whole day sifting mud. They buy mud at Rs. 70 per bag. This mud is collected from open spaces near the Highway and the money is paid to some caretaker of the BMC land. If big iron or glass pieces are found in the mud, they are sold for 20 paise per kilo. Mercury is added to the fine mud that remains to remove smaller particles of metal (including gold). This is a very laborious process involving continuous sifting with ditch-water. The mercury costs Rs 5 per ounce. It is purely a matter of chance whether they even manage to recover

Rs 75 that they have paid for the mud. This is generally possible only if particles of gold are found, which are sold to Marwaris for 50 per cent or less of the market value. This irregular earning is supplemented by Ameer collecting donations (chanda) from various surrounding slums for a mosque. He gets a small proportion of these donations (Rs 15 or so per month). The family is thus subsisting on a very meagre Income which is also very irregular.

As a result of this, the family is in the clutches of a moneylender. They have borrowed Rs 500 which they are repaying at the rate of Rs 22 per day. This amount has to be paid for 50 days. The total amount thus paid will be Rs. 1,100. Out of this Rs. 500 is the capital borrowed and the remainder is the interest, i.e., an interest of Rs. 600 on Rs. 500.

None of the children can afford to go to school. Working all the time in dirt and filth, the family's health is very poor. The nearest hospital of any size is 30 minutes' bus-ride, and the nearest municipal hospital is at Sion which is an hour's journey by bus. The closest railway station, Govandi, is 30 minutes' walking distance or a ten-minute bus-ride. The nearest school which also is only upto class VII is 30 minutes' walking distance at Shivajinagar.

Their desperate and highly insecure economic condition makes Ameer and his family easy prey to unscrupulous vested interests who can exploit them at every turn. Outsiders posing as 'social workers' have been collecting Rs 100 per hut from the residents of the slum colony with the promise of getting the huts numbered. These 'social workers' have got them enlisted in the electoral rolls and encouraged them to vote in the last three elections, including the last municipal elections. The people voted because they were promised basic amenities, which they still have to see.

Ramanmama Nagar is situated on municipal land. It is an 'unauthorised' slum. The huts are not numbered. According to existing laws, the slum can be demolished and the people evicted without being offered alternative sites. In the course of five years, their huts have been demolished four

times. Every eviction is followed by the leaders collecting more money, and promising them that their huts would be numbered. Local leaders and politicians pose as the saviours of these people in their distressing situation. Due to his destitution and helplessness, Ameer accepts this as the only way possible of securing their basic needs.

### **Marathe R. Chaskar, Indira Nagar, Ghatkopar**

Marathe Rambhau Chaskar came to Bombay four years back. He comes from Saigaon in Khed taluka, Pune district. He and his two brothers own 12 acres of dry land. Their only source of irrigation is rain water. The main crops are bajra and potatoes. The biggest landlord in the village owns 80 acres of land. The biggest landlord in the taluka, Manikrao Shivaji Patil, owns 500 to 600 acres. He is also the Block President. Chaskar was not able to say how this landlord got so much land.

The approximate population of Chaskar's village is 2,500, out of which 250 people have come to Bombay at some time or the other. In his village, most peasants take short-term loans just before the harvest, with the promise to the traders from whom they take the loans that the produce would be sold to them at rates fixed by the traders. Chaskar himself has taken a loan of Rs. 10,000 from a government agency which he has not been able to repay for the past ten years. According to him, everybody in the village owns land except for one family.

When he came to Bombay four years ago he stayed with his brother in a slum in Bhandup. From there they shifted to Golivara jhopadpatti, and again to a slum in Worli. Finally, in 1978 they came to Indira Nagar in Ghatkopar as it was nearest to their workplace. They bought the hut in which they are living at present at a cost of Rs 3,400 in 1978

Indira Nagar has come up on land belonging to the Defence Ministry. For that reason, the Municipal Corporation refuses to provide amenities to the slum. The congestion in the slum is such that one cannot even walk without taking the

support of the house-tops. The local committee has installed 12 taps with money collected from the dwellers. Water comes for three and a half hours only. There are no toilet facilities and no sanitation. The people have not been given any photo-passes showing that they are residents of the area.

When Chaskar first came to Bombay he joined a small company making acids. He had to leave the job after eight days because he could not bear the corrosive smell. He was being paid Rs. 6 per day. Three and a half years back he joined the present company which makes printing machines. The proprietor of this company is also the owner of two other companies which also make printing presses. According to Chaskar this is deliberate manipulation. All three units are situated in the same Ghatkopar Industrial Estate. There are 24 employees in the three units out of whom only 12 are permanent. The workers are unskilled when they are taken on and they are given training in the course of their employment. When they become skilled they are made turners or fitters according to the skill they acquire. This way the owner is able to pay less to 50 per cent of the workers. Thus the helpers get Rs. 7 per day and, according to seniority, the most experienced fitter is earning Rs. 18 per day, i.e. not more than Rs. 470 per month. After working for over three years Chaskar is still temporary and is earning Rs. 13.50 per day. His hopes of becoming permanent are nil because workers of 10 years' standing are still temporary.

In his three and a half years of service, Chaskar has seen 50 per cent of the employees changing—either they were removed from service or they left the job themselves. There is no overtime for extra hours of work. There is no ESIS facility. Workers are provided medical aid only when they are hurt in the company premises. Even then no compensation is provided. There is no casual leave and no sick leave. They get 15 days of earned leave in the form of 15 days' wages at the end of the year. They also get a bonus equal to 35 days' wages. There is no standard increment policy or any rules for payment. There are no canteen facilities, subsidised or otherwise.

According to Chaskar, the Factory Inspector comes and sits for some time in the owners's cabin and goes away without talking to the workers. He does not know about Provident Fund. According to him, there are two copies of musters kept by the owner. There is no union. No worker expects that the owner should provide housing. Some workers come from far away places, but they do not get any conveyance allowance.

Chaskar is able to see the owner as an exploiter, but he feels that workers are not prepared to demand anything from him. On the other hand, he is not able to identify any exploiter in the village. He has never participated in any struggle. For his slum problems he is fully dependent on the local committee. Members of this committee were present throughout our interview with Chaskar.

### **Robinson Ghorpade, Indira Nagar, Ghatkopar**

Robinson Ghorpade (35 years) is a two generation old convert to christianity. He comes from Jalna taluka in Aurangabad district. The family consists of five children, three girls and two boys. The two youngest children were born after coming to Bombay. After years of continuous drought, Robinson was forced to sell his land (about two and a half acres) and his family became landless labourers. They sold their land to the village patil and Robinson says that the patil still owes him Rs. 250. While Robinson worked for the patil in the fields, his wife was forced to do free domestic work for the patil. This was an accepted norm in the village.

After four years of this existence, Robinson with his family left the village in 1974 and came to Aurangabad town. They stayed here for two years. They worked for a doctor's family and Robinson was earning Rs. 30 per month and his wife did domestic work and looked after the cattle for Rs. 20 per month. In 1976, they came to Bombay and stayed on foot paths in various parts of the city for over two years. During these years the longest job which Robinson was able to get was for two months at Bandra earning Rs. 8 per day doing odd jobs for the church. Meanwhile, they moved to various

construction sites and the whole family worked on any job they were given on the sites. In 1979, they moved to Indira Nagar in Ghatkopar. Here the whole family took up the business of rag-picking.

The whole day is spent in hunting for rags which are sold to buyers for 40 paise per kilo. They generally get Rs. 5 per sack. The weekly income of seven people in the family varies from Rs. 12 to 15. The family does not know what is done with the rags which they collect.

At Indira Nagar they paid Rs. 200 to a 'dada' in the community to enable them to put up some kind of a temporary shelter on which they spent Rs. 800. The shelter is 8' by 8' and till today — more than a year after he has started living there — Robinson keeps trying to improve it by adding a few bricks, leveling the flooring, etc.

During this period they incurred a debt of Rs. 400 at the interest rate of 12½%, which they are now trying to return. They are also paying Rs. 1.50 per month for water to some people in the community.

The eldest daughter is about 14 years old and the youngest son is 6 years old. None of the children has ever been to school. Rag picking requires as many hands as possible and is carried on the whole day, starting very early in the morning.

### **Damayanti, Sherechiwadi chawls, Forjett Hill, Tardeo**

Damayanti's family came to Bombay from Surat over 18 years ago. They came straight to Sherechiwadi and bought a room on the basis of information given to them by someone in Surat, who had been to Bombay earlier. They only have a house in Surat. Damayanti (17 years) and two other children were born in Bombay. Her father came looking for a job. He was working in a mill. In Bombay he got a job as a ward-boy in a nursing home in Colaba.

The family consists of four sisters and three brothers. The eldest brother was born blind. The second is married



and lives separately. Two sisters are also married. Damayanti's father died five years ago. The family living in Sherechiwadi today is the mother, Damayanti, her sister and the youngest brother who is doing his SSC.

After her husband's death, Damayanti's mother became an ayah, looking after sick and old people. She works in Colaba and is earning Rs. 300 per month. Damayanti had to leave her studies two years ago after she failed in SSC due to lack of books and other facilities for study. Since her mother is out the whole day, Damayanti took up a job which she could do at home. She stitches mantles for gas lanterns at home. She has to collect a daily quota of cut mantles every morning and return the stitched mantles in the evening to the factory which is in Anandnagar which is ten minutes' walk from where she lives. She is paid 70 paise for making 12 dozen pieces. This takes her about one and a half hours. Accordingly, if she works for 5 hours daily, she earns Rs. 2.80. Damayanti earns about Rs. 70-80 per month. Her sister has also stopped studying when she was in class IX last year, and is employed in HMT and earns Rs. 250 per month.

Sherechiwadi is a recognised Municipal chawl consisting of about 400 rooms. It has been standing for over 50-60 years. It was being managed by a Marwari contractor for the municipality for over thirty years, until the municipal authorities decided to manage it themselves about 20 years ago. Most of the inhabitants have been there for 30 to 35 years. Today the rent is Rs. 30 per month. It has 15 toilets out of which three are for women. Most of the rooms have a tap, except for 50 families living in a back corner. Water comes from 7 a.m. to 12-30 p.m. Electricity is available provided the room-owner can afford it and pay for a connection. There is a chawl committee to which every family pays Rs. 5 per month. They have promised to look into the problem of toilets but nothing has been done so far. A local corporator has said that the chawls are to be broken down and re-built. Meanwhile the inhabitants would be shifted elsewhere and would be asked to come back after the chawls were ready. The chawl committee is still to answer whether they are ready for this or not.

Damayanti is conscious of the fact that the payment for her work is poor. Till the beginning of 1980 it was only 0.50 paise for 12 dozen mantles. It was only after they protested that the owner raised the amount by 0.20 paise. She is also aware that the workers who work at the factory itself are treated better. She feels that the talk of demolition and re-building of the chawls has been going on for many years and nothing will come of it. The reason she gives is that the chawl committee has not done much so far and that even today they have not given an answer to the re-building plan.

Sherechiwadi is located at ten minutes' walking distance from Grant Road station. The nearest Municipal hospital is Nair Hospital at Bombay Central which is 30 minutes' walk. There is a private hospital very near which charges exorbitantly. **Yashwant Babaji, Sherechiwadi Chawl, Forjett Hill, Tardeo**

Yashwant Babaji (50 years) comes from Satara district. He came to Bombay 30 years ago at the age of 20. His parents had died when he was young and he was brought up by some relatives. He came to Bombay because his land was swallowed up during the construction of the Koyna Dam. He had three acres of flat land two acres of hilly land. The flat land lay in the area of the Koyna Dam reservoir. Though the government had promised compensation, only one acre has been allotted.

Yashwant Babaji has two wives, one in the village and one in Bombay. He has two children—a son who is earning Rs. 250 per month as a peon and a daughter who is studying in class VIII. Both are in Bombay. The wife who is in Bombay works as a domestic servant and earns Rs. 50 per month. She works for three hours a day.

Yashwant Babaji settled down in Sherechiwadi 30 years ago and has been there throughout. He worked as a 'lohar' in Null Bazaar for 12 years. Then 18 years ago he joined an engineering company. By 1978 he was earning Rs. 500 per month. But for the past one year and nine months there has

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Malan's husband earns Rs 10 per day as a helper in a factory but he does not get work every day and so is able to earn only about Rs. 200 per month. If her husband does not get work for two or three days consecutively, Malan takes up work as a vegetable-seller earning Rs 6-7 daily.

Gautam Nagar is a slum which has come up on private land. It is unrecognised, and has none of the basic amenities of water supply, sanitation and electricity. The slum dwellers spent their own money for a water pipe and took a connection from the main water pipe. The nearest school in Shivaji Nagar upto class VII is ten minutes by bus. The nearest hospital for minor illnesses is at Chembur but all serious cases are sent to Sion Hospital which is more than an hour away by bus. The railway station is five minutes' walking distance. Gautam Nagar has been an established slum for the last 15 years. Four years ago it was demolished and only a handful of families got alternative accommodation. The result was that there was nowhere for the others to go, and they remained on the spot in kucha dwellings. People like Malanbai shifted to some of the area that fell vacant. Today Gautam Nagar consists of residents who have been there for over 15 years and others who have come in the last four years. Its strength today is approximately 1,000 huts.

The periodic threats of eviction continue. The huts are unnumbered and unrecognised. It was four years ago that the first threat of eviction was faced. A local committee came up to deal with the situation. It has been there since then. Malanbai herself is a member of this committee which is affiliated to a political group. Malanbai has taken part in two morchas. The first was about two years ago when the residents marched to Mantralaya demanding that alternative sites be provided before their huts were demolished. The second morcha in which she took part was taken to the M Ward office to demand that notice should be served before demolitions took place. For making this all-too-modest demand, the people were lathi-charged and over 30 were arrested, of whom nine were women including Malanbai. They were released on a bail of Rs 400. The police has instituted

a case against them on charges of rioting and disturbing general peace. Needless to say, the morchas have not resulted in their demands being met because, legally speaking, the slum does not exist as it is on private land.

### **Balram Ram Karan, Gautam Nagar, Govandi**

Balram Ram Karan (42 years) comes from Javapur Zilla in UP. His family has only four acres of land in the village which is being cultivated by his parents and brother. His wife and four children are in the village and three of the children are studying.

For the first seven years after coming to Bombay, he drifted from job to job, and was not able to find any permanent employment. For the last eight years, he has been working in Madhusudan Mills and was finally made permanent a year ago. He earns Rs. 500 per month. He sends whatever he can save to his wife and children. After 15 years of stay in Bombay, he has been able to buy only half an acre of land in the village. They have taken a loan of Rs. 5,000 to instal a diesel pump. Balram's savings sent home go towards repaying this loan and buying diesel. Even after incurring this heavy expenditure the crop failed in 1979. The family had to buy grain from the local kirana shopowner on credit. At present, they owe Rs. 500 to this shopowner. Balram's earnings sent home go towards repaying this debt also.

Balram was previously staying in a sleeping room in a chawl, which was near Madhusudan Mills. At present he is sharing a hut in Gautam Nagar with two other UP families so as to save the rent he was paying in the chawl. Gautam Nagar in Govandi is at least 20 kms from his mill. As a result he spends many hours every day travelling to the mill. He has no hope of ever bringing his wife and children to Bombay because it would be too difficult to find accommodation for them. Secondly, it would reduce his savings.

Balram is a member of the recognised union in his mill, but he is not very active in its activities. He knows that the union takes up issues relating to wages and facilities like medical

treatment, provident fund, etc. But he says that the question of housing for workers has never been taken up as an issue by his union.

### **Narbada Padave, New Jaiphalwadi, Tardeo**

Narbada Padave (45 years) comes from Chiplun in Ratnagiri district. She has never been to school. She was married at the age of ten, and lived in a large joint family consisting of her in-laws, her husband and two brothers-in-law who have families of their own. Her father-in-law owned five acres of land and on his death this was divided among the three sons. As it became more and more difficult to live off the land alone, Narbada persuaded a neighbour in village, who had been working in the city, to let her come to the city. This was 18 years ago.

Narbada worked in Lonavala as a domestic servant for a year. When her friend left that town to come to Bombay, Narbada accompanied her. Her first job was at Walkeshwar in a doctor's house. She was paid Rs. 35 per month, given two meals and stayed in the house, i. e., worked round the clock. After a little over a year, Narbada decided to find a small hut so that she could call her husband and three children, one daughter and two sons, to Bombay. She was able to rent a hut at Rs. 20 per month in what came to be called New Jaiphalwadi, a slum growing on the hillside behind Peddar Road, just above Tardeo. She also made a down payment of Rs. 300 to the owners of the hut who continued to live there also. Her elder daughter never came to the city, as she was 12 around that time and Narbada got her married. In Bombay a fourth child, a daughter, was born. Five years after coming to Bombay, Narbada's husband was killed in suspicious circumstances in a fight. There was no question of going back to the village as her husband's share of the land was never given to Narbada or her sons.

Her husband never found work in the city, and Narbada continued to support the family as before by doing domestic jobs. She never earned more than Rs. 60 a month. In 1976, four years ago, she got a job with a welfare organisation as a

balwadi ayah. The biggest advantage of the job was that she did not have to travel. She started working for Rs. 75 per month and today she is earning Rs. 85 per month. Her two sons aged 21 and 16 are not working. The eldest son gave up a job because he was offered a partnership in an illegal liquor business. They carried on this business for two months until the slum committee brought pressure on them to close it down. The youngest girl is going to school and is studying in class V. Narbada is paying Rs 10 per month to give her the benefit of a better education than "what is given in municipal schools". Her aim is to make her into a balwadi teacher.

She herself is not indebted, but both her sons are because they gamble. Narbada's estimate is that together their debts would come to about Rs 1,000.

Jaiphalwadi grew in the early 1960s and, when numbered in 1973, it had 388 huts. Since then its growth has been strictly controlled by the slum committee which was set up to help in the numbering. The Slum Improvement Board provided an open drainage system, 30 latrines for a population of about 2,500 and four taps with four outlets each. All the latrines are at the bottom of the hill, so the condition of those living on top remains unchanged. The highest tap does not reach at least one-third of the huts on the top. So water has to be carried 25 to 30 feet up. Water comes only for four hours daily. Before the numbering of the huts was done some people had come and collected Rs 100 with the promise of getting the huts numbered. Narbada also paid Rs 300 to the slum committee, as did the whole slum, when the official numbering was going on. Even so, her hut was divided into two parts and some newcomers were given half of it. Today her hut is only 6' by 8' in area.

The slum committee which has been there since 1973 has the support of the corporator. It consists of, among others, all the six shopkeepers of Jaiphalwadi. It does not collect a fixed amount but makes collections as and when the need arises for the celebration of festivals and religious weeks. All construction, from the building of latrines to attempts to

build pucca houses, is controlled by the corporator. A welfare agency is running a balwadi in Jaiphalwadi and the Rotary club is running a clinic. The corporator and the slum committee have both claimed that the services of the two organisations have come to this particular slum through the good offices of the corporator.

### **Lal Bahadur Sharma, Motilal Nehru Nager, Worli**

Lal Bahadur Sharma (25 years) comes from a village in UP. He and his two brothers own three and a half acres of land out of which two acres are mortgaged. The land is dependent on rainfall and the chances of crop failure are very high. His wife and sister-in-law manage the land along with one brother. Sharma, his eldest brother and their mother are in Bombay. His brother is living one hut away. Sharma followed his brother to Bombay 10 years ago and the two of them stayed in a chawl in worli until last year, when due to a disagreement they agreed to separate and sold the room and shifted to their present hutment. Sharma along with two friends bought the hut for Rs 2,500.

For three years after coming to Bombay Sharma was a temporary worker in a sewing company. Then he worked as a temporary worker for Bradbury Mills for six years and was made permanent last year. He is earning Rs 500 per month.

Motilal Nehru Nagar is a Municipal land and has been standing for 29 years. It is situated on the edge of the huge office complex of Shivsagar Estate. As such it is nearest to the main road and consists of 500 huts. It has three water-places with three openings each. There are no toilets and so the entire population of this slum along with that of the hutments further inside go to the sea. The nearest municipal hospital, Nair Hospital, is at Bombay Central, an hour by bus. Therefore, there is heavy reliance on private doctors. Rs 13 is cut from Sharma's pay each month for medical insurance but he cannot use the facility because the ESIS hospital and dispensary are too far away. The nearest school is at Worli



Sharma is not thinking of bringing his wife to Bombay, because it is too expensive to maintain a family. Every two years he is able to save about Rs 1,000 which he uses to go to his village. He cannot even think of buying more land in the village because the cost of one acre is Rs 7,000.

There is a committee in the slum which collects Re 1 every month. The slum people have taken two or three morchas for water taps. Previously someone used to sell water for 10 paise per bucket but now that the municipality has taken over this has stopped. Sharma has heard talk of eviction and shifting, but so far this has not touched their lives.

With regard to housing, his union has taken up the question of house rent only. Sharma is a member of the union but he is not very active in its work.

#### **Ram Chandar, Malwani**

Ram Chandar (32 years) comes from Kulaba district. He had two acres of land. Half an acre was taken by the government without compensation. The remaining one and a half were seized by the landlord because he had borrowed Rs 500 from him. He used to grow 20 kilos of rice.

In Bombay Ram Chandar is working as a watchman in Sahakari Bhandar, Colaba, and is earning Rs 275 per month. He came to Bombay 12 years ago. He stayed in Cuffe Parade until last year when the municipality demolished the slum and they were all taken by truck to Malwani. It took him three months to build a hut and even today it is not complete because of lack of money. It is a kacha construction of chatai and bamboo. It cost him Rs 2,000 to make and he had to take a loan of Rs 1,000. On this debt he is paying back Rs 100 a month plus interest at 12 per cent. Today Ram Chandar is reduced to existence at bare subsistence level. Out of his salary of Rs 275, Rs 160 goes towards the debt, Rs 17 for train pass, Rs 11 for bus fare and Rs 11 for rent of the hut. His wife used to earn Rs 8-10 per day working as a cleaner in Cuffe Parade. Now she is unemployed. He has four children, of whom two are going to municipal school.

Malwani is a resettlement programme of the municipality under the site and services scheme.

### **Balkrishna Mhatre, Nehru Nagar, Worli**

Balkrishna Mhatre (43 years) comes from Kulaba district. His family of five brothers owns seven and a half acres of land. They hire workers to help on their land, which has no irrigation.

He studied upto SSC in the village and come to Bombay 17 years ago. He considers agriculture a very risky occupation because if the rains fail then the harvest is ruined. After coming to Bombay he joined the Bombay Port Trust and was earning Rs 800 a month. This was a year ago. He has filed a civil case for his land which he won. But he landed himself in a criminal case of assault which he lost. Instead of suspending him the BPT forced him to go on compulsory retirement. Mhatre is still fighting the case. Though Mhatre is a life member of one of the unions, they have not taken up the case. At present, Mhatre is living by doing tailoring. He has his own sewing machine.

Nehru Nagar is part of a larger slum consisting of over 2,000 huts. By itself it consists of over 400 huts and has a population of over 2,500. Mhatre had stayed in various places in Dongri, Ghatkopar, Cotton Green and Prabhadevi before he came to Nehru Nagar in 1964. Nehru Nagar is situated on municipal land and the residents are paying Rs 11 per month. Facilities are inadequate because of lack of space. The municipal authorities are not interested in finding a solution because they are filling up and repairing a huge 'nala' (gutter) which is the toilet of the majority of the dwellers. They are then planning a road which will run over the slum as over the repaired gutter.

Mhatre used to be secretary of the slum committee, but is no longer holding this position. The president to whom he owed allegiance was murdered in a personal fight and since then Mhatre feels that the leadership has become ineffective. He says that the people are not ready to support him in the event of an eviction threat. He feels that the people cannot do

much If there is no strong leadership for a struggle. On his part he has decided to look out for a chawl, because he is convinced that the slum will be demolished sooner or later. He does not want to go back to the village.

### **Sriram Sakaram Chalke, Swadeshi Mills Chawl, Chunabhatti.**

Sriram Sakaram Chalke (34 years) hails from a village in Ratnagiri district, Maharashtra. He spent his early childhood in the village. The large joint family could not afford to send him to school beyond standard II. With the money his father sent from Bombay, where he was working in a mill as a temporary worker, the family could not even provide adequate food. He left the village at the age of 12 and came to Bombay with his aunt. His aunt put him to work in a small tea stall in the Ambewadi slum in Kalachowki. He used to work from dawn to dusk for Rs 30 a month. His feet often got infected due to the unhygienic conditions and continuous work without rest. He continued in the job for about three months. Later he worked for four years in his uncle's flower shop for just food and some little pocket money. After that he joined a thread making company for Rs. 60 a month. This was the first time he started to live with his father.

They took a hut in a Wadala slum for Rs. 200 and brought his mother to Bombay. He had to work 10-12 hours a day. Since he was interested in studying, he went to a night school at the age of 16 and completed standard IV. He was not able to continue his studies as his father could not afford to pay for his books clothes, etc. He then joined a cloth printing company in the Bombay Talkies Industrial Estate at Malad and worked for two years for a salary of Rs 35. After that he joined Morarji Mills as a temporary worker on Rs. 400 a month. During this period the Municipal Corporation demolished their hut at Wadala. They organised a protest, but in vain. They were left without a place to live in.

They put up a hut near the T B Hospital in Sewree. They borrowed about Rs. 1,000 from people whom they knew for the hut. Chalke worked for six years at Morarji Mill in the spinning department. One fine morning in 1964. 109 workers

including him, were removed from service. They were not told the reason for dismissal. The established unions did not take up the issue. By this time chalke was the only breadwinner of the family. They sold the hut for Rs 1,200 rupees and his father, mother and brother left for the village.

Chalke started to live in the Ambewadi slum with one of his relatives. For two years jobless. Later he was taken as a temporary hand in Bombay Dyeing, earning an irregular salary ranging from Rs. 150 to 400 per month. In 1973 he married the daughter of a worker in Swadeshi Mills and started to live with his in-laws in the Swadeshi Mills chawl at Chunabhatti. To make clothing and 'mangalasutra' for his marriage, he borrowed Rs 4,500 from three friends. He has still not repayed the loan; even now he pays Rs 350 as interest every year. In 1974 Bombay Dyeing made him permanent on a salary of Rs 500. His salary is Rs 750 now, of which he sends Rs 100 home every month. He had a son in 1977 and a daughter in 1980. He continues to live with his in-laws in a 10 ft by 15 ft space which houses seven persons. He finds unions useless. In the chawl there is no organisation.

#### **G. N. Sathyamoorthy, Jerimeri slum, Kurla**

G. N. Sathyamoorthy (35 years) comes from a handloom workers' family. He left Madurai (Tamil Nadu) with his brother in search of a livelihood, since the cottage industry could not support the entire family of six members (four children and parents). He came to Bombay in 1970.

He lived in Bhail Bazar slum along with his brother in a single room, paying a monthly rent of Rs. 350. His brother got temporary employment with Subash Silk Mill at Saki Naka which paid Rs. 175 per month. Sathyamoorthy could not find any employment in Bombay and finally found a job at Jalgaon. There he worked with Ashok Industries for a wage of Rs. 300 per month. He brought his wife and child from Tamil Nadu and worked for over two years. Finally he had to return to Bombay in 1973 because the owners closed down the factory. After coming to Bombay he took up a

temporary job at R. K. Silk Mills for a payment of Rs. 25 month. He sent his family back to Tamil Nadu as he could not maintain them in Bombay. Meanwhile, he lived with his brothers' family till 1975. During the two years 1974-1975 he changed jobs four times to secure a permanent job. He succeeded at R. K. Mills in 1976. He started on a salary of Rs. 500 and brought his family back to Bombay.

He secured a hut 8 ft. x 8 ft. in the Jerimeri slum, Kurla by paying an advance of Rs. 500 and a monthly rent of Rs. 25. To pay this advance he sold a golden chain belonging to his wife. His wife picked up stitching and sewing and sold another gold ornament to buy a sewing machine for Rs. 500. Thus she began earning an additional income of Rs. 150 per month which they tried to save. This saving was used to move to a pucca room of the same size for which they paid Rs. 1,000 in advance and a rent of Rs. 35 per month. After a year they moved to a bigger room (17 ft by 11 ft) where they paid an advance of Rs. 2,000 and a monthly rent of Rs. 55.

Though Sathyamoorthy has been in the same slum since 1974, he does not know the owner of the land. All along he has been paying 'advances' and 'rents' to local landlords. He took a loan of Rs 6,000 from a Chit Fund at an interest of 36 per cent, partly for the last advance of Rs 2,000. Today he has repaid Rs 3,000.

Only 30 per cent of the employees in Sathyamoorthy mill are permanent. The majority of workers are temporary despite the fact that there is work for them all the year round. There are around 200 workers who are casual and work as subcontractors. The maximum they earn is Rs 400 per month. Sathyamoorthy feels that the recognised union has never done much for the workers. He has never heard anyone raising demand for housing, either in the union or outside it.

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