

PRESSED IN STEEL

Part - III

CENTRE FOR NEW ECONOMICS STUDIES

PHOTO ESSAY

Jhuggi Basti ki Sachchai



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Migrant workers in India know hardship all too well. With the paltry income they make from work, any dilapidated shelter becomes home. Most families with 4 to 5 persons must make the most of their low ceiled, single room accommodation.

Between the scarcity of housing structures, the uncertain future of their homes and the less than ideal living conditions, migrants have to skirt the odd dynamic between old and new residents.

One in every ten people in India are seasonal or circular labour migrants. In the last 20 years, as more industries show up in the Badli and Wazirpur area, the number of jhuggis have increased as well. These jhuggis have become increasingly dense, with older families growing bigger and newer migrants flowing in. Despite the ever expanding construction of informal housing, migrants have a tough time renting them due to its relative scarcity.



While barely earning a sustainable income, they are unable to buy accommodation even in slum communities. They are left with no choice but to live in shared rented rooms lacking basic amenities for a rent as high as Rs.2500. These rooms are incredibly small, hardly able to accommodate three family members lounging at the same time. Forcibly cramped together, they are propelled to make use of that single room for all their chores. The same place is used as a bathroom in the mornings, as a kitchen by noon and as a bedroom by the night.





Mother and child living in Wazirpur Industrial Area.



A family living in Badli jhuggi.



“Few months ago, a thirteen year old girl, in an attempt to acquire water from the only tanker of the day, fell and broke her arm, as the residents stepped on it in the midst of madcap attempts of grabbing water.”

- Dr. Ashok Kumari.



These settlements face an acute shortage of water. With only one tanker per day as a source for all of their quotidian requirements, conditions can get desperate. Thousands of women living in resettlement colonies on the outskirts of this global city begin their days by hiking to the nearest water standpipe or queueing for a filthy community toilet down small, dirty alleyways.



Drinking water in tanks for the residents of Wazirpur Industrial Area.



Washing facilities in Wazirpur Industrial Area.



A metro-line passing over Badli jhuggi.

“With more metros and roads, it has happened before that factory land, where people live in jhuggis, are being converted to build flats for middle-class people” - Sunil Kumar Singh.

Residents pay rent that ranges from a third to half of their monthly income, but are not given the benefits of rental agreements or the ability to exercise tenancy rights over their living areas. Furthermore, the landowners use coercion and physical violence to ensure the workers' compliance and temporary status in these communities. Because of the informal nature of their housing, the government is often more than comfortable to start displacing people from their homes.





Apartment complexes beside Badli jhuggi.



Most people here have lost faith in the government. Promises owed to them are hardly kept, and responsibilities to maintain basic public amenities such as toilets, sewage and clean water facilities are pinned on the slum-dwellers themselves. As industries begin moving out towards the edges of the National Capital Region, many feel that they soon will be forced to leave. Though the population of Badli and Wazirpur is not certain, roughly 30 to 40 lakh workers might get displaced in the near future.



“Such is the condition of the poor” - Resident of Wazirpur Industrial Area.

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