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RESEARCH ARTICLE

HOUSING AND MIGRATION: MARGINALISING THE MARGINALISED.

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Abstract

Migration in India has been a historical process which has re emerged as a strong force shaping cities and urbanisation. Urban poor and migration are closely interrelated. This paper reflects on the linkages of urban poor migrants and their housing concerns with specific focus on women and children, who are considered to be the most vulnerable. Furthermore, the paper investigates whether housing policy concerns of the urban migrants has been addressed or they still remain invisible in the eyes of urban policy makers.

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The Urban and Urbanisation:-

Urbanisation is an integral part of the process of economic growth. As in most countries, India's urban areas make a major contribution (63 per cent) to the country's GDP (Planning Commission of India, 2007-12). About one third of India's population live in urban areas and contributes two third of the country's GDP and account for ninety percent of government revenues. At this juncture it becomes essential to understand that the urban populace in India is in an expansion mode and requires strategic urban planning that fosters sustainable and just cities and communities. Critical issues that are emerging in urban areas include poor local governance, weak finances, high costs of housing specifically in Tier 1 cities, critical infrastructure shortages and major service deficiencies that include water, power and transportation crisis coupled with deteriorating environment (World Bank News, 2011).

Urban India is reflective of diversity, today it is "distributed" in shape - with a diverse range of large and small cities spread widely across the nation. According to Census (2011) there are 7,935 towns in the country. Out of these, 468 are Class 1 cities (having at least 1,00,000 persons as population) and constitutes 70 percent of the total urban population. Out of 468 UAs/Towns belonging to Class I category, 53 UAs/Towns each has a population of one million or above each. Known as Million Plus UAs/Cities and are the major urban centres in the country. 42.6% of the urban population live in these Million Plus UAs/Cities. In addition, the Census (2011) also reveals that 45.36 crores (37 percent) of Indians are migrants in India.

As the urban population is on an increase with unbalanced migration flows, the demand for every key service will increase several folds in the cities. Given this scenario if India keeps following the current path of governance it will fail to ensure sustainable and inclusive cities i.e. SDG 11 (The 12th Five Year Plan, 2012-17). India needs to effectively manage its urbanization process by creating inclusive cities, functional urban local governance, low income housing and outreach of basic services and for this equitable planning has to be followed by effective implementation.

Migration and Right to the City:-

The term "migrant" conjures up images of the poor and destitute that work in the informal economy and live in slums or jhuggis. There is certain unsaid understanding about an ideal city dweller as belonging to a certain social

and economic class, who is conceived as a resident around whom the bulk of urban planning and development is focussed (The Business Line, 2012).

Indian cities have evolved through various migrations over a long period of time, they are characterised by diversity in terms of ethnic and religious identities, occupations, language, culture, food habits and so on. In fact heterogeneity is the hallmark of cities and innovations -in which migrants have played a very significant role. They are the central to city's existence. Migration, specifically internal migration, contributes significantly to the growth of Indian cities. The Article 19 of the Indian Constitution guarantees freedom of movement and freedom to settle within the territory of India as a fundamental right to all citizens. Yet migrants face several barriers in terms of access to civic amenities, housing and employment, as well as restrictions on their political and cultural rights because of their linguistic and cultural differences. These discriminations are articulated in various parts of India in the theory of 'sons of the soil' which invokes anti-migrants sentiments for eg: The 'son of the soil' practice in Mumbai has invoked much tension in the recent past and still continues grow (Bhagat, 2011). The conditions of migrants in cities needs to be addressed, the urban policies and programmes should reflect their concerns.

The experience of many emerging economies indicate migration has tremendous potential to improve human development. At present, more than a billion people rely on international and internal migration to escape poverty and conflict, adapt to environmental and economic shocks, and improve health and education. On the other hand, in the context of India migration also enhances social prestige and family status. There are several opportunities involved in migration like it fills gaps in demand for and supply of labour, return migration brings knowledge, skills and innovation. In India many people migrate from the rural areas and small towns to the urban space in search of livelihood. Internal migration in the State is many times larger than external migration (UN, 2017).

Migration raises a central issue for the right to the city -the right for everyone, including migrants, to access the benefits that the city has to offer -and how best to promote awareness of, and representation for migrants within the city. Despite immense potential of the migrants to contribute to urban development, the treatment that is meted out to them is largely exclusionary and discriminatory in nature. This exclusion of migrants is sustained through ethnic polarisation and a negative attitude towards the process of migration and urbanisation. Migration is also not recognised in the planning process in the various programmes and schemes of the Government. City planning in this context has failed to realise the migrant's right to the city. Migrants are blamed for rising crime and problems of law and order in the city, a threat to national security! (Bhagat, 2011).

The Housing and Migration Linkage:-

Sustainable housing and urban development was placed at the centre of the New Urban Agenda of Habitat III, 2016. On the 17th June 2015, the Union Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister gave its approval to the Housing for All Mission which promised to build 20 million affordable houses by 2022. According to the data released by MoHUA in December 2017, only 3.61 lakh houses have been constructed and 32 lakh houses have been sanctioned over 2.5 years. Around 87% of the houses constructed belong to the subsumed programmes of erstwhile housing programs like JNNURM and RAY and only 13% houses were constructed under Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana Urban [PMAY(U)]. (Lok Sabha Unstarred Question No. 1167, 2017). The Government so far has done very little to address India's urban housing crisis, which affects the poorest and most marginalised populations in cities. In this process millions of migrant workers in Indian cities are pushed to the peripheries, both spatially as well as in the imaginations of the urban planners (The Wire, 2018).

The housing market in particular is in crisis and the Government has failed to ensure affordable housing to the urban poor. The issue of housing for migrants in India is increasingly significant, the migrant has no real choice -they must choose a slum or the street. Most urban migrants engage in what are commonly called daily wage labour, vending, domestic work, etc. They are unable to access any employee benefits such as sick leaves and pensions; they are compelled to live in cheap unhygienic conditions that definitely have long term implications on their health. Additionally, the lack of adequate housing of the migrant populace is coupled with their lack of access to basic services like no toilets in the community or its vicinity, open defecation is a common practice, non functional urban health posts, water crisis and many more. The current housing policies along with Government's ambitious Smart Cities Mission has definitely achieved one thing i.e marginalising the marginalised. To top it all, the Government has been at continuous level playing an antithetical role of forcefully evicting persons like urban slum residents, homeless communities, street vendors, construction labour from their homes, streets and city spaces (YUVA, 2016).

Despite emphasis on 'empowerment' over 'entitlement' -the government's social policy agenda alongside welfare schemes comes with its own set of problems (The Wire, 2017). Barring demonetisation, which caused hardships to the common people, the government has not conceived anything new, the role has been to repackage the welfare schemes and its simultaneous failure to implement them (The Indian Express, 2018).

A large chunk of the migrant population are also homeless, these are people sleeping without shelter, found in places such as roadsides, pavements, drainage pipes, under staircases, or in the open, temple madaps, platforms and the like -they have no security. The question here is do homeless migrants matter to the State? Following the wave of economic globalisation, cities like Mumbai have become more interested in wooing the real estate magnates and builders to redevelop slums and dilapidated open spaces on a commercial basis to transform the face of 'urban' altogether. All open spaces, slums, low income housing areas, at times, middle class areas also are getting appropriated by the above design of ushering in an era of a global 'urban' that happens to be much more complex than before. As a natural outcome, the number of urban homeless is found to have been increasing with a concomitant withdrawal of State from generating employment, providing housing and services for many (Jha and Pushpendra, 2016).

The major question of housing should be contextualised within larger question of their integration with the city, and right to city itself. The Housing for All by 2022 will remain a rhetoric and India's urban housing crisis will only aggravate further if the Government fails to listen to the needs of the this large cross section of urban populations (The Wire, 2018).

Positioning Migrant Women and Children in the Context of Housing:- Women:-

In India, around 69.7 percent migrants are females. It is estimated that most men migrate for work and most women migrate for marriage (65.9 percent) (Census, 2011). Migration involves dominant identities like caste and gender. Patriarchal power relations continue to be embedded in religious, caste, place and gender-based identities in cities, despite increased urbanisation and mobility. The decision of whether women family members can work outside the home is often made by men. Working women have to take care of both household chores and workplace duties, they have little control over their salaries and wages. Migration has taken women from the sphere of traditional gender relations in rural areas to a new patriarchal set up embedded in the conjugal family system and the separation of the living space from the workplace. Studies show that women migrant workers are the more vulnerable to violence and exploitation than their male counterparts. Women's safety and security are a matter of great concern in the cities, and the issue is acute with respect to migrant women (Bhagat, 2017). The urban planning in India is not at all women friendly. The women living in the urban slums as well as the urban homeless women face the risk of violence especially during the night, when toilet facilities are not available within residential premises or are located far outside the home. Interactions with homeless women reveal ugly incidents where they were molested and harassed in the night when they were sleeping out in the open. There is appalling shortage of basic services like water supply in the residential premises also forces women to spend more time on water collection. At this juncture it is important to mention that women are not a homogenous group, and some are more vulnerable than the others. There are poor migrant women and these women face greater disadvantages as compared to middle and upper class urban women (Bhagat, 2017).

Not all economically poor migrant women engage in work, there are home makers as well as home based workers whose contribution are enormous. In this context the lack of housing is a serious problem for migrants in Indian cities. Shortage of basic amenities, lack of identity proofs, denial of social and health benefits, hostile attitudes and violence against women are only some of the issues that reflect how migrant women suffer at the hands of patriarchal values and practices -these discriminatory practices deny them the right to the city. This is a vicious cycle and if we look at the conditions of women from the housing perspective, it can be estimated that lack of housing or shelter doubly affects their security.

Children:-

Children migrate with their parents, who further migrate in search of livelihood so as to give their family especially their children a better standard of living. Children migrants are even more vulnerable than the others. This paper is looking at children in the slums and homeless children located in the urban space referred to as urban poor. Slums have witnessed a substantial increase in urban population owing to natural growth factor and the inability of migrant

to find space in cities other than slums or else they are homeless. A report by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation presented the following findings:

1. Around 7.6 million children in the age group of 0 to 6 years live in the slums of India and constitute 13.1 percent of the total child population of the urban areas.
2. Maharashtra, which is the largest number of slum enumeration blocks (21,359), also has the highest slum child population with around 1.7 million children (between 0 to 6 years) staying in slums

The poor housing and lifestyle causes a number of problems like indoor pollution, degradation of air quality, increase incidence of communicable diseases that prey on the children, lack of water supply, improper sanitation facilities, illiteracy and unemployment leads to increasing social problems like drug abuse of young children who engage in drug intake and supply, alcoholism and criminal activities. In urban India, it is not just the lack of housing for the homeless which is a problem. Even those living in houses face the problem of poor quality of housing. The number of dilapidated houses in urban India is more than 2.27 million (2.9 percent of total occupied houses). Such houses are unsafe, particularly for children, who cannot look after themselves. We see that urban poor children are growing in an unstable and difficult environment which cities currently offer. They face difficulties of living in the slums or on the streets where the crime rate is on the rise. The roof on their is inadequate and some of the them do not even have that too, their access to basic services is poor indeed. Urban policies and schemes needs to take into consideration children's population a crucial subset of the larger urban population (Save the Children Report, 2015).

The Road to Transformative Change:-

Cities are engines for sustainable development. Urban spaces offer opportunities for people to prosperous cities that can accomodate people in decent jobs and where land resources are not overwhelmed by growth. The challenges to urban spaces can be overcome by improving resource use and focusing on reducing poverty. The SDG 11 aims to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable which will include cities that offer opportunities for all, and which provide access to basic services, energy, housing, transportation and universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible spaces, in particular for women and children (UN India, 2016). If India is serious about achieving the SDGs and associated targets by 2030, we need to effectively integrate them into national and subnational development strategies and plans (Bizikova and Metternicht, 2017)

The urban in India is associated with complexity and much like SDGs no urban issue (the major issue of migration in this case) cannot be dealt in isolation. The urban history of India represents segregation and exclusion of the urban poor and specifically the poor migrants and providing them equal space and opportunities in cities is necessary as a part of their right to the city. In order to ensure equity in cities, following are some of the major policy recommendations:

1. Ensure the Right to Adequate Housing and Basic Services in informal settlements. In cases of evictions the belongings of the slum dwellers and street vendors, who are mostly the migrant populace, are mercilessly confiscated. These violations must end. The UN Guidelines on Forced Evictions must be enforced and fair compensation in the cases of loss of property and physical injury must be made compulsory. A law that guarantees the Right to Housing or Housing for All Act should be introduced so that it specifically sets out the requirements of proper housing and includes provision of land tenure and infrastructure development in informal settlements. A provision of rental housing should be introduced to help the urban poor find an alternate solution to the problem of lack of land ownership documents and cut-off dates which hinder their access to housing. The States should ensure that funds are utilised to provide adequate shelters for the urban homeless in each city. Additionally, local urban bodies should be empowered and monitoring mechanisms should be strengthened. The local urban bodies should be hold accountable if targets are not met and funds lie unutilised.
2. Urban development is a state concern in India, but the central government has formulated a huge urban development programme and has given the states the opportunity to take advantage of them. Government policies and programmes are still silent on the issue of migration and on the need to protect the rights of migrants especially women and children. Concerns related to gender and migration are not addressed, and the rights of women do not find an equal place in city development plans. Policy inclusion of both women and children migrants in decision making processes, are important steps to ensuring the right to the city for all, for building the cities based on the principles of freedom, human development and gender equality (Bhagat, 2017).
3. For inclusive cities, a child led planning process is essential as it allows children to provide solutions to the challenges they encounter. The planning is then based on the child's knowledge, experience and analysis. Child development elements needs to be integrated in schemes and policies (Save the Children Report, 2015).

4. Convergence is key essential for transformative change. At this point it is important to take into consideration India's larger commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals which aim for transformative change rather than incremental change and this requires the inclusion of local at parallel to the global. Multi Level planning should consider the diversity of India and include the ones located at the margins so that no one is left behind. The emphasis of planning should be on developing local tools and non negotiable principles for effective implementation. The problem in India is not of poverty of schemes/policies but that of convergence. Horizontal as well vertical coherence of governmental departments alongside cross sectoral convergence of ministries is the need of the hour. There is lack of participation of the stakeholders, people's development cannot happen without people's involvement -participatory monitoring should be prioritized. Community ownership needs to be promoted for reflective communication and outreach. The Government of India needs to work to promote cooperative federalism and not competitive federalism.

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