Homeless Migrants in Mumbai
Life and Labour in Urban Space

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Based on empirical work in Mumbai, this article enquires into experiences of homelessness of migrants to the city. It tries to locate these experiences within the larger processes of the neo-liberal envisioning of Mumbai as a global city, the ever-growing informalisation of labour, and displacement and inadequate resettlement of people, resulting in restricted access to affordable housing, services, workspaces and social welfare. The analyses expose how the homeless migrants perpetually suffer from the condition of suspended citizenship, lead their everyday domestic life under public gaze, face violence and also confront civil society's increasing assertion for rights over public spaces.

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1 Introduction

Labour migration from rural to urban areas is a persistent feature of developing countries like India. Mumbai, like many big and thriving cities, has been attracting a large number of migrants from all over the country. A substantial chunk of the migrants, belonging to poor working classes, are unable to rent or own a home in the city. They are forced to live either in public spaces such as pavements by the roadside, or at workplaces, or in slums or shelters of various kinds which do not qualify to be called homes. Declaring 1987 as the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless, the United Nations defined a homeless person as not only someone who lived on the street or in a shelter, but also someone whose shelter or housing failed to meet the basic criteria considered essential for health and social development. These criteria included security of tenure, protection against bad weather, and personal security as well as access to sanitary facilities and potable water, education, work, and health services (Speak and Tipple 2006). The condition of homelessness is created when people migrating to cities may be in such a precarious financial condition that they cannot afford to buy or rent a house, even in a poor locality, or when they experience single or multiple evictions without resettlement.

The latest census data for migration is available for 2001. Out of Mumbai's total population of 11.97 million, 5.18 million or 47.3% was categorised as migrant population in the 2001 Census. The migrants are predominantly from rural areas across the country, constituting two-thirds to three-fourths of all migrants. The largest proportion of migrants come from Maharashtra (37.4%), Uttar Pradesh (24.3%), Gujarat (9.6%) and Karnataka (5.8%). Work/employment and business were cited as the main reasons for migration in the 2001 Census. The sex ratio among migrants from states other than Maharashtra was 615 females to every 1,000 males, indicating predominantly male migration from these states. Most migrants are unskilled or low-skilled and undertake either menial or minor jobs or are underemployed. With ever growing informalisation of the service sector, half of the jobs generated by this sector are carried out by the migrants. Besides, they also engage in small-scale manufacturing of goods at home as well as other low income self-employment activities. "At least half of the migrants have become indispensible to the city's economy by filling-in cheap labour-oriented and unskilled jobs" (MCGM 2010).

A baseline survey of 16,000 slum households done for the Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority (MMRDA) in 2002 revealed that the average income of slum households

was ₹2,978 per month and 40% of the households were categorised as below poverty line (BPL). Low income and poverty is further compounded by unaffordable housing and lack of supply of cheap housing, forcing the migrants to either live in slums, in many cases illegal/unauthorised, or squat in public places. It is no surprise then that 54% of the Mumbai population in 2001 lived in slums under appalling conditions, occupying just 6% of the total land area of the city. The 2001 Census enumerated 11,771 homeless households in Greater Mumbai with a population of 39,074. Additionally, the number of homeless households in Mumbai city and its suburbs were 7,184 and 4,591 respectively, with corresponding populations of 24,000 and 15,074. Though the number of homeless households as well as population in Greater Mumbai has been steadily declining since the 1971 Census, the average size of homeless households has increased from 1.9 in 1971 to 3.3 in 2001, indicating that the homeless are increasingly living with families. "It is likely that the houseless population is under-enumerated, and the same may also be true for some short duration temporary migrants as well" (Bhagat and Jones 2013). Unofficial estimates of homeless population in the city put the figure at 1.5 lakh persons.[1]

The year 1991, when the neo-liberal economic policy—characterised by liberalisation, privatisation and globalisation—was introduced, also saw the introduction of a new city development plan for Greater Mumbai. The plan sought to further strengthen neo-liberal urbanism in Mumbai. It, among other things, liberalised the floor space index (FSI); introduced the concept of Transferable Development Rights (TDR) formally for the first time, as a market-based planning instrument; and allowed reuse of the land of former industrial units. Slum redevelopment and slum rehabilitation were linked with the TDR to free more and more land for construction and infrastructure projects, thereby freeing the state from the responsibility of housing the poor as well as resettling the slum dwellers. The plan envisaged decongestion of Mumbai by moving out production activities from the city and also freeing the city from slums.

The World Bank-supported projects—Mumbai Urban Transport Project (MUTP) and Mumbai Urban Infrastructure Project (MUIP)—resulted in large-scale eviction and relocation of slum dwellers, which also rendered thousands of them homeless. The Slum Act of 2001 further criminalises those slum dwellers who have moved to slums after 1995. The state government in 2007 repealed the Urban Land Ceiling Act, a condition for availing funds under the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM). In 2005, 100% foreign direct investment (FDI) in housing and real estate was allowed. Basic social services have increasingly been privatised and several works of the municipal corporation outsourced. Many more reforms are on the cards such as changes in the coastal zoning and repeal of the Rent Control Act. The JNNURM envisages financial and administrative reforms in the governance of municipal corporations. To quote Harvey (2008):

> Neoliberalism has also created new systems of governance that integrate state and corporate interests, and through the application of money power, it has ensured that the disbursement of the surplus through the state apparatus favours corporate capital and the upper classes in shaping the urban process.

In 2003, the global consulting firm McKinsey & Company came out with a document "Vision Mumbai: Transforming Mumbai into a World-Class City." The state government not only endorsed the plan but also "came out with its Mumbai Transformation Project 2003 to transform Mumbai into an 'International Financial Centre' with world class infrastructure, citizen-friendly services and business-friendly environment" (Banerjee-Guha 2009). "The entire project was estimated to have a cost of $40 billion (about ₹1,82,600 crore), to be spent over 10 years," 75% of which was expected to come in the form of private investment (Banerjee-Guha 2009). The Vision Mumbai plan emphasised on slum redevelopment to free at least 60% of the land occupied by slums for commercial purposes. The government promptly embarked on slum demolition, and in 2004–05, more than 90,000 slum units were demolished. Since then, the periodic bulldozing of slums has become a regular phenomenon. Displaced families, if found meeting the 1995 cut-off date criteria, were rehoused in densely packed clusters of tenement-style apartment blocks (each apartment being 225 sq ft in area) that have been sprouting up in the marshlands on the city's periphery; those unable to meet the criteria find themselves homeless (Bjorkman 2014).

Social Costs

The social cost of making Mumbai a global city and financial hub is starkly evident by rising social inequality, making the disadvantaged sections of the society more vulnerable (Banerjee-Guha 2009). Adverse implications of policy restructuring on labouring migrants were treated by neo-liberals as "private matters" and were justified as harsh forms of workfare (Bonoli 2005). While referring to the new urban politics in the city of Ahmedabad, Chatterjee (2011) defines it as the dialectical interplay between "governance as performed (practice of ethno-religious entrepreneurialism) and government as inscribed (policy documentation through scientific planning)," and how these two concepts "produce double narratives of the 'lived' and the 'inscribed' city." "The 'purified spaces' of the 'beautified city' normalise a 'bourgeois urbanism' that informalises labour, legitimises the downward spiral of wages, sharpens socioeconomic inequalities and institutionalises the displacement and social exclusion of minority groups" (Chatterjee 2014: 23) Further, "marketing the city to attract capital involves a "hypermarketised style of governance' (Weber 2002: 520), often geared towards a cosmetic overhaul achieved through slum eviction, identifying 'blight' and 'purification' through greening and beautification projects" (Chatterjee 2014: 17). The direct implication of this style of governance is more and more eviction, dislocation and homelessness for the toiling masses. Kundu (2000) provides empirical evidence to show that market reforms have increased poverty and informalisation, and urban renewal projects are responsible for displacement of the poor. The public–private nature of this style of governance is increasingly motivated by growth, image, and entrepreneurship rather than social good, justice, and redistribution (Harvey 1989).

This paper looks into the issue of homelessness of the migrants in Mumbai through an empirical study undertaken at four locations in the city against the backdrop of the politics

of homelessness played by the state and civil society. We have tried to derive meanings from issues related to violence, eviction, insecurity, lack of privacy, livelihood and struggle for essential amenities based on interviews conducted in four areas of Mumbai: (i) Cross Maidan, which is near the Churchgate station in South Mumbai; (ii) Indira Nagar (part of Shivaji Nagar), the farthest eastern point of Mumbai East ward, a resettlement site near Mint colony; (iii) Tulsi Pipe Road, Mahim West, near the Mahim station in western suburbs; and (iv) a garment manufacturing unit at Dharavi in Central Mumbai.

The experience of the homeless migrants is deeply embedded in the larger economic and political developments transforming the city. Four such larger processes form the core of the analyses in the paper: (i) the envisioning and planning of the city space in order to transform Mumbai into a global city, requiring reorganisation, eviction, relocation of the poorer social groups, and/or redevelopment of their spaces; (ii) the ever-growing informalisation of labour and production processes, following a definite neo-liberal shift in the economy that suits the needs of the global as well as Indian capital and business; (iii) the rise of middle class citizenship movement articulated by civil society that seeks to aesthetically transform the city's landscape; and (iv) the agency of the homeless to deal with various actors—state as well as non-state—in course of their daily struggle for retaining their space, basic amenities, and livelihoods.

2 Civil Society against Civility

Homeless migrants expose the paradox of urbanisation, visible in the fragmentation and segregation of city spaces. Like other cities, Mumbai's landscapes feature the cohabitation of people living in poverty and those situated in more affluent circumstances. Geographers have emphasised upon the reality of increasing divisions between enfranchised and disenfranchised groups in contemporary urban landscapes (Cumbers et al 2010). "Baviskar (2003: 95–96) argues that the 'bourgeois gaze' identifies the poor as 'disfiguring the landscape" creating a paradigm of the 'encroacher.'" Anjaria (2009) explains the processes whereby citizens' group/civil society organisations exclude the poor population and "re-configure the nature of citizenship" and analyses what Smith (2002) refers to as the "urban strategy" that exhibits the shift from welfare to maximisation of profit extraction. This process of profit extraction, dispossession and displacement, and marginalisation of the labouring migrants in the city of Mumbai has been explicated by scores of authors (Banerjee-Guha 2002; Jha et al 2013; Anjaria 2009; Bjorkman 2014).

As a consequence of economic liberalisation in the early 1990s, the middle class in India could expand their economic wealth, improve their social status and augment their claim-making in the political arena. This phase also witnessed the distancing of the better-off classes from the politics of the poor. This reflects the "dualism that distinguishes 'citizens' from 'denizens' (inhabitants, who may be 'done unto'), and that particular technocratic associational elite defines citizenship in particular ways (such, notably, as in terms of the idea of the 'consumer-citizen')" (Harriss 2007: 2719). More often than not, the particularity of new citizenship discourse has been emphasised upon by the influential section of civil society that prefers to call itself as citizens' group. Such a group, along with middle and affluent class neighbourhoods, makes a claim on or reclaim public spaces by displacing homeless, hawkers, etc, and unleash new regimes of accumulations. The aspects of dispossession and displacement, experiences of insecurity, indignity, structural violence, and restraining citizenship and contentious politics and practices around it are the focus of our inquiry in the case of homeless migrants at the Cross Maidan near the Churchgate station.

Under the 1991 Revised Development Plan for Greater Bombay, the state government devised a policy for giving plots to private trusts reserved for gymnasiums/gymkhanas, clubs, stadiums, swimming pools, recreation grounds, playgrounds, gardens, and parks on adoption/caretaker basis. The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation's (BMC) Mumbai Urban Heritage Conservation Committee (MUHCC) in 2004 approved the plan to restore a five-acre area of the Cross Maidan, submitted by a city-based non-governmental organisation (NGO), the Oval Trust (Organisation for Verdant Ambience and Land). The Maidan was finally opened to the public on 28 June 2010 after converting it into a recreational park with a jogging track, children's play area, a variety of trees, flowerbeds, a drinking water fountain, and benches for senior citizens. Further, a large steel sculpture of a "charkha" was installed in the Maidan, and from 2012, it started hosting events of the Kala Ghoda Festival. The Maidan is protected by wrought iron fences. The Tata Steel and Jasubhai Foundation financially supported the various works under the restoration project. The media along with many city architects, historians, high profile citizens, heritage activists, environmentalists and public space crusaders celebrated the opening of the Maidan to the "public." However, the Maidan had to be cleared of the hutments and hawkers who had occupied a part of the place for more than 40 years (in 2003, the Bombay High Court had declared the area as a no-hawking zone). Among them was Rajni, one among the many "illegal" encroachers who were thrown out of the Maidan. Recounting her ordeal that continues till date, Rajni exposes the problematics of citizenship through the experience of migrants.

Rajni, who is 32 years old and married with three children, lives on a pavement outside the Cross Maidan. She is engaged in ragpicking and her husband, a native from Maharashtra, works for a local catering agency. Rajni who had stayed all her life inside the Maidan now finds herself living on the pavement outside for the last nine years after her forceful eviction. Her father, who had migrated to Mumbai from Tamil Nadu at the age of 15, worked all his life as a daily labourer in the city while spending his nights at the Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus (CST). Her mother was raised by people living at the CST since she was one year old. After marriage, her parents moved to the Maidan and lived in a tent made of polythene sheets. Several other families in similar circumstances lived there. Rajni's childhood was spent begging at the station, taxi stand, and other public places. Sometimes, she would also work in middle class homes as domestic help.

After her father's early death, her mother raised her and her three siblings single-handedly. Rajni was sent to an ashram at Pune to look after young children so that she could financially

assist her family. On her return, she engaged with a variety of livelihood options, including ragpicking, domestic help, etc. After a while she got married, and she and her husband started living in Govandi in a rented room. But after the birth of their first child, it became increasingly difficult for the couple to meet their daily expenses, so they returned to Cross Maidan and put up their own tent. Rajni worked as a maid servant in a family, mainly doing babysitting, and her husband started working in the catering agency he was employed with earlier.

In 2006, they were asked to sign on papers which stated that the government would provide them with another shelter if they vacated the place. They did so with expectation, but soon realised that they had been deceived along with other families. Only a few families, including her brother's, got a house at Mankhurd under the resettlement scheme, facilitated by the Society for the Promotion of Area Resource Centers (SPARC), an NGO. They occupied the footpath along the Maidan, facing the railway office, and tied a polythene sheet to the iron fence of the Maidan to protect themselves from rain during the monsoon. The secretary of the Oval Trust considered even the tying of polythene sheets to the iron fence as an encroachment and would call the police or the BMC to take action against these people. The police or BMC would tear their polythene sheets and at times confiscate their belongings, causing immense hardship to these homeless people. Even their effort to block the rainwater flowing from the Maidan onto the pavement, by putting wooden blocks, was considered an encroachment. Rajni along with some other women had met the officials of the Oval Trust at least three times in the past to persuade them against calling officials of the BMC,[2] particularly during the rainy season. However, their attempts barely elicited any favourable response. The trust has objection to their mere presence on the pavement, as it spoils the aesthetics of the park.

These people are traumatised by the action taken by BMC authorities against them. Rajni goes on narrating the woes of the families on the pavement caused by the BMC raids and how the residents of the area, people working in nearby offices, and the crowds around the Maidan show utter indifference to their predicament. But the sheer need for survival has forged solidarity amongst them, enabling them to struggle for the fulfilment of their demands. Earlier when they used to live inside the Maidan, the BMC would only occasionally bother them. They were more secure from the outsiders, could maintain some amount of privacy, and were not always under public gaze.

How are we to make sense of the story of eviction and, as a result, exacerbation of day-to-day miseries of Rajni that runs counter to the success story of the Oval Trust? How do we theorise it? First, it problematises the notion that civility is at the core of civil society. Civility, as Shils puts it, would consider

> 'others as fellow citizens of equal dignity in their rights and obligations as members of civil society; it essentially means treating others, including one's adversaries or detractors, as members of the same collectivity, even though they belong to different political persuasions, religious or ethnic communities whose interests run counter to those of yours' (Quoted in Dhanagare 2005).

The gap between the normative civil society and actually existing civil societies (Chandhoke 2003) can be explained by the fact that civil society organisations are segmented; and in the case of Mumbai, these have a class perspective (middle and upper middle class), thus restricting their domain to particular groups of citizens. Some of the active participants in the "restoration" of Cross Maidan have frequently claimed that they brought back the park to the "public" and freed it from the squatters, thereby redefining the concept of "public." The Oval Trust pursued an agenda that looked most uncivil when viewed from the perspective of the hawkers and squatters. Despite being a non-statist entity, the trust was as coercive as any state machinery could have been and worked in collusion with the politico-juridical apparatus.

Second, this points to a complex relationship between the state and the civil society—in this case, the collector's office and the Oval Trust. The Oval Trust faced numerous difficulties in getting full access to the land, and this resulted in the restoration of only three-quarters of the land. And finally, after it succeeded in developing the land as a recreation ground, the collector's office decided not to renew the contract of the Oval Trust.[3] Yet, throughout the episode, both the state and civil society organisation shared the same notion and model of public space utilisation.

3 Life in a Slum: From Dispossession to Illegality

The Shivaji Nagar slum falls under the M-East Ward (77.5% of the population in this ward lives in slum) and is inhabited by evictees, who started relocating there as far back as 1975.

> Among the first arrivals were the lower-caste Maharashtrian residents of a long established neighbourhood in down town area of Churchgate, where many of them worked. Additionally, a large number of families came from neighbourhood settlements that were demolished in a series of urban development and infrastructure projects, including several in the gentrified areas on the western seafront, and in the city's present-day financial district of Nariman Point (Bjorkman 2014: 43).

The history of settlement of the displaced people in Shivaji Nagar and neighbouring areas has been marked by demolition, resettlement and migration. The journey from eviction to resettlement was an arduous and a complicated one for the people residing in this area. Identified as an urban periphery, this area adjoins the Deonar dumping ground, the city's biggest open garbage disposal place. The dumping ground relieves the city of thousand tonnes of garbage everyday and is a source of livelihood for many who work there as ragpickers. Besides, the city's slaughterhouse is also located here. "The entire area was laid out in phases—with 14 roads and at least 94 blocks (or plots) each with eight lanes (or *chawls).* Chawls were designed to be allotted to 16 families (eight on either side of the lane), each with a toilet block and four shared water taps" (Bjorkman 2014: 43). Despite a severe crisis of water supply and lack of other infrastructural facilities, this part is still considered well organised and falls within the legally accepted notion of a slum.

In a few years' time, a large section of migrants and displaced families began to inhabit the huge marshy terrain beyond the gridded area specified above. This area, known as Indira Nagar, is adjacent to the Deonar dumping ground and is classified as an "illegal settlement." The Indira Nagar inhabitants, including children, have been sorting garbage and are engaged in ragpicking for years together. The makeshift shelters are characterised

by tarpaulin sheets, tin sheds, crowded and filthy lanes, overflowing drains and the overpowering stench from the dumping ground. The ethnographies of the locality and residents provide a vivid description of precarity and insecurity of work and habitat, informality and illegality associated with access to basic services, and experiences of humiliation and indignity while interacting with the "other." Accustomed to the reality that their shelter would be bulldozed and demolished by the BMC at least three times a year, the ethnography captures people's struggle, patience, perseverance, negotiations, and assertions. The constant fear of eviction and the unprofitability of ragpicking as a means of livelihood haunt the lives of men, women and children as they sift through the garbage. Excluded even in the urban periphery of M-East ward, an area that is infamous for its underdevelopment and ranks the lowest in human development index (HDI) in Mumbai, Indira Nagar symbolises the poverty and marginality of migrant population in the city.

Symbols of Marginality

Shafina, a Muslim woman in her early 40s, lives with her husband, younger brother-in-law and five children at the farthest end of Indira Nagar. She does tailoring, though she does not get work regularly. Earlier she used to go for ragpicking in the dumping ground. Her husband and brother-in-law work as daily wage labourers and often supplement their incomes by ragpicking in the dumping ground. Her children are in school and also take private tuition. Her shelter was under construction at the time of our interview. The walls and the roof of the 120 sq ft single room shelter was made of thin tin sheets, with light wood logs supporting the structure. A tin door was yet to be fixed. Since there was no scope for windows or any ventilation, the shelter was boiling hot inside. There was no electricity in the shelter, as a pucca roof is required for getting an electricity connection. Her belongings—a few ragged beds, a large mat, a kerosene oil stove, some aluminium utensils, two large jerry cans for water storage, a bucket, an air bag and a suitcase and a few clothes—were casually strewn in the shelter. One corner of the shelter was being used for keeping water and cooking and the other for washing utensils and perhaps bathing. Most of the domestic work is performed outside the shanty due to the paucity of space. There is virtually no privacy, and all other families too live in similar conditions. Her children often fall ill, and are particularly afflicted with breathing problems; the doctor says it is because of the smoke-filled environment and advises shifting to another place.

The family belongs to Uttar Pradesh (UP) and has been living in Mumbai for more than 10 years. Earlier they lived in a rented room in the colony but decided to erect their own room, when the residents gradually reclaimed more marshy land after years of hard work of filling it. Like most other people living in slums or on streets, she too possesses various identity proofs such as the Aadhaar Card, BPL card, PAN card, birth certificates of children, etc. Shafina is active in the area and is associated with an NGO, having an office in the vicinity and a history of supporting slum dwellers for decades. They purchase water from a tanker operated by a corporator. A private toilet service in the vicinity charges two rupees for every single use. Only the adults use the toilet service, and the children are allowed to defecate in the open to save expenses.

The fear and anxiety about demolition of the makeshift shanty is palpable among people, because it occurs frequently in the locality. Shafina explained how the government first allowed the people to fill in the marshy land, and once the land was reclaimed and people put up their shelters, the BMC started its routine anti-encroachment drives on the land. The ritual is conducted two to three times in a year, and a JCB machine is used to demolish the shanties. Whatever household goods are confiscated, are destroyed and buried there itself by using the JCB machine. Thus, they perpetually live in a state of insecurity, suffer losses, and have to rebuild their lives at regular intervals. The NGO is promoting self-help groups (SHGs) amongst women, livelihood training among youth, and has recently started on demand the supply of clean drinking water in a 20-litre bottle to the households. On a few occasions, the NGO has also registered its protest with the authorities against demolition drives. A few other organisations also work among these people on housing right issues—"Ghar Bachao, Ghar Banao" being the most prominent one. This organisation has led several anti-demolition campaigns and street fights in the past. Political parties such as the Samajwadi Party, Shiv Sena, Congress and Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) also have their pockets of influence in Shivaji Nagar, though the member of the legislative assembly (MLA) of the area belongs to the Samajwadi Party.

For Shafina and many other residents of the colony with whom we met, the housing issue, demolition, atrocities by the BMC and the police, and access to water are major issues. "No rich people will ever live in this area, as the filth, stink and the smoke from burning garbage is unbearable. But we have no option but to live here." Emphasising upon the insanitary and dangerous living conditions in the slums, Menon (2013) says, "it can be surmised that given the quantum of faecal matter that is disposed of in the open, in and around the living spaces of the poor, means that the poor are literally living in the conditions of their own demise."

Living by the side of a dumping ground is the last thing on earth anyone would want; however, these people seemed to have reconciled to their situation, as the place has become a hub for a number of entrepreneurial activities and businesses based on waste collection from the dumping ground. In fact, the residents are not that anxious about earning money, as according to them, all able-bodied persons can get some work or the other in the city, sufficient to make both ends meet and save a little to take care of contingent and social expenses. All of them conceded that they did not foresee any transformation in their condition unless their children excel in their education and become *sahebs* (gentlemen). They can see generations after generations living and dying in similar conditions and facing the same existential issues. Stopping demolition drives and atrocities by the police, and free water supply and sanitation were articulated as the most urgent demands that can give them a sense of citizenship; as Shafina says, they feel like refugees in their own country.

"The production of urban subjectivities is intimately tied to the production of space whereby slum clearance and resettlement politics in Mumbai's fringe areas constitute the core political processes enabling capital accumulation through redevelopment"

(Doshi 2012). In several instances, in the processes of redevelopment and resettlement, thousands of households are classified as "illegal" and, therefore, disqualified for relocation entitlements. The Bombay Prevention of Begging Act (BPBA), 1959 criminalises people for being homeless or without regular employment ("who they are/"), rather than for their actions ("what they do") (Goel 2010). The act provides for the arrest and detention of not only those who beg but also their dependents. This is possibly the only legislation, with the exception of the Immoral Traffick Prevention Act 1956,[4] where the offender's family is punished for being dependent on his/her income. In Maharashtra, once detained under the BBPA, the detainee is made to work under the pretext of vocational training as an agricultural labour on large tracts of land attached to the beggars' homes and paid wages of ₹5 per day (under the BPBA rules). The subtext is obvious—the price to be paid for being homeless and without regular work in the city is forced labour with subhuman wages—to punish and "teach the person" to become industrious (Raghavan and Tarique 2011). Besides, the overwhelming presence of the state agencies such as police, magistrates, and civic bodies (BMC, Navi Mumbai Municipal Corporation, etc) makes the migrants' everyday experiences precarious and undignified.

4 Conducting Private Life in Public

Our next respondents, Binod and Neela, a couple in their late 50s, live on the roadside pavement at Mahim near the station. They are from Rajasthan and live with their extended family—their two married sons, their wives and grandchildren; married daughters with their husbands and children. Before coming to Mumbai at the age of 15, Binod used to work as a *pheriwala* (vendor) in a train. His income was quite meagre from vending and involved backbreaking hard work. Once he was married, he decided to move to Mumbai as his income was insufficient to support his family. He mustered up the courage to travel to the city, where an acquaintance from his village used to live on the pavement in Mahim, eking out a living by selling bamboo-made handicraft items, their traditional family occupation. After sometime, he brought his wife too. They lived on the pavement in their relative's neighbourhood. In the beginning, living on a pavement, in full public gaze, was shocking and incomprehensible to his wife. But somehow both managed to live on the street where their children were born, brought up and now married. They continue to live on the pavement even after more than 35 years. Earlier they used to get water from the railway station, but now they have to travel to a nearby public water tap in the neighbouring lower-class colony and carry water in jerry cans on a bicycle, as the railways have erected high fences along the tracks. On the other side of the pavement is a residential colony, which is also protected by high walls and wrought iron fencing. The BMC authorities occasionally appear with an eviction threat, though the frequency has reduced in recent years. All family members are engaged in making bamboo products and earn just about enough to make both ends meet.

However, it takes a lot of physical and mental energy to make a home on the streets. Living on the pavement demands integration with the "homeless street culture" (Hodgetts et al 2008). The street culture is characterised by living one's private life in public glare, with a thin veil of privacy maintained behind curtains or by ignoring the public gaze as non-existent. Yet, homelessness represents a continuation of their lifeworlds, which have already been shaped by poverty, disadvantage and marginalisation. They experience homelessness as simply yet another hardship (Hodgetts et al 2008). Rajni of Cross Maidan explains her sense of home and conception of homelessness as "*Main yahan pe tab se hoon, jab se maine aakh khola hai* (I am here since the time I was born). But the government or the people would look at us as homeless, and so we are homeless."

Both at the Cross Maidan and Mahim pavement, access to a toilet is an expensive and a problematic proposition; sometimes they visit the nearby "pay and use" toilets, but this poses a huge financial burden on the homeless. To bring down this expense, they try to befriend a local shopkeeper or an obliging guard at a nearby building. But mostly, they do not have an option but to urinate in public places—by the side of bushes, drainage channels or railway tracks. The women bathe on the streets, and to shield themselves from the prying eyes, they put up a makeshift curtain, which is usually a sari. Rajni says she no longer feels embarrassed and is not too conscious of her surroundings or the public gaze while taking a bath like this. She would loosely drape her sari after the bath and walk up to her hutment where she would dress properly. She would not even think about the passers-by. However, if someone stopped and stared at her, she would consider this as eve-teasing and shout at him. According to her, the way people walk through their shelter on the pavement and look at them is demeaning and humiliating. People often find their spaces strange and their living uncivil. Males working around the area and passers-by often urinate on the other side of the pavement in front of their hutment. Santosh, another pavement dweller, shared one of his experiences of humiliation and indignity.

> A few days ago we were having lunch on the pavement near our stall. One young person who was dead drunk came in his private car. He got down and asked as where he can urinate. My father told him about the place which is a pay and use toilet about fifty meters away from here. However, he shouted at my father and said that you prepare food here on the pavement and make the place dirty and tell me to urinate in the public toilet! I will urinate here where you people prepare and eat your food. My father told him to do whatever he wanted to.... (Tripathi 2014).

For years, Rajni and some other people on the pavement have fought with such people and have succeeded in keeping the place clean. Neela, who stays on a pavement in Mahim, tells us,

> Many a time, drunken men touch and try to molest women. Sometimes, we catch them and ensure that they get a beating. We find it difficult to even complain to the police because of our insecure and 'illegal' habitation. Lodging a complaint and approaching officials means inviting insults and humiliation.

Living on the pavement sometimes invites very unpleasant or dangerous instances of misbehaviour by the people. She explains how a taxi driver once tried to allure a girl from her family. Having failed in his effort, he once tried to abduct her at midnight while she was asleep but was caught by the family members and given a good thrashing. He returned later drunk, and tried to ram his taxi into their hut. Two persons were badly injured. She feels such incidents can happen to anyone, but in

their case, they are dangerously exposed, as they do not have a roof over their heads.

However, such experiences of marginalisation, indignity, humiliation, insecurity, and ultimately violence are not isolated or individual cases. When Neela says that two generations of her family have spent their lives on the streets and the time is coming for the third to do so, she is pointing to the structural aspects of their marginalisation that is beyond their control and rooted in the materiality of their social existence. The trajectory of migrants' life elucidates the fact that they start and, in most situations, continue to be homeless and live a life of deprivation and dislocation and are therefore disentitled and disenfranchised. It is evident that they are the most voiceless and invisible group in a city's populace. "Middle- and upper-class worldviews tend to delegitimise lifestyles associated with lower class lifeworlds, rendering 'the poor' strange, dirty and distant" (Veness 1993). Conducting private lives and activities in public may have been internalised by the homeless as part of the street culture, but it causes further estrangement and objectification and aggravate social distancing from the middle class whose notion of "dirty" and "stinking" squatters gets reinforced.

> The sight of the poor and homeless in contemporary times in a city like Mumbai is no longer seen with sympathy; the uppish middle class population—earlier dwelling on progressive thoughts and carrying apology of denying justice to the poor—have not only become nonchalant enough to shun the homeless but even contribute in making strategies—legal or non-legal—to prove the latter's right over the urban space as illegal (Banerjee-Guha 2010).

5 Homeless Workers

The category of homeless migrants is more often than not engaged in vulnerable employment. Vulnerable employment, also often referred to as precarious employment, is generally characterised by uncertainty and economic insecurity among temporary or part-time workers. Typical conditions of precarious employment are low wages, poor protection from termination of employment, lack of access to social protection and benefits, and limited or no ability to exercise their rights at work (ILO 2011). "The link between precarious employment and poverty is evident in India, where about 92% of a workforce of 457 million is estimated to be in the unorganised sector" (Ferus-Comelo 2014). The homeless population, without exception, come from this segment of the workforce.

A study of a garment manufacturing unit in Dharavi reveals how work, workplace and shelter conjoin to extract the maximum labour from a worker and, at the same time, keep the worker homeless and insecure. The unit undertakes work for multinational and big national brands. When the orders are few, it also manufactures shirts to be sold mainly through street vendors as well as retail units. The two-room unit operated from a two floor chawl, and rooms on both floors were approximately 35 square feet each, with the walls lined with wooden racks to keep the unstitched clothes and stitched clothes separately. The upper floor of the unit could be accessed by a narrow, straight iron ladder, located in the dark and narrow lane adjoining the unit. The ladder was very difficult to climb, and a thick rope hung from the roof so that a person could hold it for safety while climbing. Inside the rooms, it was very hot and humid, as there was no cross ventilation. The six workers working at that time were in briefs. The rooms contained stitching machines, and in one corner of the room, rolled mats, bags, containing the worker's personal belongings, a stove, and a few utensils were stacked against the wall. Clothes hung on a rope tied across the room. The room which was used for working during the day doubled up as living quarters at night after moving the machines and tables to one side of the room. There was no source of water and toilet within the premises. They had to use the public tap for water and the toilet facility provided by Sulabh in the locality.

Upon our inquiry, we realised that all the workers were migrants. They could not afford renting a room in the city because of their low earnings. We found similar conditions prevailing in several other units in Dharavi, P N Lokhande Marg and Govandi. The workers push themselves to the limits of their physical endurance to earn as much as they can, as the wages are paid on a piece-rate basis. They said that they did not consider the place as home, as they had no permission (as well as no space) to host any guests or family members there, nor did they have space to rest during the working hours in case of illness. These places could only be used to sleep at night. Further, since the shutter had to be downed at night for safety reasons, it was just unbearable to sleep in summers.

The Dharavi unit is an example of how the present capitalist production relies on the supply of cheap labour from rural areas. Coming from poor backgrounds, they lack the capacity to bargain and get fair wages and decent working condition. Interestingly, such units are invariably registered under the Shops and Establishment Act, rather than the Factory Act, thereby avoiding the application of provisions of the Factory Act, which are favourable to the workers. This happens in full knowledge of the state labour department. However, this is hardly an issue for the department in neo-liberal times, when the central government itself has unleashed comprehensive labour reform measures aimed to alter the framework for protection of labour in the interests of the capital, Indian as well as foreign. Migrant labour, the world over, unfailingly provides an opportunity to understand the nuances of their precarity, insecurity, struggle, coping as well as their ability to negotiate with the city space and society at large.

6 Conclusions

Following the wave of economic globalisation in India, the city space in Mumbai is now dominated by powerful elites—industry, business, finance, real estate developers, media, etc—more than any other time in its history. As a natural outcome, the condition of the urban homeless, most of whom are migrants, is found to have been worsening with a concomitant withdrawal of state from the sphere of employment generation and provision of housing and basic services for many. The urban reform agenda, along with other neo-liberal developments, has restricted access to affordable housing, services, workspaces, and social welfare that can undermine the daily living experiences of these groups and their legitimate access to city spaces.

Scores of statements and constructions crafted around homeless migrants, branding them as shameless illegal occupants,

beggars, encroachers contribute in changing the "moral colour from red/wrong to green/right or at least yellow acceptable" (Galtung 1990). It is ironical that though it is the public gaze that trespasses into the private lives of the homeless, it is the homeless who are dubbed as shameless. Despite the fact that they are evicted from the place where they stay and are dislocated from their site of work, they are summarily dubbed as illegal encroachers. They "are not only defined as the 'other' based on what they lack, but they have become depersonalised" (Parsell 2010). The reactions and responses of the better-off sections of society also portray moral obtuseness and a general disconnect with the lives and circumstances of the dispossessed.

The four ethnographic explorations expose the homeless migrants' everyday encounter with structural violence through their experiences of indignity, humiliation and insecurity. Galtung sees "violence as avoidable insults to basic human needs, and more generally to life, lowering the real level of needs satisfaction below what is potentially possible" (1990: 292). Unlike cases of direct violence where actors and factors can be traced, structural violence is silent and without an apparent actor and hence looks natural. The process of normalisation and wide-ranging societal approach towards homeless migrants clearly reinforces Galtung's assertion that structural violence is built into the system and in the structure and is unleashed through government, governance, society and culture. The informality and precarity of their work, indignity and humiliation at their shelter, exploitation and repression by state agencies, and other experiences depict the structural and systemic apparatus and operationalisation of violence against the homeless. This explains how the perennial structural violence perpetrated on homeless migrants is seen as normal, natural and even desirable. In a city like Mumbai, the issues and concerns of homeless do not find space in any kind of political discourse. The political parties and their agendas and manifestos revolve around the concerns of the lower, middle and upper class housing societies, whereas for the slum population, these talk about settlements with basic necessities like water and electricity. The fragmented homeless migrants are beyond the political gaze, and the approach of neo-liberal state is increasingly exclusionary and apathetic towards the poor migrants.

NOTES

1 See http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/other-states/homeless-in-a-wet-city/article4989-176.ece. Although officially, the census figures put the homeless population to be 35,408, civil society organisations deride this conclusion and claim that about 1.5 lakh people in the city are living as homeless.

2 Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation, also known as Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai, is the civil body that governs the city of Mumbai.

3 This was reported in various newspapers on 27 February 2015

4 The ITPA, 1956, criminalises "living off" the earnings of a woman in prostitution, thus making dependant family members of a victim of prostitution liable to prosecution.

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