Homelessness, Contestations and Subjectivities

Sarika Negi

Department of Anthropology, University of Delhi

Abstract: The publications by the Census of India in 1991, 2001 and 2011 showed an increment in the population of homeless in India, including Delhi. This paper seeks to bring forth the causalities behind homelessness with special reference a group of populations, who were living under a flyover in the open and two institutional spaces in Delhi. The paper further seeks to understand how locating identity, nature of the population, and duration of stay add to the subjectivity in understanding and formulating approaches towards homelessness.

This study utilised a mixed-method approach. Data were collected from 108 households, including 22 single-person households, concentrated in two clusters. An overwhelming majority of the participants of these households migrated (98.1%) to urban streets or open spaces and shelter services to resolve their life situation. Data were collected through ethnographic method, interview schedule, and genealogy method. The result revealed that the phenomena of homelessness include an adaptive process for many in the study population. The findings also call for broadening up of the understanding of homelessness within a policy framework. The research also highlights the need to explore homelessness from a caste perspective at a larger level and to extend it further to a domain of intersection of caste, poverty, and homelessness.

Key words : Migration, Homelessness, Ethnic enclave, Adaptation, Delhi.

INTRODUCTION

Globally, 'homelessness' stands as a challenge to put into effect the 'Right to Housing'[1]. In 1990s, the understanding of the 'Right to housing' was extended to more than just four walls and a roof where legal security of tenure, availability of services, affordability, accessibility, habitability, location, and cultural adequacy were also incorporated (UN-Habitat, 2014: 3-15).

The literary journey around the concept of homelessness has started witnessing subjectivities entering into the field (Somerville, 1992; Cooper, 1995; Culhane *et al.*, 2007). These understandings and subjectivities originate from the underlying idea of 'Home' and therein 'lack' of it in specific situation(s). The idea of home has been conceptualised through various approaches, focussing on the homelessness as well and the need for 'home' to be thoroughly discussed in the latter in order to devise a suitable policy framework.

Etymology of Home(lessness)

Homelessness is considered to be the antithesis of 'home'. The latter has been studied through 'structural' and 'material culture' approach (Bourdieu, 2003; Miller, 2001), processual approach (Douglas, 1991) and cognitive approaches (especially in migration research). Douglas (1991: 287) argued that 'home

certainly cannot be defined by any of its functions'. The 'regularities', which Douglas (1991: 287) pointed at, to some extent help in appreciating the ways of place making and identity grounding.

Globally, homelessness is considered to be lacking housing, 'not having regular or 'customary' access to dwelling or residence' (Clarke, *et al.*, 1995: 102), 'rooflessness, houselessness, insecure or inadequate accommodation' (Edgar, *et al.*, 1999:2; Daly 1994; Tipple and Speak, 2005: 338), an experience of residential instability, lack of right to adequate housing and a range of issues related to adequate housing, such as poverty and conflict situations (Robinson, 2003: 1).

'Home' is also seen as a meaningful space of 'social, personal, physical, political and cultural qualities' which are 'experienced as a whole' (see Despres, 1991; Sixsmith, 1986). It is a place for locating a 'sense of identity', as it moves away from the (infra) structural idea, and absorbed ideas from the sphere of 'affiliative bonds' (Caplow, *et al.*, 1968: 494), and place of 'meaningful social relations' (Cooper, 1995: 4). Home is also signified as not only a physical place but, as the 'centre of activities, source of identity, belonging from the past, a goal for personal and social development, an abstract state of being, and a legal concept' (Moore, 2007: 145).

Culhane, *et al.* (2007) found the temporal factor important in contributing to subjectivity of homelessness while discerning 'Temporary, Episodic, Long Stay and Chronic homelessness' (also see Singh, 2018). Beavis *et al.* (2003) also observed homelessness in terms of 'situational (temporary), episodic and chronic forms of homelessness', considering the housing in the light of duration of stay (Tipple and Speak, 2005: 339).

The human right standpoint also became pivotal in assessing various housing situations and its inputs were also helpful in the understanding homelessness. For example, Cooper (1995: 338) noted 'home' as a place where 'ownership of space lies in having liberty to form and shape it'. Similarly, Somerville (1992: 532) also identified 'home' having components like, "shelter, hearth, heart, privacy, roots, adobe and paradise" turning to structural, cognitive and legal lens. Tipple and Speak (2005: 338) utilized this legal aspect to understand homelessness, pointing at control of activities and defining privacy bringing forth 'a sense of identity' with the place'.

As an Indian phenomena

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. The Census of India also states that households which do not live in buildings or census houses but, live in the open or roadside, pavements, in hume-pipes, under flyovers and staircases, or in the open in places of worship, *mandaps*, railway platforms, etc., are to be treated as 'Houseless households' (Census of India, 2011: 8-9).

Tipple and Speak (2005: 345) noted that the discourse of homelessness in India was shaped utilising this definition of houseless (in the Indian Census) and through the welfare entitlements, given at various instances. The latter was, however, based on the individual's land holding status when slums and JJ clusters are cleared and entitlement is given against it. They highlighted that irrespective of the quality of housing, if a household has land holding in a regularised area then the household is not considered homeless. The same study also observed that since the names of the pavement dwellers are not documented in the electoral roll and they do not have ration card, this group is not entitled to get the benefit of housing welfare scheme. It included households from the squatters whose settlement has not been recognised as 'slum' (*ibid*, 346). The exclusion practice also included religious nomads (Hindu *sadhus*) and nomads (such as, Banjaras (Gypsies) and Loharas (nomadic blacksmiths)' (*ibid*, 350). They made reference of Somerville's definition of home, and found that the Indian understanding of home is less inclusive as it lacked certain components such as, privacy, roots and sense of heavenly place (*ibid*, 347).

There were 23,175 'Houseless Households'[2] in Delhi (rural and urban) constituting a total population of 47, 076 (Census of India, 2011). The urban sections had a population of 46,724 constituted by 23,078 households (Census of India, 2011). Dupont (2000: 100), while tracing the history of houseless households in Delhi showed that their number doubled between 1981 and 1991 (2000: 100). Dupont pointed towards the underestimation of this population, based on estimates provided by Slum and *Jhuggi-Jhonpri* Department of Delhi Developmental Authority (DDA). The study showed that in 1985 approximately 1% of the total population (i.e., around one lakh) was houseless.

Global and local causalities

Hamilton (2007: 114-116) explained that historically, causes of homelessness ranges from disasters, lacking conformity on condition needed to changing life and ostracism from the family, removal of protection from the head of the family of the divergent individuals leading to dissociation of the family.

Worldwide, the most common reason for homelessness ranges from loss of employment (Lewit, 1996) to due to shifting economics (Hopper, *et al.*, 1985) to poor mental health (Lissner, 1985; Hopper, 1991), to disaster or fire (Lewit, 1996), and many other. Nunez and Fox (1999: 294-295) cited various demographic factors associated with homelessness, namely, race, low educational levels, poor employability, and welfare dependence.

In the Indian context, Gupta *et al.* (1993) attributed homelessness to economic development-induced migration, while the National Institute of Urban Affairs (NIUA) (1986) sought the reason to be the outcome of industrialisation and urbanisation process (Dupont, 2000: 99). Singh *et al.*

(2018: 187-189) identified breakdown of family relations, financial difficulties and lacking affordable housing, loss of independent tenancies, forced migration due to economic, and natural calamities, as some of the plausible reasons of homelessness.

The present paper examined the nature of the population under the study and cause(s) of homelessness suffered by it. It also tried to unfold the ways of locating identity among the so-called homeless and makes an attempt to subjectively understand homelessness depending on their duration of stay.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The list prepared by the Delhi Urban Shelter Improvement Board's (DUSIB) was used in the sampling frame. To select a population cluster, family shelters were filtered and selection of universe was done based on the higher number of individuals residing at the location.

The study was conducted between the period April 2017 and August 2019 in different phase. Data were collected from 108 households, including 22 single-person households, concentrated in two homeless clusters of South Delhi. Population living in both shelters and open pavement were included for this study. The first cluster consisted of 47 households, including 2 single person households. 24 of these households lived at a U- turn (under a flyover) and 23 households lived in a shelter along with 4 single person households, which was a few meters away from this U- turn This cluster constituted 43.5% of the total study population. The second cluster consisted of 57 households which included 16 single person households, constituting a major chunk (56.4%) of the total study population. The total number of population living in both the clusters were 416.

The population living at the U-turn was distributed into two enclosures, accommodating *Pamaria* and *Dusadh* households. The population of these two households hailed from Madhubani district of Bihar and shared a common regional identity and culture. The shelter near these enclosures was represented only by *Pamaria* households. In the second cluster, households from two sub-populations (*Basor* and *Lambadi*) and other households coming from diverse locations were living.

The genealogical method helped in understanding the structure of the households, and the type of relationship between these households. Most of the households of this study were constituted by nuclear families (69%), followed by 5.5% joint families. The other type of households include 'supplemented nuclear family' (n= 2), 'sub nuclear' (n=1) and 'other type' family (n=1).

Data pertaining to migration, its causes, migration network, and concerned details about its pattern were collected using interview schedule. In the supplemented households, through formal or informal interviews, additional members were interviewed about their causes of migration to Usual

Place of Residence (UPR)[3]. The total number of participants was 111. In order to ensure anonymity of the participants, pseudo names were used in the study. The participants were asked questions like 'Was there someone with whom they migrated' or 'to whom they sought assistance before or on migrating to the place' to explore information on migration network. Here, ethnographic method also helped in understanding functioning and relevance of existing migration and kinship network to the people, and especially to new in-migrants. The term 'long term dweller' is used for the households or participants who were living at UPR for at least 1 year and less frequently visited their natives, to distinguish them from temporary and cyclic migrants. The recent settlers were considered to be those households who were living at UPR for less than one year, from the day of data collection.

The ethnographic data in this paper deal with the question of how homeless managed their life, and the way they interacted with people and space (open spaces and shelter). It helped in understanding the pattern of life lived by those in the homeless category, observing their behaviours from close and looking into the process of identity construction within home and homeless spaces. It also helped in understanding how people maintained their social capital and enjoyed cultural adequacy at both the study sites. Formal/informal interviews were also done with people to understand the relevance of UPR at the household level.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study population and its characteristic features

Table 1 depicts the socio-demographic characteristics of the population. Majority of the populations belonged to Muslim OBC households (48.83%), who migrated from Bihar, followed by the populations from scheduled caste (SC) category (31. 39%), who migrated from U.P., and then by scheduled tribe (ST) category (12.79%), who migrated mostly from A.P. In case of single person households, more than half represents ST (56.25%), followed by OBC (26.08%) and then by SC.

The distribution of the population according to the ethnic group has been presented below.

Table 1. Population distribution

//S.No.	Ethnic group	Category	Place	Households (N)	Individuals (N)
1.	Muslim *Pamaria*	OBC	Bihar	40	6
2.	*Dusadh*	SC	Bihar	6	0
3.	*Lambadi*	ST	A.P.	10	13
4.	*Basor*	SC	U.P.	16	0
5.	*Lala Lalpuria*	General	U.P.	1	0
6.	*Muslim Sheikh*	OBC	Bihar	2	0
7.	*Yadav (Guwala)*	SC	M.P and Bihar	1	1*

//S.No.	Ethnic group	Category	Place	Households (N)	Individuals (N)
8.	*Indar Mindar Oraon*	ST	Jharkhand	1	0
9.	*Turi*	SC	Bihar	1	0
10.	Not known**	-	U.P., Punjab and Delhi	4	0
11.	*Majhi*	OBC	WB	1	0
12.	*Chaudhary*	SC	MP	1	2
13.	*Dhanuk*	SC	Chhattisgarh	1	0
14.	*Bedia*	SC	Chhattisgarh	1	1
	Total			86	23

*The person is living with a household having mother and her children but taken separately as they did not marry but are living as a family.

**these households could not inform about their ethnic or caste category

Majority of the study population were wage earners (56.74%), followed by individuals who were engaged in begging (30.34%). Out of the 12.82% of people, who practically were non-earners or with no definite income included most of the children, homemakers or caregivers and non-working or unemployed members. Among wage earners, majority were engaged as construction labour (27.75%), followed by those who were engaged as cleaners (16.65%), domestic help (5.55%) and 6.79% belonged to 'other' category.

Migration: a cause with history

Wage difference is not the main cause of rural to urban migration. As Stark and Katz (1986: 135) pointed out, 'the expected income in the urban area is not larger than the expected income in rural areas'. Similar kind of reflection has been observed in the present study. For example, *Nasra* said, 'At our place, it does not work with only one son. Family members push women to reproduce more in number as a desire for son. In this process, the family becomes large and the earning becomes meagre. Some fellow villagers (*gaon ka log)* used to live and work here (Delhi), and we came along with them in search of job opportunities. When we arrived in Delhi, the wage was Rs. 24 per day.'

Most of the people reasoned out that they migrated to the city to get a regular job. These opportunities were not available in their native places. Nasra unfolded this uncertainty in course of her narration and said, 'There (in the native place), we used to work for 4 days and then we wouldn't find any work for the next 3-4 days. We have six children to be taken care of and there are other expenses as well. Moreover, we have two daughters! We could not bear all that with such uncertainty.'

The city offers multiple job opportunities. So, it is easier in the city to switch over from one job to the other, in compelling situation, through social network. For example, Allamun reported that initially he joined the construction industry. Later, his wife and kids joined him in the city. The couple started working at various construction sites in the area and earned

for their living. They also invested money in the construction of their house back in the native village. Sameena, his wife, stated, 'At present, I am unable to work because of old age health issues. So, I have started begging. Previously we both used to do *baldari,* wage work at construction sites. We married off our daughters, and also constructed a four-storied house in the village. My husband has become old and has stopped working in the construction site. Presently he is an ice cream vendor.'

Some Pamaria households, who migrated in the mid1960s at a slum to a nearby place Madan Nagar (pseudo-name) where presently a Central University (name kept anonymous) is located. The slum was demolished for the construction of the university. The slum dwellers were resettled in Shivnagar (pseudo-name), a place located in the fringe of Delhi near Uttam Nagar extension. After the completion of resettlement, some of the people sold off their allotted houses and returned to Madan Nagar. These people found Madan Nagar a convenient place where they could sustain with the economic opportunities and established network.

Allamun used to live in the slum with his family before the incident of demolition. Haseena reported that Allamun was also allotted a house (unreported) at the time of resettlement. Allamun was alcoholic. To meet drinking spree, Allamun sold off his allotted space.

Basor households were also evicted from the slum near the Yamuna's bank. After eviction, some started living on pavement of distant locations. Eventually, these households re-located themselves near the demolished slum area and started living under the flyover. Later, these households were brought to shelters by some NGO. Chotu narrated, 'During my childhood days, we used to live in the slum located on the bank of the river. Later, the slum was demolished and people got scattered. When the slum got demolished, we started living on the pavement (which was near the settlement) for some time. Later, we were compelled to leave that place. So, we shifted to Sarojini Nagar. After some time we came back and started living under the flyover (near the demolished slum), where other households from this shelter were also living. Later, we started being pushed from there as well. Then this NGO (name kept anonymous) came to our rescue. It all started when one of my younger brother died. He was a sensitive person and used to feel hurt even on minor things (*har cheez mann se laga leta tha).* When the police started pushing us away from here, he went into a depression (*usko gum lag gaya)* and because of it only he died. This incident became a headline in the media. Later, this NGO came to the fore front and offered us shelter. Initially, they provided cloak tents erected on the main road, but later in the year 2015 this shelter was handed over to us and to many others.'

In both the clusters, households living under the flyover were brought to shelter by the NGO. While some continued living at the old place, others moved to the shelter after seeking information from their relatives or the nearby

vendors (Table 2). The participants narrated the whole story of their migration from their native villages.

Dukhi narrated her journey to Delhi. She told that one of their fellow villagers used to live in Delhi at the UPR with whom the couple came here. They both worked as construction labour at this place and lived under the flyover for 16 years. She reported that they worked in the city and accumulated money. With this earning they supported their children staying in the village with their grandmother. But now they had to switch over to begging as they had grown old.

The following table explains the causes of migration in the population studied:

Table 2: Primary and secondary causes of migration

Reasons for migration to Delhi	Reason of migration to Usual Place of Residence (UPR)	Male(N)	Female(N)	Total(N)
Brought and lived in the area	Relatives living here	1	-	1
	External source of Information / by nearby people	1	-	1
	Demolition of slum	4	1	5
	Total	6	1	7
To avoid conflict	External source of Information / nearby people	-	1	1
	Relatives staying here	1	4	5
	Total	1	5	6
Conflict over property	Presence of a relative	1	-	1
	Total	1	0	1
Economic	Brought up in the area and have relatives here	-	1	1
	Have relatives here	12	32	44
	Lived in the area and have relatives here	-	1	1
	Conflict	1	-	1
	Employment	1	-	1
	Relatives and villagers living here	1	1	2
	Villagers living here	6	24	30
	Destruction of slum	2	2	4
	External source of information	-	5	5
	Total	23	66	89
Legal case	External source of information	-	2	2
	Total	0	2	2
Health issues Spouse/household members had already moved/ settled here	Relatives	1	1	1
	Relatives and villagers both living here	-	3	3
	Villagers	-	1	1
	Total	-	4	4
Total		32	79	111

'Relative' means extended family and primary kin. External source of information meant when the household was given information of shelter either by the nearby shopkeepers, vendors or NGO personnel or the advocate in case of household with legal case.

From Table 2 it can be inferred that 80.1% (89 out of 111) reported 'economic' reason as a cause of migration. Among those individuals who were brought up in and around UPR, some decided to stay back due to economic reasons while others migrated back to Delhi in search of better opportunities taking advantage of their familiarity with the place and available networks. The second major cause (8.1%) was 'being brought up at and around UPR', followed by 'conflict' with the spouse or family members at the original place of living (5.4%). A small proportion of 3.6% reported migration to Delhi was triggered by migration of spouse or the household members who were already settled in Delhi. Cases of migration due to conflict over property and health concerns constituted a minute proportion (0.9%).

Some households from Pamaria and Basor communities, who experienced eviction following slum demolition cited it as a secondary cause of their inhabitation on the pavement and road (see Table 2). Around 8.1% participants reported demolition of the slum in their respective areas as a reason behind their settlement on pavement or shelter. Households, who lived in the slum before demolishment and were away at the time of the event traced their network, and started living on pavement or under the flyover or in shelter along with others.

Kinship based ties (primary or extended or village kin) was identified by the most of the participants (79.2%) as a reason for choosing UPR for their encampment (see Table 2). The relevance of kinship ties or network to new migrants is not restricted to the process of migration alone. It extends to areas of immediate concern for the migrants after they set their feet here.

Relevance of kinship and migration network

One of the aspects, central to migration and migration studies is social network (see Kuhn, 2004). It facilitates various processes through which migrants adapt to the situation or the dynamics of the migrant space. Apart from deciding about the destination, new migrants, from the moment of their arrival, rely on the social capital of their network for assistance in lodging, job search, monetary support, avoiding conflict and in conflict resolution, habituation, etc. (also see Banerjee, 1983).

Most of the in-migrants in the study population were helped by their support network in fixing a job opportunity for them prior to their migration. Like Naresh Paswan, Ramswarup Paswan, Ranjeet Paswan and Phullo Sahni, many others migrated with their families to the city to earn for a better living. When the household survey was conducted, these four Dusadh households were living together sharing a common premise. The first three of these four families were connected through kinship ties (extended as well as primary), while the fourth, headed by Phullo Devi, was connected to Naresh through village kinship tie. Phullo Devi migrated to Delhi to avoid domestic violence

and joined a previous employer of *Meena* (Naresh's wife). Naresh's wife arranged migration of her own sister's family and helped in getting employment opportunities for the couple (Pinki and Ramswarup) as well. They both started working at the same construction site where Meena was working.

Nelson (1976) sees chain migration as an indication of the lack of assimilation of migrants into the urban environment with their inclination to initiate migration of relatives and/or villagers to build a social network parallel to the native setting. This type of networking leads to the formation of an 'imagined community' (Anderson, 1983). In such communities 'identity' is an important element behind ethnicity manifestation. Ethnicity here 'defines an individual or group and specific set of characters to which the group subscribes and through which one makes a distinction of themselves from others' (Story and Walker, 2016: 138).

The most important of all is that the kinship network facilitates social support and affiliations continuously, even when one moves away. It also (1) connects home and the destination locations (Jewell and Molina, 2009) giving support in the times of need, such as remittance network assisting in sending the money, and (2) brings people from the same culture to a commonplace, constructing an enclave that has characteristics in parallel to the native, giving one a sense of cultural adequacy.

There were several occasions when it was observed how kinship and village ties became a key social capital at the time of illness or any other problem faced by a particular household. Haseena (one of the participants), a single person household, was living under the flyover alone with other households sharing a common enclosure with them. Referring to an incidence of theft which occurred at her place I asked to her, 'doesn't living here alone scare you?' She said, 'she is not scared.' She emphasised it further by telling that her employer has offered her space many times in their house but she preferred living under the flyover. She explained, 'here everyone is like my own family member (*yahan sab apna hi hai*). If I ever fall sick, my fellow neighbours will take care of me'. In August 2018, when my fieldwork was nearing completion at this site, Haseena had viral fever and it was Allamun's family who took all care of her. The enclosures were demolished and technically everyone was living on pavement. They allowed her to sleep at their own space and fed her. *Allamun* once told that Haseena was Sameena's (his wife's) mother's sister (*mausi*). Earlier as well, Allanun's family and Haseena were seen spending time gossiping and sharing tea and tit bits.

Haseena also received favour and support of Firooz and his family who were from her natal village. Firooz belonged to Kaluwahi village, Madhubani, Bihar. They allowed her to stay in their house in a nearby slum and to use other resources (gas, electric appliances and eatables). The family also cared her when she fell sick. They helped her in sending cash and kind to her husband and daughter who were living in a nearby village.

The households from *Dusadh* and *Pamaria communities* had a common regional association. The members of this association speak in *Maithali* language. This linguistic commonness helps the members of this association to share and discuss on household and personal issues. Among the *Lambadi,* shared culture and practices became the pivotal point around which interactions were woven. They got engaged with each other in limited ways such as service received in exchange of service offered, and discussion over local situation and family issues. For them, their language and ritual songs became a comforting communal asset in the city of Delhi. Similarly, people from Chhattisgarh displayed cooperation which moved a level higher than Lambadi, as they exchanged material stuff such as cooking stoves, uncooked meat and rice and in exchange they receive cooked meal.

The kinship and/or communal ties were maintained in the city enclaves in line with the system prevailing in their native places. The households remain connected to their kin and others through telephonic conversations and video chats. For example, Dheeru, a resident of Bilaspur, Chhattisgarh received a call from his son who informed that the process of initiation of allotment of new ration card was initiated by the local authority. He asked his mother to come to the village for the renewal of the ration card. Dheeru informed this matter to Dukhi. On receiving this information, Dukhi called up her sister who lives in the village to confirm the news.

Patterns of migration

Within migration studies, there is also a scope and relevance of examining the question of migrant remittance (see Kuhn, 2004; Yang, 2011; Garip, 2011; Parida, *et al.*, 2015; Cohen, 2011), which depends a great deal on the types of migration like, 'long term migration, temporary or circular migration' (see Rao and Finnoff, 2015; Keshri and Bhagat, 2010). In this section, the focus of discussion will be restricted only on the temporary and/or cyclic, and long-term migrants to understand their reasons for stay and mobility.

Table 3: Patterns of migration of the study population

Households (N)	Duration at Current location	Return migration to native (N)*	Duration of stay at UPR	Long-term immigration (N)**	Duration of stay away from UPR (N)	Circular-migration (N)***
No. of Households	<3months	4	≥1 year	66	Stay for ≤3months	13
No. Of single person households	<3months	0	≥1 year	2	Stay for ≤3months	20

*who went to Delhi but returned to native home within first to sixth month period;
**who did not visit native place in the past 365 days;
***who remained away from Usual Place of Residence (UPR) for more than one month but returned; and repeated it several times. There were 6 households who migrated recently, hence excluded from the study design.

Table 3 depicts the maximum number of long term staying households (64.76%, N=68), living at UPR for the past one year to more than 15 years. Among these households, 32 households were living in and around UPR for 15 years and above. Out of these 32 households, 17 households were having at least one member who was from the second generation of the first migrated family.

There were 33 (31.42%) households who were cyclic migrants. These households, including single person households were visiting Delhi for more than 1 year (equivalent to the duration of long term dwellers) to earn from begging. Some households (15% of the cyclic households) were coming to Delhi for the last 6-20 years. Also, a small section of the households who were living there during the initial phase of my study, later returned to their native villages and did not return for at least another two years, the time I took for the completion of my field work.

As observed, some migrants experienced pull towards the sending states (native states) and push from the receiving state (Delhi), i.e., from pavement or shelter in Delhi to native place again leading to return migration. These push and pull factors, experienced simultaneously or independently, played an important role in the migratory pattern. Initially, the pull towards receiving state centred round availability of work in Delhi to move away from the native place and the economic uncertainty, characteristically reported to be part of rural economy. The push factor, operating at the receiving end (pavement) pointed at local authority's drive to move people away (from street, pavements and other spaces). Some returned to their villages and got resettled. But as some migrants continued their stay with the support of their own people who had acquired a fair amount of knowledge about the city and economic opportunities it could offer, the push effect did not make much of an impact on them. Initially, they experienced problems like, sharing communal sleeping spaces, developing illegitimate relationship at work place, etc. which resulted into thoughts to move out of 'stigmatised and stigmatising space'. Some, while experiencing push from pavement felt a pulling effect towards their native place in search of homely comfort and security.

The long term migrants were also visiting their home but for a short duration and for specific purposes. Some Pamaria households used to visit their native place on *Muharram* and *Bakar Eid* every year. Samina said, 'most of these people go to observe *Muharram* in the village and attend a village fair (*mela*) organised every year beside the river *Kamla* (a river in Madhubani).' Allamun and Jabeer along with their family members visit their villages every year at the time of *Muharram* as well as during *Bakar Eid*, bringing along sacrificial meat (*kurbani ka gosht*).

These celebrations remained the prime way of reinforcing kin and village ties. Visits to village on various other occasions, such as, sowing of seeds and harvesting of crops (for certain households only), of marriage, festivals, and in

arranging a match for their daughters keep them connected with their native land and people and help in retaining their socio-cultural and place identity.

The cyclic migrants visit their villages regularly to avail the benefits of government welfare schemes, and to deposit their earnings in post offices, banks and with particular relatives. For example, among all the three major subpopulations, participants of Lambadi group, who were mostly engaged in begging, visit their native places most frequently and in a cyclic manner. This sub-population mostly had older individuals (>60 years) who were availing old-age pensions for which they were supposed to be present at the pension office at the time of disbursement of pension.

There are cases which depicts the struggle of migrant people for life in such spaces. For example, after migrating from Madhubani to Delhi in 2017, Abdul started living in the shelter with his family. But because of some issues, *Abdul* had a heated argument with the caretaker of the shelter and was compelled to leave. They left the shelter and moved to an enclosure where his village level paternal aunt (*gaon ki bua)*, Jamila was living. Jamila offered them a space where they could sleep and keep their belongings. Once it was raining which made some section of the enclosure quite wet, especially where Firroz (another inmate) and *Abdul*'s family used to sleep. In a disappointed tone Abdul spoke, 'Is it what people migrate for! Look, from everywhere the rain water is pouring in. How can one live at this place! Tomorrow we will return to our native place forever. Many of the migrants of my village and around earned good amount of money from this city. They have also constructed big houses in the village. My wife became attracted to these and moved to Delhi to earn. Our contractor (*thakedar*), under who I work, has run away with our money. People are trying to trace him but till that time we will not be able to survive here. I stitch clothes in the village and earn a good amount, and we can survive with that.' I noted that the next day Abdul and his family returned to their native place and never returned till I was doing my fieldwork.

Such cases necessitate exploration of perspectives towards UPR among both long term dwellers and others, belonging to different timelines, and the way they manage their life in these spaces and (re) locate their identities.

Homelessness and locating identity

In this study, the main categories found to be relevant in unfolding the phenomenon and subjectivities of homelessness were (a) true homeless, living in shelter, pavement or street, neither identify with UPR nor have home to locate identity with i.e. lacking both structural as well as cognitive grounding, (b) the cyclic migrants, temporary homeless, who locate home in their native place and experiencing 'rooted mobility', (c) the migrants who have 'adapted' with the public space, to meet the demand of their life circumstances, experiencing homelessness with 'rooted mobility' (also see Singh, *et al.* 2018; Snow and Anderson, 1987), and may or may not have spent long time at UPR, and (d) the migrants who 'adopted' a public space, initially migrating to UPR

to meet the demand of their life circumstances but later feel 'at home' at UPR, locating identity with it as they have been here since a long time. They may or may not locate home in their native place where the former tend to be more diasporic than migratory.

The first category, just like any other categories, lacks privacy, temporary or long term tenancy security, etc. But, more importantly, it lacks what characterises the next category of cases involving 'rooted mobility'. The household who had lost its home because of the conflict over property, and was living in shelter, hoped to move out once they accumulate enough money to get their own home. They fall under this category.

The NGO's non participatory operations in shelters to manage space, and other agents prevented any attempt on their part to search for an identity at UPR, turning them to the status of true homeless and not allowing them to derive psychological comfort of being at home.

In previous years while working with some clusters of homeless population, it was observed that agencies like, local police and local municipal corporations, while keeping a check on illegal construction, threatened their stay giving no scope to these people to have any permanent grounding here, structural as well as cognitive. Usually, a monthly or weekly check was done against any infrastructural up-gradation to be curtailed and restricted through demolition. Under the city's beautification and sustainable drive, people of the study area were pushed out of the enclosures to the open pavements which threatened their security. They were feeling helpless as these demolished enclosures once acted as a defensive wall in odd hours, and also helped in concealing their settlement from the notice of the public. To an extent, it helped them to steal some privacy amidst publicly exposed living condition.

The second and third categories can be considered from adaptive approach (see Dupont, 2000; Hopper, 1985), where the street was the economic corridor, and different occupations were taken up by the in-migrants and money was accumulated to be invested in various spheres of life. Hopper, et al. (1985: 185) pointed out that it is a strategy of poor who live in the margins of cities. Some took up open spaces and shelters to survive or manage components central to their well-being while others intended to reduce their consumption in order to accumulate. The latter have trimmed money spent on housing, which even in squatters takes away a relevant chunk of wage under uncertainties.

For example, Samina, who was living with her children and mother in one of the enclosures for the past twelve years, reported domestic conflict as a push factor for her to leave her village. They started living on the pavement when the flyover was not constructed, and later moved inside the enclosure after completion of construction. She narrated her life history and pointed out, 'We just live here.....we have a house in my husband's village (*sasural*). I got some property (land) of my husband and constructed a house there. Now

we are constructing a brick built house (*concrete wala ghar*) there.' She certainly found this place as an option to live and manage her life after separation, but even after so many years could not locate her home here and thought of settling in the village.

At the time of the study Samina was sharing the enclosure with her cross cousin's family and her sister's in-laws family and others who were from her natal village. In the nearby slum her brothers used to live, who often used to leave their children under her care. Later, she was joined by her sister, who migrated to this place in search of work. They all created familial and communal space from which all drew comfort.

The present study reveals that many households living at UPR for a long period of time visited their native villages only for specific purposes (such as, during illness, festivals and for attending marriages) and usually for a shorter duration of time. By and large, this is the characteristic of most of the homeless people living in the city. A component of ethnic enclave is sometimes imbibed, created as a result of the chained migration, which could give them some comfort of being at home.

In the present research, most of the households were found to be lying in the third category as most reported the space being 'utilised for living only'. The households were well connected with the village, fellow villagers and distant kin through periodic visits to villages and communication through mobiles. Basor households, like in other sub- population, were also well connected to their native place. Ruby, a lady from the same community, had recently married off one of their daughters in a nearby village and was going back again, looking a match for the next daughter.

There was only one individual (Ajay) who was brought up and located his 'home' at the UPR. Ajay was living in the area with his family since seven years of age and had no connection with his native village. He reported having no plans to move out of the shelter. When asked about his native place, he reported to be having a faint memory of it and told that it was somewhere in U.P. He laughed and said, 'Now this is my home. I have lived here since I was a child. I know everyone, and everyone knows me, including the people from the slum at the back. And, I don't even feel like moving out.'

I was reminded of certain cases from my previous encounters with children who grew up on the street. Some of them compelled their parents to withdraw them from the Children's Home as they loved the open street, a feeling which the Children's Home could not give. They felt good on the street where they had spent early years of their life and enjoyed excursions in the open. In the present study, there were 8.1% of the participants who were brought up around UPR or had previously lived here but did not quite feel 'at home' on the street, especially the one who almost regularly visited the native home. In one occasion, a child said, 'My parents work here. So, we just live here. Our home is in the village.'

The households who were settled in this particular setting for a long period of time have developed a behavioural pattern which they perceived necessary to adapt with this place. It involved appropriation of space, management of artefacts according to the setting, and understanding the distribution of resources. Caplow and Bahr (1973) explicated that even if it began as a condition, 'homelessness endures as a trait if it persists long enough' (see Hopper *et al.*, 1985: 90).

As observed, homelessness begins with a cause (slum demolishment or migration), pushes one to live with scantily spaced or distantly placed make-shift 'home' but, through established networks, either kinship, village or street-based, makes one feel 'at home'. In the new situation they feel the comfort of communal or familial space despite missing some components, such as privacy, authority and the security of tenure. The ethnic or regional ties, as a by-product of network-based migration brings joy of sharing or becoming a part of the cultural practices even in the city, which include celebrating festivals, practising cultural values and beliefs. These create a feeling of cultural adequacy among the inhabitants helping them to re-create their village environment in city. Festivals, celebrated in the city are the best occasion to observe the community engagements. Pamaria households observed *Muharram* collectively and went out to the fest held at Karbala, Lodhi Road in Delhi every year. The Basor households celebrated *Rakshabundhan* with distant relatives who visited them in the shelter especially for the day.

The ontology of homelessness, in the present section points at the multiplicity of the identity. The most important factors which play a vital role in experiencing homelessness is the temporality, i.e., the time spent at the UPR, and the frequency of visits to the native place. As the population has settled at various timelines, there was bound to be some variation in understanding of 'home' among the migrants who were recent settlers compared to the long term dwellers. The recent settlers certainly saw shelters strictly from the lens of service provided by the government as was done by the cyclic migrants, explaining their stay here for a purpose, 'to earn' only while long term dwellers, with the cultural adequacy served by the ethnic cluster could find some sense of being home.

The subjectivites associated with 'feeling at home' on the street and in institutional spaces among homeless migrants have various factors supporting and challenging the 'freedom of home' uniquely. The first consideration is the availability of ethnic or kinship backing in constructing enclave and supporting people or giving them some comfort, which was originally lost in the migration process. Through these networks, the recent settlers also became acclimatised to the practice and the culture of the street. The second factor which posed a challenge was action(s) and perspective of external agents such as, shifting tenders and changing approaches of NGOs to welfare activities to

suit their own purpose and attitude of the municipal authorities and of other agents (such as people travelling through roads, the employers, and relatives of the people living in nearby slum). Apart from the activities of welfare organizations, people passing by these places also construct an image of the people living here attributing an identity to them. They used to project these places as a problematic space and a sign of poverty, alcoholism and related issues, non-hygienic spaces, etc. They used to stop at the spot often and stare deeply into the situation, analysing it from their perspective. The third factor was the nature of migration and time spent at UPR, which differed from cyclic migrants to long term dwellers. These factors interacted invariably with the notion of 'home located in native', while kin or village-based relations gave comfort of 'at home' stay and cultural adequacy in the city.

When we look at the concept from the Census of India point of view, it classifies the population from an infrastructural standpoint only. The concept 'houselessness', essentially lacking conventional housing, privacy, authority, etc. has become fundamental in shaping the concept of homelessness in India but, it turns a blind eye to other possible interpretations. The dichotomy is criticised by Marcus, as he argued that it is utilised by social scientists producing the category close to what has been utilised by the government bureaucracy for poverty (2005: 36).

The subjectivities emerging from the cognitive and processual approach are significant in unfolding the concept as opposed to houselessness. The approach(s) can be employed to other spatialities or geographies also, depending upon the nature of the population which extends to true homeless non- migrant population as well.

CONCLUSION

The study suggests that besides dealing with the problem of houselessness conceptually, it is particularly necessary to analyse the situation producing it from the perspective of the participants, which provides a varied lens with its focus on their orientation, identity construction with space(s) and issues generated from within. Generally, the policy framework connected to the so-called urban homeless population turns a blind eye towards the subjectivities and ignores other possible interpretations, such as, homelessness as an adaptive attribute of migrants coming to Delhi and accepting homeless spaces as adaptational.

There is a need to relate different kinds of homelessness with government policies. Special attention should be paid to issues of self-identification of individuals or households, governing their motives and actions. The homeless migrants in the city are struggling with living expenses with a low wage rate having immunity of native home. The work also calls for the need to explore the intersection between caste and homelessness, as observed from the data collected.

The rehabilitation and their return to the same place because of their transient nature, employment availability and making use of the existing network, subjectivities in experiencing poverty, locating identity and a developing a proper perspective towards stability, comfort and security cannot be overlooked. The immediate need for framing a policy for the true homeless is realised as they lack any form of permanent abode other than the street or shelter, which is not choice-based making a distinction between them and migrants, both experiencing homelessness. Similarly, adopting a policy to resolve the issue of availability of affordable housing, and social and economic security of migrants cannot be delayed indefinitely.

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END NOTES

1. The right to housing was brought to spotlight by Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948). Later in 1996, 'International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights' and 'The Istanbul Declaration and Habitat Agenda' reaffirmed the housing as one of the basic rights (Sattar, 2014: 9).

2. http://censusindia.gov.in/Data_Products/Data_Highlights/Data_Highlights_link/concepts_def_hh.pdf

3. Usual Place of Residence (UPR) is considered to be the place where household/individual lived or visited continuously for a period of one year or more. Here visited was incorporated, unlike Census of India and NSSO to reflect on the cyclic migrants who do not live at the place for more than 2 month but come back after visit to home in native. In the present study the clusters were the UPR as at least 90% of the household were either living or have been visiting with stipulated duration.

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Address for correspondence: Sarika Negi, Flat No.- 353, B-4 Paryatan Vihar, Vasundhara Enclave, Delhi- 96; Email Id: negisarika1988@gmail.com; Mobile number: 7834878716.