India is a vast country; it extends over 2,980 kms from East to West and 3,200 kms North to South covering a land area of 3.3 million square kms, which is 2.1% of the entire world land area and 11.9 percent of Asia. At its present population growth rate of 2.1% India adds on the equivalent of the entire population of Australia every year.

After Independence in 1947, India adopted planned economic development as the strategy towards economic modernisation and social progress. However, Housing has not received due priority in our Five Year Plan Programmes. No comprehensive National Housing Policies or Programmes were formulated with the objective of overcoming housing shortage within a prescribed time limit.

The problem of Housing in India is a complex one requiring finance on a large scale and is dependent on its solution upon the concerted efforts of individuals, co-operatives, Central and State Governments, to be planned and executed over a number of years. All those who need houses to live in can hardly build them. In a single year (1993-94) the building prices rose by nearly 50 percent and the average increase over the last three years was a phenomenal 400 percent. Meet Mr. Asesh Shah and see his experience.

With Rupees six lakhs in his bank account Mr. Asesh Shah searched for a flat in Andheri last year. He is still searching now 18 kms away in Dahishar "It is no longer a question of finding the right flat" he says wearily "one has to find an affordable flat". Now he is forced to give those dreams an unwilling burial.

Ironically those who have the power to make such down to earth dreams come true will soon be spending hours at work conference "examining the situation and looking for new solutions to human settlement developments". That the second United Nations organised conference habited II was being held after a yawning gap of two decades, when the World Economic Forum meets every year, itself shows the sheer official apathy towards the housing crisis. Indeed it is no longer an issue, it is a crisis. On this background a research study on Housing Development and Finance in Maharashtra was attempted to throw some light and give new directions to the development of Housing in our country.

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