



WATER AVAILABILITY AND GENDERED NARRATIVES IN URBAN SLUMS OF INDIA- A HABITUS PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

The rapid urban expansion and ever increasing rural aspirations have given rise to haphazard and precarious encampment in cities of India just like the case of several other developing nations. This paper attempts to showcase and understand the woes and vicious cycle of affliction in terms of 'habitus' of a community in one such settlement in Tejaji Nagar area of Indore, Madhya Pradesh, India. Pierre Bourdieu's concept of habitus is employed here in order to explain the gendered notions surrounding water, sanitation, intoxication and providing for family financially. The explanation thus derived clearly creates a dialogue on gender and power dynamics in the backdrop of continued perpetuation of habitus, thus forming a rural-urban cultural continuum. The study further indicates greater implications of water scarcity on women and thus suggests gender mainstreaming to counter this greater burden on women while framing water policies.

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INTRODUCTION

According to the UN Human Settlement Programme (UN-HABITAT, 2006) the estimates of increasing slum dwellers has been reported. As stated by them, numbers of slum dwellers were expected to reach the one billion mark in the world by the year 2007 (UN- HABITAT, 2006). Mostly the growth of cities and towns throughout the world has been created both for opportunities and enormous difficulties. Mainly urban growth is due to natural population growth, not migration, migration into the world's major cities nonetheless continues unabated. While urbanisation in and of itself is not inherently problematic, the pace and sheer scale of urbanisation has in many places, far exceeded local government capacity or willingness to provide basic amenities to city residents, including adequate housing, water, electricity and sanitation. This problem has been particularly pronounced in developing countries. As a result, urbanisation in many places has given rise to the creation of vast urban slums, where thousands and sometimes millions of urban residents live in sub-standard housing conditions, without access to even the most basic services (COHRE, 2008).

Following the above discussion the first objective of this paper is to highlight the issue of water scarcity in the slum areas, with special focus on women living in the settlement of Tejaji Nagar, Indore. Many migrants to urban areas arrive seeking jobs or fleeing economic hardships in their places of

origin. Yet, women are sometimes said to be newer entrants in the global migration trend. Today, about half of international and national migrants globally are women. The studies reveal that most women accompany or join family members – most often their husbands- in the city, there are certain females who also come on their own for different reasons, ranging from seeking income opportunities to fleeing conflicts, environmental degradation or family problems (especially those resulting from discrimination) to cope with health related problems and other factors that leave women isolated and financially destitute (COHRE, 2008).

The second objective of this paper is to highlight two other concerns related to water which are gender specific roles and slum administration in terms of basic services. The paper lays stress on the issue of water scarcity with special focus on females who are burdened with the responsibility of cooking, cleaning, washing and taking care of children. They are the highest contributor in the families' survival and have to face the hardships that come with it. Water scarcity is just one example among many hardships that the women living in slums have to face to perform their everyday duties. This study points out the alternative solutions to carrying water and managing it so that females could be relieved from their daily roles of carrying water from one place to another and managing it.

With the rising problem in the water sector, this paper studies the water scarcity and its distribution in the deprived areas of Indore, Madhya Pradesh. The study focuses on the slum dwellers of Tejaji Nagar, living in extreme poverty. The paper

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explores the challenges faced by the people on the whole and women in particular living in the slums of medium sized Indian cities, specifically in the sector of water availability and distribution which is very much related to the study area. Carrying forward the argument of condition of women and their contribution in terms of bringing clean drinking water to their homes, this paper is divided into following sections: section 2) gives the background of the non-registered slums near Tejaji Nagar. Section 3) discusses the Bourdieu's concept of habitus to conceptualise gender and its mainstreaming. This section analyses the routine and vicious cycle that the gendered division of labour is caught up in. Section 4) analyses the data and the interviews collected during fieldwork in the slum residing near Tejaji Nagar crossing. The analysis in this paper emphasises on basic needs and its fulfilment, with the focus on providing an equal status to females so that their contributions have the acceptability concern in the society they live in. Section 5) discusses policy related changes which can be incorporated in order to provide water security to non-notified slums. Section 6) provides the conclusions derived from this study and outlines some of the issues for future research.

Background of the study

Population of urban areas have skyrocketed worldwide and today it represents more than half of the world's population. In some parts of developing world this growth has more than proportionately involved rural migration to informal settlements in and around cities known more commonly as "slums"- densely populated urban areas characterised by poor-quality housing, a lack of adequate living space and public services and accommodating large numbers of informal residents with generally insecure tenure. Perhaps not surprisingly, the identification of slum inhabitants suffers from the lack of a consistent terminology for example, "slums" and "squatter settlements" are used almost interchangeably, although tenure and ownership institutions vary greatly across informal settlements. UN- Habitat (2006) applies the notion of "slum household" to any household lacking access to improved water, improved sanitation, sufficient living area, durable housing, and secure tenure. Slum areas are generally thought of as geographic areas accommodating informal residents that combine several of these characteristics (Marx et al., 2013).

dwellers in developing countries has increased from 689 million from 1990 to 880 million till 2014 (UN, 2016). In some cities in the developing world slum residents make up more than half of the population and often do not have adequate shelter clean water, sanitation, education or healthcare. Cities, indeed, have absorbed nearly two-thirds of the global population explosion since 1950, and are currently growing by a million babies and migrants each week (UN, 2002). The world's urban labour force has more than doubled since 1980, and the urban population increased to 3.2 billion than the total population of the world since the year 1961 when John F. Kennedy was inaugurated as President of United States (Rondinelli, D and Kasarda, J., 1993). The global countryside, meanwhile, has reached its maximum population and will begin to shrink after 2020. As a result, cities will account for virtually all future world population growth, which is expected to peak at about 10 billion in 2050 (Lutz et.al. 1997).

The price of this new urban order, however, will be increasing inequality within and between cities of different sizes and economic specialization. Chinese experts, indeed, are currently debating whether the ancient income- and development chasm between city and country-side is now being replaced by an equally fundamental gap between small, particularly inland cities and the giant coastal metropolises (Guldin, 2001). However, the smaller cities are precisely where most of Asia will soon live. If megacities are the brightest stars in the urban firmament, three-quarters of the burden of future world population's growth will be borne by faintly visible second-tier cities and smaller urban areas: places where, as UN researchers emphasize, "there is little or no planning to accommodate these people or provide them with services (UN-HABITAT, 2003)."

In India some slums are notified, or recognised, by the government. In some cities, notified slums are entitled to receive security of land tenure, which means that the people who live in them cannot be arbitrarily evicted. In other words, inhabitants have a form of property rights to the land even though they do not own it. People living in notified slums are also usually entitled to access city services, including connections to the water supply. In 2012, 59% of slum settlements in India were non-notified (NSSO, 2013). People living in non-notified settlements suffer from poorer access to piped water, latrines, electricity and public transportation when compared to notified slums; they also receive considerably less assistance from the governments' slum improvement schemes (NSSO, 2013). Life in non-notified slums is comparatively tougher; lack of proper shelter, no drainage facilities, sanitation, unemployment, police harassment, caste conflicts and shortage of clean water are some of the prominent troubles. On top of that, the slum residents have to jostle through huge crowds' everyday for a few gallons of water.

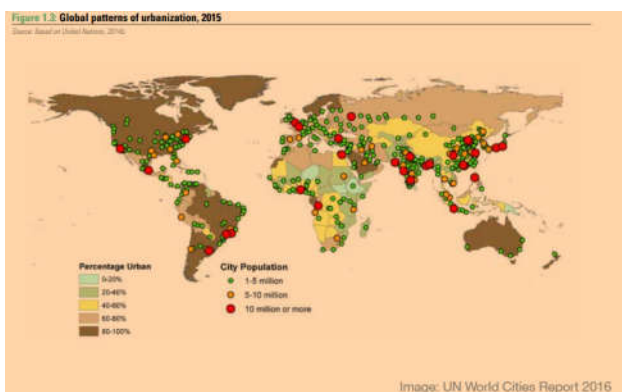


Figure 1 shows global patterns of urbanization (UN, 2016)

The figure 1 shows global patterns of urbanisation, through which it can be perceived that around a quarter of the world's urban population lives in slums and taking into consideration this figure it is increasing exponentially. The number of slum



Figure 2 Tejaji Nagar Crossing (Source Google maps)

This paper unfolds the rising problem of clean drinking water and its distribution in non notified slums of city of Indore, Madhya Pradesh. The location of the area of study is shown through the figure 2, 3,4 and 5.

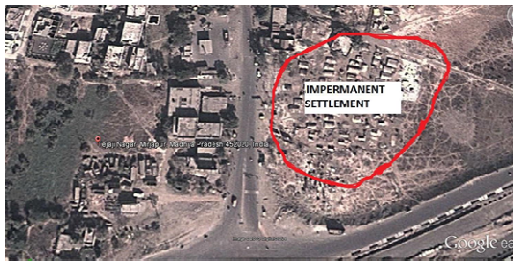


Figure 3 The permanent settlement, on one side of the crossing (Source: Google map)



Figure 4 Impermanent Settlement of the slum on the other side of the crossing (Source: Google map)

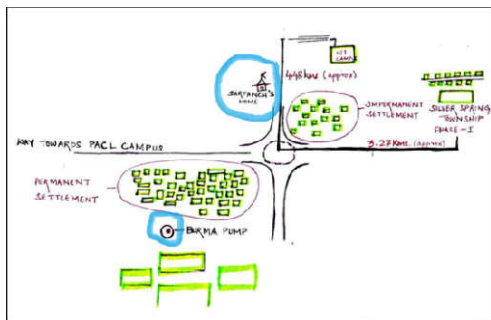


Figure 5 Schematic Map explaining the position of places from where they get water (Source: Self-made)

Figure 5 is a schematic map which shows the area of study. Tejaji Nagar is located just near the Ralamandal Sanctuary, Indore. According to the forecasts of Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) under the ministry of the earth sciences (MoES), hot weather season, March to May for the year 2017 suggests that above normal temperatures, up to 1 degree Celsius, are likely to prevail over all meteorological subdivisions of the country except Northwest India, where temperatures are likely to be more than 1.0 degree Celsius above normal. It thus becomes a pertinent concern and question for the people of northwest India, which includes western Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Rajasthan and parts of northern Maharashtra (Mishra, 2017). Indore lies in the region of western Madhya Pradesh where during the summer month, the rivers, water reservoirs and wells begin to dry leading to a ubiquitous concern about the availability of drinking water during these months (Mishra, 2017).

Tejaji Nagar settlement is mostly non-notified so it becomes all the more difficult for the residents settling here to deal with the issue of water scarcity and sanitation. As reported by the slum dwellers the water trucks sent by Indore Municipal Corporation are supposed to come every day but they choose their own sweet time to come, which is usually unknown to the people living here. There is a bore well almost 100 meters

from the location of the slum, which is considered to be *Sarpanch's* house. To get a bucket of drinking water is a struggle for most women living in this slum. The virtually dry and dead water resources have led to acute water scarcity, affecting the socio-economic condition of this slum (NWC, 2005). The drought conditions have pushed villagers to move to the city of Indore in search of jobs. Whereas women and girls are trudging still further. This time lost in fetching water can very well translate into financial gains, leading to a better life for the family (NWC, 2005).

Recently fifteen public toilets have been provided to people living in this slum having two tanks attached to the toilets with the capacity to hold 300 liters of water at a time. Looking from an outsider point of view they have facility to defecate in the public toilets but water is a constraint even for defecation. Further in this study it was found that like any other slum domestic violence and abuse is very common here, yet the problem is overlooked, excused, or denied. The study reveals that males living in this community are more prone to intoxication leading to which females have to handle every day activity from earning to household pursuits.

Theoretical framework

This section explains the theories which are used to understand the case of non-registered Tejaji Nagar Slum. It starts with explaining the habitus of the Indian society and then it explains the other factors which affect the habitus and give rise to gender inequality and poverty.

Habitus: to explain gender specific roles

In an attempt to understand the way the dwellers of this slum perceive, think and operate around the nuances of their everyday life, this paper employs Pierre Bourdieu's concept of habitus. It effectively encapsulates most of the observed characteristics. It can be used to analyse the routine and the vicious cycle that the gendered division of labour is caught up in. It also explains the basis for the decisions that they take. And this is very much required to understand the motivations and reasons which could help us in devising appropriate interventions.

Habitus as described by Bourdieu consists of structured structures and structuring structures (Bourdieu, 1990). Structured structures refer to the assimilation and ingestion of the dispositions in their environment by the people. This process takes place by the social interactions, imitation etc. i.e. family and childhood environment play a prominent role in ingestion and practice of certain behaviours (Swartz, 2002). In the case of Tejaji Nagar, structured structures include the gendered notion passed on in family as well as social circles. A woman is groomed from childhood to be the water-bearer of the family. This conditioning is brought about by both men and women in the family as they were themselves subjected to structuring structures of the habitus.

Structuring structures form the active functional component of habitus (Swartz, 2002). Here, active component refers to the component of habitus that is involved in transmission of dispositions and behaviours by means of active propagation and practice. The mere presence of certain practices paves way for its longevity and it also instils in others these tendencies. This is what is happening currently among the community of interest in Tejaji Nagar. They are propagating the tendencies which they themselves were subjected to in

their journey to adulthood. They are doing this by actively being involved in gendered notion among the younger members of the community. Thus this paves way for continued existence of the vicious cycle that leads to poverty as well as inequality among genders (Rhodes, 1997).

Habit according to Bourdieu is not just the mere repeated act but carries within itself several conditionalities. Habitus is also a function of one's position in large power structure (Bourdieu, 1990, p4). This is seen in the case of male members enforcing their dominance in order to attain their desires as in the case of consumption of alcohols when even making food available for family is in question. Most women make a living in order to make ends meet for whole of family. Pierre's ideas are critical of both structuralism and objectivism as his theory of action tries to take components from both to explain the decisions of the actors. His ideas are built upon the consideration that decisions or actions undertaken by actors are not only based on the externalities but also based on practicalities and past experiences (Swartz, 2002). In the current case, alcohol consumption of the male members of the community surely follows this observation. The structuration of the community in financial terms has seen no influence alcohol consumption habits i.e. low income in spite of being a major external constraint doesn't discourage alcoholism. This can be further elaborated and said that these actors are not conventional conformists to traditional and cultural statutes but rather delve upon their previous experiences. These previous experiences are of women members who are projected to be the sole providers for the family; women are allowed to take up that role when the dominant gender wants to have intoxicating and relaxing experiences. What is observed here is that conventional conformism to traditional norms (including gendered notions) is practiced wherever it is comfortable for the dominant stronger sex i.e. habitus becomes a function of power as well as engendered past experiences.

All these previously made observations are applicable in the case of continued existence of gendered notion associated with water in the community too. These dispositions of habitus are not conscious or discursive but they form the informal and practical component of knowledge (Swartz, 2002). This to say that gendered relation to water is not arrived by rational and reflective process rather by mere practice in the current context. The attempt is not to generalise and equate the consequences of habitus to the entirety of the current community of interest rather it is to show widespread relevance of understanding it to come up with effective and plausible measures. Habitus being the major determinant of most of our everyday actions deserves due importance and should be taken into consideration.

Urbanisation and its effects

Urbanisation refers to "the process whereby ever larger numbers of people migrate to and establish residence in relatively dense areas of population" (Ritzer, G and Ryan, M.J, 2011; p671). Urbanisation has in the past three decades exposed the weaknesses of infrastructure and urban spatial characteristics of towns and cities (Ramachandran, 1989). The recent perceptions of the role of the city as an industrial centre providing employment to the unemployed, as a growth point stimulating development in its hinterland and as a utopia for the rural poor and those afflicted by natural or man-made

calamities, have brought in their wake myriads of problems which the cities are unable to cope with (Ramachandran, 1989). The proliferation of slums, the inadequacies of city transport, the rising land and poverty values, the legendary insufficiency of water and electricity, are all manifestations of changing circumstances in urban areas (Ramachandran, 1989). The spatial allocation of amenities and infrastructure is uneven within our cities, with appalling conditions of living in some areas, contrasted with luxury and high living in others (Ramachandran, 1989). The misery of the slums does not however deter the rural poor from coming into the city; the perceptions of the poor and also the rich are often widely off the mark (Ramachandran, 1989). The paradox is that to the rich the city's landscape is filthy and ugly, needing urgent urban surgery, while to the poor the city is still full of vitality and variety, and is highly liveable compared to the dull and static atmosphere of the village (Ramachandran, 1989). There is a need to adopt a behavioural approach to the study of urban problems (Ramachandran, 1989). It is not merely the physical reality as it exists that needs to be studied, but also the reality and the need for change as perceived by various sections of urban society (Ramachandran, 1989). Habitus forms the basis for protection motivated moves which is noticeable in the community of interest. Urbanization creates push and pull factors which along with human instincts for self-preservation (which is a function of habitus) leads to rural-urban migration.

Importance of governance of water

Governance of water is simply the decision making process through which water can be managed efficiently and effectively in our day to day life. It covers the entire range of political, organisational, and administrative process involved in managing water supply. This includes the time when communities articulate their interests and the input is absorbed, to the time when decisions are made and implemented. One indicator of good governance in water sector is that the decision makers should take the responsibility or be accountable for the development and management of water resources and delivery of water services (Bakker and Cameron, 2002; p.ii). Knowing the exact role of water governance will set some benchmarks on which things can be handled in a better way. The routine bureaucratic functions with regard to water provisions for non-permanent settlements are tainted with disregard for position of those community members. Their perspectives are mired in power structure which in itself is a function of habitus. This predicament continues as habitus continues to self-perpetuate (Swartz, 2002).

Analysis of Data Collection

The data was collected from the Tejaji Nagar crossing which finds its location on Agra Bombay Bypass road near city of Indore, Madhya Pradesh. The survey made was in the form of semi-structured interviews. The location of this slum also falls in and around National Highway-3 which is partially constructed. Survey covers twenty five families living on both sides of the location of the Tejaji Nagar crossing. The study finds out that women and girls being the primary users, providers and managers of water in their households and the guardians of household hygiene, if the water falls short, women are the ones forced to travel long distances over many hours to meet their families need. Common societal practices

that determine men as property owners, heads of households and main decision makers in the public sphere often results in marginalising the views and preferences of women and girls. A gendered approach can create a framework of co-operation between men and women, so that insights and abilities of both men and women are available to shape programs and meet sector objectives.

The water and sanitation sector can contribute to redressing inequality and can impact positively on the social, political and economic position of women. Well targeted services can improve the health and security of women and their families, and free them to engage in social, economic and political activities, thus tackling 'time poverty'- the situation where women's time is inflexible, consumed by routine and non-productive tasks, perpetuating their absence from decision-making and other profitable pursuits (WB, 2006). Sanitation and hygiene improvements are often low on the list of family investment; as a result women and girls suffer more indignity. Their privacy and security are partly determined by ease of access to, and location of sanitation facilities which is the matter of concern of the slums of Tejaji Nagar. Children especially, have needs and concerns that should be taken into account when creating sanitation interventions to be used by them. Using a gender lens, the section of policies need to be constructed and technology to be tailored to meet their needs. Mostly due to lack of awareness and ignorance there is inequality in slum areas. It requires decisions which affect the condition and position of both men and women, and the relationship between them. In order to promote fairness this paper tries to bring into light the widely accepted strategy to achieve gender equality which is mainstreaming of gender. The concept of gender mainstreaming is provided by United Nations Economic and Social Council (1997), it suggests that mainstreaming a gender perspective is the process of accessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programs, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy of making the concerns and experiences of women as well as men, an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programs in all political, economic and societal spheres, so that women and men both can benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality.

Policy being the starting point of gender mainstreaming as this is when a government demonstrates its intention to redress inequality and adopt a gendered approach. A policy explains goals and what all can be done to achieve them. The policy in turn, forms documented basis for strategy and resource allocation. There have been policies to improve the conditions of urban slums like: Environmental Improvement of Urban Slums (1972), Integrated Low Cost Sanitation Scheme (1981), Urban Community Development Programme (1983-87), Self-Training and Employment Programme for Urban Poor (1984-87), Urban Basic Services Programme (1991), ValmikiAmbedkarAwasYojna (December 1991), National Slum Development Programme (1996), Urban Water Supply and Environmental Improvement (SESI) funded by UN-HABITAT (2005) (MHUPA-RAY, 2011). Though these policies are well-documented yet they fall short in environmental concerns, water supply, sanitation and several training programmes for the people living in slums. The policies lack in their implementation because either registered

or few slums i.e. the visible ones receive the advantage of such policies not the ones which are not-registered or are not-visible. In order to focus on the implementation part, the policies have to look at both physical reality and the need for change as perceived by various sections of society. This implies a shift from the observational approach to a field survey i.e. the interview method. After all people being the main source of information in the city are its very source of existence. In order to study the problems meaningfully, there is a need to give up preconceived notions of the city's landscape and society and focus on ingenuity and innovation to solve the difficult situations of urban slums.

Water Security

It is defined as, "The capacity of a population to safeguard sustainable access to adequate quantities of an acceptable quality of water for sustaining livelihoods, human wellbeing, and socio-economic development, for ensuring protection against water-borne pollution and water related disasters, and for preserving ecosystems in a climate of peace and political stability (UN, 2013). Access to safe water and sanitation is now a fundamental human right. But water management requires realistic ways of recovering delivery costs," says Zafar Adeel, co-chair of the UN-Water Task Force on Water Security and director of United Nations University's Institute for Water, Environment and Health (UNU-IWEH, 2013). In this study the key aspects of water security which needs to be taken care of are: access to safe and sufficient drinking water, protection of livelihoods, human rights and cultural and recreational value, preservation and protection of ecosystems in water allocation and management systems in order to maintain their ability to deliver and sustain functioning of essential ecosystem services, good governance and accountability, and the due considerations of the interests of all.

CONCLUSION

Many of the women in the urban slums are born into the slums and as such live in an environment where scarcity and struggle is all that they know. However, there still remains a high degree of what prevailed traditionally with regard to the co-operation and social unity, even in the face of high degrees of urbanisation, thus forming a rural-urban cultural continuum. Women living in urban slums exhibit the characteristics of *Gemeinschaft* (German for Community i.e. feeling of togetherness) which despite their adverse circumstances have realised the strength in cooperation which has traditionally held the Indian society to a stronghold (Rambarran, 2014). The declining emphasis on caste and the injection of the system of capitalism has led to the virtual non-existence of the ever present caste system in India, as one moves closer to the urbanised environment but exhibits the parallel in the capitalist form, i.e. the class system. The pursuit of profit and the possibility that their children could have a great future, be educated cheaply and elevate the family out of poverty is enough to keep these women in the urban slums going.

In order to give their children a better future and to improve the condition of their families these women compromise in terms of their health, their hygiene and their security. The kind of structural gender imbalances do exist almost in every strata of society in India. The lack of sanitation facilities

and unhygienic environment adds on to the devastating effects on their health and well-being of women.

Inadequate supply of drinking water during the summer seasons and also for the domestic purposes carries the highest burden of disease which disproportionately affect their health and also impacts the health of their children. Lacks of these basic necessities also influence the work burden, safety, education and equity of women. Therefore the government has to be urged to take several steps to improve the status of women in slums and provide them with basic necessities for living. Media and NGO's should also play a pro-active role in disseminating information to increase the health awareness of people living in slums (Kaviarasu, 2015). These efforts could go a long way in alleviating their basic needs and provide them an improved quality of life.

Understanding habitus and gender mainstreaming form the basis for effectiveness of targeted remedial measures but these are continuously overlooked. And clearly in this study a complete absence of any such local approaches seem to tighten the noose around already suffering community. But with well thought out strategies and moves (several have been already suggested) at even local administrative level, it is possible to stop the falling apart of such communities especially women on account of water availability and sanitation.

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Compliance with ethical standards

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Conflict of Interest: The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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