

SKILL ENHANCEMENT COURSE (SEC)

SUBJECT: ART & APPRECIATION

PROJECT: “A DAY IN THE LIFE OF SLUM”

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Philosophy Honours Batch (2016-2019)

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We would like to thank for the guidance and invaluable support of Ms. Jolly Singh through the entirety of this project, which grew to be much more than just a project. Her commitment to encourage the best from her students cannot be overstated. We would like to thank our families for their love and support. And, finally, we owe our thanks to those people who were willing to share their stories, allowing us a glimpse into their family's many hardships and achievements.

Life is a dream for the wise, a game for the fool, a comedy for the rich, a tragedy for the poor.

- Sholom Aleichem

The world doesn't look like what you think it looks like. It's strange how a few kilometres can transform a place into something so different from our everyday lives. We spent a day in a small slum near Meherchand market in Lodhi Colony, New Delhi, witnessing and living the lives of slum residents and closely observing them. There is no iota of doubt that a slum's physical condition pose numerous obstacles to residents, especially children. Despite this, thriving communities with strong social networks can be found in slums. This short documentary project examines what it's like to grow up in Delhi's slums and the drastic conditions in which people survive and earn their living.



As one entered the slum, children could be seen everywhere. They ran around in the parks that encircled the slum on the western side, shielding it from the city's gaze. They ran around on the uneven ground and unoccupied lots sprinkled with stones, as well as in the open spaces in the centre where waste was manually sorted. In the streets, parked rickshaws, vending carts, vehicles, and bikes all served as a sight to see. Outdoors, children might be seen strolling around barefoot, climbing on rubbish, and stroking goats that wandered freely. In the narrow pedestrian by-lanes, girls as young as 6 held toddlers and roamed around freely. Many residences have a doorway that is little more than a 5-foot-high gap in the wall that leads directly to the street. Infants interact with passers-by by reaching out of these holes in the wall. There are no guidelines, plans, or logic. Houses are frequently erected on top of one another, with too many people crammed into a limited space.



CASE STUDY 1

Mohammad Alam Ansari, a 12 year old boy sells candies, tobacco products, and food items and makes tea, his father owns a shop, which is handled and regulated by him. When asking some normal questions on his day to day life he explains how he manages to run a shop and manages to attend school, do regular study and daily play also he is quite mature than his age as he is the eldest of the siblings and manages to prepare everything altogether. Out of all this actually shows that he is a child who has to work under all these circumstances. His father says that I am getting old and cannot look after the shop 24 X 7, as he is suffering from hypertension and is highly diabetic.

CASE STUDY 2

Raju is a 10 year old boy who sits at a meat shop in the slum area of Jorbagh. Raju was quite shy on asking some questions. On asking how does it feels to be at shop he says I feel normal to not attend a school, he doesn't understand the importance of education and is forcefully made to sit on shop and sell all kinds of meat. As we studied the above two cases of child labor, it invariably shows that there is a need to aware people about what child labor is. As per the Child Labor (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986, amended in 2016, a "Child" is defined as any person below the age of 14 and the CLPR Act prohibits employment of a Child in any employment including as a domestic help. It is a cognizable criminal offence to employ a Child for any work. Children between age of 14 and 18 are defined as "Adolescent" and the law allows Adolescent to be employed except in the listed hazardous occupation and processes which include mining, inflammable substance and explosives related work and any other hazardous process as per the Factories Act, 1948 There are still many causes behind child labor, but one of the biggest causes is poverty.

Poverty and inadequate public education are some of the causes for child labor in India. Also not ignoring the lack of availability and quality of schooling. Many communities particularly the rural areas do not have the proper facilities of education for the children so they are forced to go under the bondage of labour. Even when the schools are available they are far away to reach, unaffordable, or the government paid teachers do not show up.

CHILD LABOUR

Low aspirations of parents and children are a major cause of child labor because in such a situation, being employed in a local factory, or selling grocery in the streets is the normal way of life. To these types of children and parents, success only belongs to a certain region or group of people. They do not aspire to become professionals in the society or great entrepreneurs. It is a mindset that forms the very foundation of child labor.



In such a case, the new life they dreamed of becomes a nightmare due to lack of access to potable water, sanitation, and other municipal facilities, poor housing quality, overcrowding, and a lack of legal home or land ownership. We felt stifled and nauseous after only a few hours in the slum. We imagined how anyone could live there for the rest of their lives, which was the case for the vast majority of them. Following are some of the basic problems faced by people living in slums:

1) OVERCROWDED HOMES:

Imagine a 8x10 room with up to 10 people living in it. At times a few households in the slums even share their room with another family.

2) SANITATION WOES:

Slums lack proper sanitation facilities. Even the common toilets that are used by the dwellers are not connected with proper sewage systems.

3) MEAGRE INCOME:

With lack of education, slum dwellers have to opt for jobs such as rag picking, labourers and house servants. They earn a meagre income, just enough to buy a day's meal.

5) WATER DEFICIENCY:

Water is supplied only for a few hours per day. And with the number of people living in slums, is that enough? And no, there is no mention of pure water yet!

6) CONTAMINATED WATER:

With no proper sewage system and sanitation facility, people living in slums get exposed to contaminated water. This in turn gives rise to a number of health hazards.



VULNERABILITY

Vulnerability to poverty is a measure, which describes the greater probability of certain communities (for eg. members of a backward caste) or individuals (such as a physically handicapped person or a widow) of remaining, or becoming poor in the coming years. Further, it is analysed on the basis of the greater risks these groups face at the time of natural crises or disasters.

Further, they are low on their social and economic ability to handle these risks. Social groups which are most vulnerable to poverty are; scheduled caste and scheduled tribes, rural agricultural labour households and urban casual labour households. The Scheduled Castes are not allowed to avail the facilities given to others due to the prevailing caste system, leading to poverty. The economic groups vulnerable to poverty are the rural agricultural labour and the urban casual labour households. The rural agricultural labour have no land of their own and are thus not able to earn enough to meet their daily needs, leading to poverty.



Being poor means having less of a financial voice to defend oneself against the crimes often committed against the poor. People often assume poverty as a result of having less intelligence or less literacy or less education and not as a result of time, chance, circumstance, and opportunity.

EDUCATION & ITS IMPORTANCE

It is rightly said by Nelson Mandela “Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.” Education is a vital human right, enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Every girl and every boy should have the right to a quality education. They should not be denied of their basic rights. By this we can make sure of them having more chances in life, including better health, employment opportunities and also to participate in political activities.

“Bal” means young children and “wadi” means place. Balwadi is an Indian pre-school run for economically weaker sections of the society, either by government or NGOs. There are two types of balwadis; Central Balwadi and Angan Balwadi. Central balwadis function during regular school hours and are centrally located whereas angan balwadis are located in the neighbourhood of the children targeted and have hours at their convenience. The purpose of balwadi is to provide child facilities for physical and mental growth at school and at home. Thousands of balwadis have been set up all over India by government and non-government agencies. Balwadis were developed as a part of the government of India's poverty alleviation programme by universalising education. They were developed for children of Indian rural areas. The Balwadi Nutrition Programme provides food for children at these schools.

Many NGOs provide education for disadvantaged children, but some goes even further. This Balwadi motivates and encourages parents to send their children to school, and makes communities aware of the value of education. It provides free textbooks, uniforms, meals and what not.



SANITATION AND HYGIENE

“We shall not finally defeat AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria, or any of the other infectious diseases that plague the developing world until we have also won the battle for safe drinking water, sanitation and basic health care.”

-Kofi Annan, United Nations Secretary-General

Sanitation refers to public health conditions related to clean drinking water and adequate treatment and disposal of human excreta and sewage. Sanitation system aim to protect human health by providing a clean environment that will stop the transmission of disease. Lack of basic amenities like safe drinking water, proper housing, drainage and excreta disposal services, make slum population vulnerable to infections. Poor sanitary conditions and poor quality of water lead to illnesses like diarrhoea and other water borne diseases, affecting the life expectancy of slum dwellers. Menstrual hygiene is also an issue of concern in both urban and rural slums. Women often use cloth instead of proper pads due to poor financial conditions. Menstrual cycle, even though being a natural process, is considered as unclean or dirty in Indian society and linked with several misconceptions and practices which results in adverse health outcomes.

Upon visiting the slum called “The Harijan Camp”, situated in Meherchand Market, we learnt that sewer problem was the major problem faced by the people living there. Drainage system was not well kept, due to which health issues of children were a constant threat. Lack of clean drinking water. The provision of sanitation is a key development intervention – without it, ill-health dominates a life without dignity. Simply having access to sanitation increases health, well-being and economic productivity. Inadequate sanitation impacts individuals, households, communities and countries. Despite its importance, achieving real gains in sanitation coverage has been slow. Scaling up and increasing the effectiveness of investments in sanitation need to be accelerated to meet the ambitious targets.



Though the slum visited by us had a shared toilet facility, it was hard to believe that the entire population of the slum, consisting of almost 200 people, had to use a common toilet. Oftentimes due to lack in the number of toilets, they were forced to go out in the open, specially the children. We are privileged to live a life with access to all basic needs and luxuries. But these people are not only alien to luxury, but are deprived of their basic needs too. Life in a slum is no less than hell. We were struck by the realisation that the living circumstances in slums like this must be improved. It's a massive task that will necessitate massive government efforts as well as active and equal engagement from various communities. Additionally, after spending time in an anganwadi and engaging with the children and staff, it is clear that anganwadis are evolving at a far faster pace. While the last Anganwadi, the last child, and the last mother among the 10,000 or so Anganwadis have yet to be reached, we are confident that with the help of the Government, the Anganwadi Samiti, and various communities, a motivated trained Anganwadi work force, and a determined department, devoted completely to the children will be in place.

Through this documentary, "A Day in The Life of Slum", we have tried to bring to light the problems that are faced by the people living in such adverse conditions and yet being able to keep themselves happy. Happiness is the only luxury that they own.

