

HOUSELESS POPULATION IN INDIA: ISSUES AND PROBLEMS

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ABSTRACT

Growth of population in cities is so fast that it has become impossible to provide adequate residential accommodation to all hence housing problem or what is known as “*Houselessness*” has become one of the serious problems of the city. The pressure on space in cities is so tremendous that large numbers of people are force to live on roads, bus stands, railway stations, slums and in poorly equipped houses. It is said that around 50% of the city people are wither ill-housed or pay more than 20% of their income on rent. According to 1991 census report, around 27.4% of the city houses are *cacheha houses*, 30.9% of the houses are *semi-pokka houses* and only 41.7% of the houses are *pakka houses*. According to one estimate (as reported in The Hindustan Times dated 9-5-1988) around 50% to 75% of the people living in urban areas are either residing in temporary houses or slums. The rate of overcrowding is so high that in a city like Delhi the population has increased from 2 million in 1957 to 9 million in 1990 and then to 1.63 crore in 2011. Hence every year Delhi is force to provide accommodation for more than 60,000 people. Mega cities like Mumbai, Kolkota, Delhi and Chennai are suffering from acute housing problem. In a heavily concentrated city of Mumbai more than 77% of the houses are found to be single room houses where in on an average more than 5.3 persons are living. A survey conducted in 53 cities in addition to the four mega cities revealed that more than 44% of the people are living in single-room houses in the urban areas. This paper an attempt has been made to analyze state and sector (rural, urban) wise growth and distribution of homeless population in India, In this paper, the census of India 2001 and 2011 data have been used to comprehend the size and magnitude of homelessness in the country. This study further throws a light upon regarding the problems of houselessness population in India issues and constraints.

Key words: *Urbanization, Slums, Houselessness issues and constraints*

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Introduction

In India the process of urbanization is at critical juncture. India is among the countries at low level of urbanization. However structure of urbanization is changing in India. There has been change in the pattern of urban growth. However a significant departure of this pattern in 1990s emerged from the earlier decades as the developed states registered urban growth above the national average. Urban poverty alleviation is the major thrust of development planning in India. However poverty eradication is a daunting task as the problem is gradually increasing due to migration of rural poor people in urban centre. There has been paradigm shift in urban governance in India. Decentralization as envisaged by 74th Constitution Amendment Act 1994 has led the process of municipal reforms and ensuring urban governance however the task of devolution of powers functions and finances to local bodies is still showing unfinished agenda. The escalating demand for urban infrastructure and services has called for mobilization of resources through public private partnership initiatives and introducing municipal reforms in urban local governments. The urban governance is also experiencing a paradigm shift. The policy on urban housing and habitat intends to promote sustainable development of human settlements with a view to ensuring equitable supply of land shelter and services at affordable prices to all section of society. The strategies for empowering urban poor are also changing.

Due to increasing urbanization providing houses to all the people have become a serious problem. The problem of housing has two dimensions. Quantitatively it refers to shortage of houses, and qualitatively it refers to living in sub-standard houses, unfit for human habitation. Rents are high in the urban areas and even middle class families live in slums. There are too many married couples in a room. Shelter is the basic human requirement that needs to be met on priority basis. Housing is an important source of shelter, comfort and social status; as “home” performs basic protective and symbolic functions (Smith 1977). Housing fulfills physical needs by providing security and shelter from weather and climate; psychological needs by providing a sense of personal space and privacy; social needs by providing a gathering area of communal space for the family, the basic unit of the society. Homelessness perhaps, is the most visible and most severe symptom of the lack of respect or the right to adequate housing. A conservative estimate from the United Nations (2005) puts the number of homeless population in the world to be 100 million. India accounts for 78 million homeless people (Action Aid, 2003). Homeless people are found in both urban and rural areas but ‘the rural dimension of homelessness has been almost absent in policy debates’ (UNCHS

2000). Rural areas one experience 'hidden homelessness'. Is due to the distinctive character of rural homelessness in which people tend to try to cope through makeshift arrangements that render homelessness more hidden (UNCHS 2000).

The houseless people are those who lack fixed, regular, safe, and adequate night time shelter and also one who has night time residence at a publicly supervised or privately operated shelter designed to provide temporary living accommodation, or an institution that provides a temporary residence for individuals intended to be institutionalized, or a public or private place not designed for, or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings. People living in substandard housing with inadequate facilities, should also be included under homelessness. All such housing arrangement often is an antecedent condition of houselessness therefore, rise in the number of slum dwellers can be considered as an indicator of increase in the magnitude of homelessness. But in reality it is very difficult to capture the actual magnitude of houselessness as large section of this segment of the population remains invisible. This is due to various reasons. According to the Census of India definition, the word houseless does not consider people who live in makeshift arrangements or in deplorable housing conditions. So, sections of the population who are vulnerable of becoming houseless are not considered. Besides, the government's official surveys are conducted during the day time, when it is difficult to trace the houseless. Moreover, the houseless population, out of fear, maintains distance from the enumerators.

Although problems associated with homelessness can be discussed in various spheres, social questions arise such as why homeless people 'lack ambition', why they are socially maladapted, why they are ignored by the larger part of society, and why they are considered to be a group lying somewhere outside the social system. These issues associated with homelessness have huge investigatory potential. Many authors have identified homelessness as a major and growing worldwide social problem (Forrest, 1999; Marsh and Kennett, 1999; Chris, 2006). Moreover, the homeless have significantly higher rates of exposure to violence and drastically lower rates of social support (Kennedy, 2007). In the sociological enquiry of Durkheim, Parsons and Merton, homeless people were considered to be aimless people living outside society or on its fringes who had, for different reasons, given up their former lifestyle or behaviours that were considered normal (Barak, 1991). Attributed to various structural factors and individual issues, homelessness is a major social and public health concern worldwide.

Causes of houselessness

Although most people do not become homeless, a significant number of people usually belonging to the poorest section are prone to become homeless. Some of them remain homeless for a very long time while some have episodic homeless experiences. There is not a single cause of homelessness but many. However, there is a long-standing belief that homelessness can be a personally chosen state. Certainly, several scholars have indicated that this notion is a widely-held perception (Wright, 1989; Snow & Anderson, 1993; Jones, 1997; Blackman, 1998; Pleace, 1998). Notwithstanding, this warrants a debate whether homelessness is a choice, or something different. Debate over the causes of homelessness is caught up in whether the focus of research should be on structural forces that permit homelessness to occur or the immediate reasons why people become homeless (Shlay & Rossi, 1992). Several authors have agreed that homelessness is related to a range of risk factors that can lead to homelessness and a host of negative outcomes (Barker, 2012). Research shows those at risk of homelessness typically face multiple difficulties, which may increase the likelihood of a young person prematurely leaving home and subsequently experiencing homelessness (Echenberg & Jensen, 2009).

Review of literature

Barker, 2012: Houselessness, a typical example of ‘social exclusion’, is neither new nor rare across the world. The homeless are perhaps the most invisible section of society, with its ‘symptoms’ appearing as vagrants, vagabonds, tramps, beggars, bums, mendicants, idlers, indigents, itinerants and the underclass. All these symptoms are interrelated with social issues that create the gap between homeless people and the rest of society. Homelessness is a potent and evocative social issue that has become emblematic of social inequality and injustice in otherwise affluent societies.

Census of India, 2011: In India, the Office of the Registrar General of India (ORGI), popularly known as the Census of India, is the authority to define and enumerate the homeless population in India. According to the census of India, there are three types of households, viz. ‘normal’, ‘houseless’ and ‘institutional’. The individuals living in these households are called ‘normal population’, ‘houseless population’ and ‘institutional population’ respectively. As per the census of India, the homeless households are those “Households which do not live in buildings or Census houses but live in the open or roadside, pavements, in hume-pipes, under fly-overs

and staircases, or in the open in places of worship, *mandaps*, railway platforms, etc. are to be treated as Houseless households”.

Kraus & Dowling, 2003: Unlike economic and institutional factors, sociological and psychological explanations are two sides of the same coin. Traumatic situations arise when the sociological situation becomes unfavourable, and vice versa. In a sociological explanation, one can stretch the importance of various institutions. The role of these institutions provide the basis for formation of society, which connects the people to each other through certain values, norms, help and support. The failure of some important institutions like family, community, lack of social support and networks are the major social problems of homeless family and individuals. Breakdown in familial relationships, including divorce or domestic violence, can have an adverse effect on human psychology and cause household members to separate or to flee their homes in search of safety. There are several triggers such as family breakdown, domestic violence, job loss, unsafe housing, sudden illness or injury, problems with family members, or an unexpected major expense, which prepare the ground for becoming homeless.

Robinson, 2003: Although a majority of the population in the world has some form of dwelling, roughly half the world population does not have the full spectrum of entitlements necessary for housing to be considered adequate. UN estimates indicate that over one billion people are inadequately housed. Discussions of houselessness tend to be shaped by a number of discourses concerning causation, definition, counting the homeless and appropriate responses.

Methodology of the study

The present paper is entirely based on secondary data collected from Census of India 2001 and 2011.

Objectives of the study

1. To examine the issues related to homelessness in megacities in India,
2. To suggest the measures for eradication of houselessness and effective implementation of policies for homelessness.

The process of growth of population and migration from rural to urban areas cause the increasing pressure on the urban housing and infrastructure, however, it can be much in excess of the supply, which in turn may result in rising land prices and growth of sub-standard living conditions for the relatively weaker sections of the society and even result more frequently of the housing shortage and the development of slums & squatter settlements and houselessness particularly in the developing countries of the world. The Census of India 2001 recorded 1943766 houseless persons in the country, of which 59.94 per cent was classified as rural houseless population and 40.06 per cent was as urban houseless population.

Table No. 1
Temporal changes (2001–2011) in homeless households in India

All Households			Houseless Households			
			Absolute		Percentage	
	2001	2011	2001	2011	2001	2011
Total	19,35,79,954	24,94,54,252	4,47,552	4,49,761	0.23	0.18
Rural	13,77,73,323	16,85,65,486	2,59,742	1,92,865	0.19	0.11
Urban	5,58,06,631	8,08,88,766	1,87,810	2,56,896	0.34	0.32

Source: Office of the Registrar General & Census Commissioner, 2011, India.

Table No. 2.
Temporal changes (2001–2011) in homeless population in India.

All Households				Houseless Households				Growth Rate (2001-2011)
				Absolute		Percentage		
	2001	2011	Growth Rate 2001-2011	2001	2011	2001	2011	
Total	1,02,86,10,328	1,21,05,69,573	17.7	19,43,476	17,72,889	0.19	0.15	-8.8
Rural	74,23,02,537	83,34,63,448	12.3	11,64,877	8,34,541	0.16	0.10	-28.4
Urban	28,63,07,791	37,71,06,125	31.7	7,78,599	9,38,348	0.27	0.25	20.5

Source: Office of the Registrar General & Census Commissioner, 2011, India.

To understand the scenario of homelessness since the new millennium in India, we have tried to capture the official information regarding homelessness data provided by the Office of the Registrar General of India. Data in Tables 1 and 2 show that, overall, there has been an increase in homeless households as well as the homeless population over the decade. This increase is remarkable in the case of urban figures regarding both homeless households as well as the homeless population. However, data indicate that rural homelessness has decreased over the decade. Concerning the growth rate of the homeless population between 2001 and 2011, data revealed that overall the growth is negative but there has been a huge positive growth in the case of the urban homeless population. This grim situation of urban India is partially attributed to the process of rural to urban migration in search of employment. Further, large urban areas with relatively high concentrations of poverty become the natural targets for the placement of emergency homeless shelters and other social services, developing into what Eitzman et al. (2013) have referred to as service ghettos.

From the state-wise distribution of the houseless population Table No. 3, it is found that generally the bigger states (Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, and Andhra Pradesh) have greater number of houseless population in comparison to other states. In majority of the Indian states the number of houseless population has declined. It is decrease is significantly noticed in Maharashtra, Gujarat, and the southern states of Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and in the north eastern states. The states which have registered a significant increase in houseless population include Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan West Bengal and Delhi. Whereas in Uttar Pradesh, both in rural and urban areas the houseless population increased. In Delhi, the number increased in urban areas but has declined in the rural areas. In Rajasthan, houseless population has increased in both rural and urban areas, while in West Bengal the number of houseless population decreased in urban areas but increased in rural areas.

Table No.3
State-wise distribution of houseless population by rural and urban areas

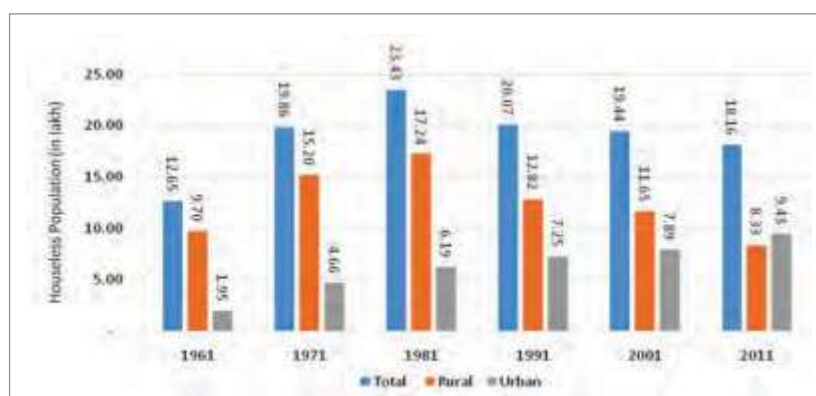
States / UTs	Total houseless population		Per cent (%) of houseless population to the total population					
	2001	2011	Total		Rural		Urban	
			2001	2011	2001	2011	2001	2011
Andaman & Nicobar Islands	242	76	0.07	0.02	0.03	0.01	0.14	0.05
Andhra Pradesh	1,63,938	1,43,787	0.22	0.17	0.18	0.12	0.32	0.27
Arunachal Pradesh	442	1,522	0.04	0.11	0.04	0.12	0.04	0.10
Assam	13,355	12,482	0.05	0.04	0.05	0.04	0.07	0.06
Bihar	42,498	41,640	0.05	0.04	0.04	0.04	0.15	0.11
Chandigarh	2,722	4,116	0.3	0.39	0.04	0.02	0.33	0.40
Chhattisgarh	28,772	22,991	0.14	0.09	0.14	0.09	0.14	0.11
Dadra & Nagar Haveli	1,478	997	0.67	0.29	0.74	0.39	0.42	0.17
Daman & Diu	1,071	730	0.68	0.30	0.65	0.24	0.72	0.32
Delhi	24,966	47,006	0.18	0.28	0.11	0.08	0.19	0.29
Goa	5,280	3,063	0.39	0.21	0.44	0.25	0.34	0.19
Gujarat	2,20,786	1,45,055	0.44	0.24	0.47	0.17	0.38	0.33
Haryana	59,360	50,703	0.28	0.20	0.24	0.17	0.39	0.27
Himachal Pradesh	8,364	4,119	0.14	0.06	0.13	0.05	0.22	0.13
Jammu & Kashmir	12,751	18,812	0.13	0.15	0.13	0.09	0.10	0.32
Jharkhand	10,887	23,092	0.04	0.07	0.03	0.07	0.06	0.09
Karnataka	1,02,226	79,424	0.19	0.13	0.18	0.11	0.22	0.15
Kerala	16,533	13,362	0.05	0.04	0.04	0.02	0.09	0.05
Madhya Pradesh	2,31,246	1,45,254	0.38	0.20	0.38	0.15	0.39	0.33
Maharashtra	3,40,924	2,13,511	0.35	0.19	0.42	0.16	0.25	0.22
Manipur	2,607	3,084	0.12	0.12	0.14	0.10	0.06	0.16
Meghalaya	1,827	1,187	0.08	0.04	0.09	0.04	0.04	0.03
Mizoram	336	110	0.04	0.01	0.02	0.01	0.06	0.02
Nagaland	2,002	791	0.1	0.04	0.08	0.04	0.22	0.06
Orissa	42,871	33,579	0.12	0.08	0.11	0.06	0.21	0.20
Pondicherry	1,662	1,622	0.17	0.13	0.06	0.02	0.23	0.18
Punjab	46,958	47,164	0.19	0.17	0.15	0.16	0.28	0.18
Rajasthan	1,43,497	1,78,226	0.25	0.26	0.20	0.21	0.42	0.43
Sikkim	286	305	0.05	0.05	0.05	0.05	0.10	0.02
Tamil Nadu	86,472	50,503	0.14	0.07	0.08	0.04	0.21	0.11
Tripura	857	3,307	0.03	0.09	0.03	0.07	0.03	0.14
Uttar Pradesh	2,01,029	3,19,700	0.12	0.16	0.08	0.10	0.28	0.41
Uttaranchal	14,703	12,104	0.17	0.12	0.17	0.09	0.18	0.18
West Bengal	1,10,535	1,36,914	0.14	0.15	0.03	0.05	0.40	0.36
India	19,43,766	18,15,854	0.19	0.15	0.16	0.1	0.27	0.25

Source: Census of India 2001 and 2011.

Houseless Population in India

The total houseless population in India according to Census of India 2011 is 1.82 million. Since 1961 onwards till 1981 the number of houseless population has shown a rising trend. The rise was sharp between 1961 and 1971. The number of houseless population declined during 1991 till 2011, but this fall was lower during 2001 and 2011 (Figure 1). In the rural area the number of houseless population maintained a rising trend till 1981 and since then it has started to fall. Whereas, in case of urban areas the number of houseless population has maintained a rising trend since 1961 till 2011. The picture of rural- urban differentials of houseless population is also an interesting one. Since 1961 till 2001, rural areas accounted for larger number of houseless population in comparison to urban areas. But in 2011, the number of houseless population registered a fall and was also, for the first time, less than the urban areas. The deference in the share of rural and urban houseless population has followed a declining trend over the years. To the contrary, the share of the rural and urban houseless population to total population shows that the problem of homelessness was higher in urban areas in 2001 as well as in 2011. Between 2001 and 2011 the share of urban houseless population has increased in urban areas whereas it has declined, though marginally, in rural areas. On the whole it may be concluded that homelessness has declined in the rural areas in comparison to the urban areas, where it is a rising phenomenon. The probable reason behind this is that the rural poor migrate to urban areas in search of employment and better living condition and end up with a poorly paid job or remain unemployed. This jeopardizes their chance of affording a house hence they add to the number of houseless population in the urban areas.

Figure 1: Houseless population in India, 1961-2011



Source: Census of India 2011

Eradication of houselessness and effective implementation of policies

- ✓ National Urban Housing and Habitat Policy 2007, which was last revised in 2007, advocates public-private partnership for providing affordable housing for all and specifically to the urban poor. The policy focuses on multiple stakeholders like private sector, cooperatives, industrial sector (for labour housing and services) and institutional sector (employee housing) to meet the housing needs. It was estimated that in 2006-07, the housing shortage in India was 24.7 million, of which 99 per cent belonged to Economically Weaker Sections (EWS) and Lower Income Groups (LIG).
- ✓ Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM) has taken major policy initiative to meet the challenge by emphasizing on increased supply of land through, increased incentive for higher FSI, Transfer of Development Right (TDR), increase inflow of funds and reservation of 10-15 per cent in every new public-private project or 20-25 per cent of FSI, whichever is higher, for EWS and LIG. States were asked to prepare 10 years Perspective Plan for EWS and LIG. JNNURM has two sub-components to address housing needs of the urban poor, namely, BSUP (Basic Services to the Urban Poor), in 63 JNNURM Cities and IHSDP (Integrated Housing and Slum Development Programme) in rest of the cities.
- ✓ To mitigate the problem of homelessness in rural areas scheme like Indira Awas Yojana (IAY) which was launched as a subschema of Rural Landless Employment Guarantee Programme (RLEGP), were launched. The main objective of the scheme was to provide free dwelling units to the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe population and to the freed bonded labourers living below poverty line.
- ✓ Government of Andhra Pradesh Housing Government have planned to construct 25.00 lakh houses (14 lakh in Rural areas including UDAs and 11 lakh in Urban areas ULBs) in the next 4 years as a part of “Navaratnalu” with an estimated total project cost of Rs.61,000 crores to provide **Pucca houses** to all eligible. As a part of this, it is proposed to take up 15.00 Lakh houses during the financial year 2020-21. It is planned to provide house sites to all the poor and needy and also register the land along with the house on the name of women and allot sites and also facilitate to provide loans @ “Pavala Interest” through the banks and other financial agencies, for the amount required over and above unit cost.. Government have already taken steps for acquiring land and also proposed to distribute house site pattas to 25.00 Lakh beneficiaries on 8.7.2020.

- ✓ The State Government is giving top priority to provide protected drinking water to all urban local bodies by strengthening existing infrastructure and improving service levels. During this year 135 MLD of clear water generation treatment capacity plants have been commissioned. Frequency of supply and per capita supply has been improved in 5ULBs, about 32,000. House Service Connections have been added in this year. During the year 2019-20, 5(Five) water supply schemes have been completed under AMRUT, HUDCO&UIDSSMT.
- ✓ A.P State Housing Corporation (APSHCL) has been identified as nodal agency to implement both central and state sponsored housing schemes in the state. Government have sanctioned 17.57 lakh houses since 2014 with a project cost of Rs.33643.98 Crores. 4.76 lakh (pertaining to the schemes prior to 2014) houses were completed as on 01.04.2014. From 2014, a total 22.33 lakh houses were taken up and so far, 8.23 lakh houses completed up to 31-03-2020. 6,56,482 houses proposed for cancellation under various housing schemes. The total work load in the state is 8.03 lakh houses under Rural and Urban Housing through APSHCL.

Suggestions

- ✓ People who migrate to the city face the housing problem. Existing residents of the cities are also not having satisfactory housing accommodation. Hence city administration must make it a policy to encourage housing industry. It can give encouragement to the private builder relax the rigid rules for the construction of house and the private public and the co-operative housing boards may be given all the necessary help to construct as many houses as possible. Employment government servants and private individuals who want to construct houses for self-occupation must be helped in getting loans from the nationalised banks, housing boards, co-operative societies, etc.
- ✓ The National Housing Policy which the central government presented in 1988 to the Parliament should be made more workable. The existing Rent Control Act must further be amended so as to give courage to the owners of houses to give houses on reasonable rent to the needy people.
- ✓ Primary prevention from houselessness could be affordable housing, social housing, creating employment opportunities and demolishing discrimination. Homelessness is largely driven by the lack of affordable housing. Families with extremely low incomes, thin support networks, poor credit and employment histories, and individual problems

may find themselves at a disadvantage in the competition for rare affordable housing units.

- ✓ Providing employment opportunities will not only enable people to earn money and make them self-reliant but it will also help to prevent social exclusion from other members of the society.
- ✓ Better health and education services will enable poor people to do work and can make them a resource for the country. Further, socio-economic equality will also make people realize their humanity that will enhance the understanding of common people towards the problems associated with homelessness.

Conclusion

This paper discussed the issues of homelessness with causes and consequences of being homeless. Although it is very difficult to cover issues and problems related to homelessness under one roof, this study is a small attempt to understand the relationship between social science research and social policy for future discourses on homelessness, especially in developing nations like India. Destruction and displacement caused by conflicts or natural disasters are also major forces that cause people to enter into homelessness. Major forces like urban gentrification, disasters and conflict accompanied by rising property prices and rental rates are pushing poor families into risky circumstances, including homelessness. This actively pushes people out of mainstream society and at times into homelessness.

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