Chapter V

PAVEMENT DWELLERS OF KOLKATA CITY

5.01. Overview
The present chapter covers another dimension of urban poverty that is the 'pavement dwellers'. They are the most vulnerable group of poor residing on the pavements without any form of shelter. In Kolkata City, the pavement dwellers live in a very critical and difficult condition in terms of housing situation, poverty, malnutrition, sanitation and health. They are those who lack protection, are shelter less, lack housing rights, have no access to safe environment and live in deplorable condition. The pavement dwellers are termed as 'houseless population' according to the Census of India. People who do not live in buildings or census houses but live in the open or roadside pavements, in hune pipes, under fly-over and staircases, or in the open places of worship, mandaps, railway platforms etc are termed as ‘houseless’ (Census of India, 1991).

5.02. Pavement dwellers and migration
Pressure of rural poverty in the surrounding districts has lead to increasing migrants of families to Kolkata to find a better life. The landless labourers, who constitute the bulk of the village population, are deeply imbedded in poverty. It is due to the economic pressure that the rural population is forced to migrate to urban areas in search of employment. Added to these factors is the stark reality of growing insecurity in villages on account of the tyranny of parochialism and casteism. However these poor became part of the ever-increasing slum and pavement dwellers in the city. Having found a job, even if it means washing pots and pans, or working as a scavenger or rag picker, the migrants stick to the big city. If driven out, they return in quest of any other job. The cost of public sector housing is beyond his modest means. Evidently, they choose the pavement in the vicinity of their place of work, the time otherwise taken in commuting and its cost being, forbidding for their slender means. To loss the pavement is to lose the job. Kolkata faces an acute housing crisis, especially among the poor and the State has failed to come out with clear policies and plans to rehabilitate them. The poor are unable to afford the choices offered to them in formal housing markets. In contrast, the informal and illegal housing markets of slums and squatter settlements are specifically geared to meet some of their shelter needs. There are thousands of poor who live on the pavements and street under the open sky, on railway platform.
5.03. Assessment of pavement dwellers in Kolkata

5.03.01. Proportion of houseless population, 1961-2001

Nearly 0.63 percent of the city’s population lived on the pavements in 1961. During 1961-71 their growth has been the maximum thereby being 1.56 percent of the total population. During the same time the houseless male has increased from 0.83 percent to 1.98 percent. Though the share has decreased during 1971-1991, there has been increase during 1991-2001 from 0.76 percent to 1.48 percent (Figure No.5.01 and Table No.5A). Their number has increased from 18,323 in 1961 to 67,676 in 2001 that is, increasing by 269 percent within a span of 50 years (Census of India, 2001).

5.03.02. Residing places

They occupy a variety of urban open spaces including pavements, city squares, courtyards of religious establishments, bus stop shade, beneath flyovers and footbridges etc (Photo No.5.01, 5.02, 5.03, 5.04, 5.05, 5.06). Most of them resided in and around the Central Business District of the city. Maximum concentration was seen in the Canning Street and Barabazar area, this central commercial area needing the service of daily wage labourers like rickshaw-pullers, handcart drivers, manual loading workers, and truck drivers. By staying close the pavement dwellers provided substantial services. Prosperity of the bazaars in Canning Street-Barabazar area depends on their cheap labour, which makes it possible to keep the prices low.

5.03.03. Demographic characteristic

The sex ratio of the houseless population during 1961-2001 in Kolkata shows the preponderance of male population. The sex ratio was the lowest in 1961 being 223 females per 1000 males. In 1971 it was 287 and thereby increased to 453 in 1981 and 463 in 1991 and then again declining to 313 in 2001 (Figure No.5.02 and Table No.5B). But the child (0-6 years) sex ratio in 2001 census was comparatively higher being 863 (Census of India, 2001). Kolkata has a higher

Geography Of Urban Poverty In The City Of Kolkata
Plate No.5.01
RESIDING PLACES OF PAVEMENT DWELLERS

Photo No. 5.01
Houseless population residing on the pavements of Central Kolkata

Photo No. 5.02
Houseless population residing under the portico of Kolkata Improvement Trust in Central Kolkata

Photo No. 5.03
Houseless population residing under flyover in West Kolkata

Photo No. 5.04
Houseless population residing under footbridge in Central Kolkata

Photo No. 5.05
Houseless population residing under shade of Bus Stop on APC Road of Central Kolkata

Photo No. 5.06
Houseless population residing beside a religious establishment in North Kolkata
proportion of girl street children (47 percent) compared to other metro cities of India having 28-35 percent (Government of West Bengal, 1995). The share of 0-6 years population was almost 6.6 percent of the total houseless in 2001. But the share of 0-6 years age group of female child constituted 12.86 percent of the total female houseless population in the same year (Census of India, 2001).

5.04. Assessment of houseless population in Kolkata (Ward wise)

5.04.01. Houseless population in 1971

5.04.01.01. Share of houseless population
- In 1971 pavement dwellers accounted for 1.59 percent of the city’s total population.
- 6 Wards out of 100 Wards had no houseless population.
- 64 Wards had a share of less than 1 percent of the total houseless population accounting to 22.33 percent of the total houseless population in the city.
- 23 Wards accounted for almost 40 percent of the total houseless population having a share of 1-3 percent.
- The rest 7 Wards had a share of 37.88 percent of the total houseless population with 3-9 percent (Figure No. 5.03 and Table No.5C).
- The centrally located Wards in and around the CBD had the highest share of the total houseless population in the city.

5.04.01.02. Major areas of concentration
In the same year almost 42 percent lived on the pavements in the CBD and its surroundings. The major concentration was found in Ward No. 44 (Barabazar) being 9.98 percent, followed by 6.33 percent in Ward No. 46 (Esplanade surroundings), 5.22 percent in Ward No. 42 (Jorasanko, MG Road), 4.67 percent in Ward No. 45 (Esplanade-BBD Bag), 4.15 percent in Ward No. 87 (Kalighat), 3.76 percent in Ward No. 43 (Barabazar, MG Road) and Ward No. 32 (Karnagachi-Ghose Bagan).

Table No. 5.01
Major Centres Of Concentration of Houseless Population In Kolkata, 1971

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ward No.</th>
<th>Name of areas</th>
<th>% of houseless population to total houseless population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>44</td>
<td>Barabazar</td>
<td>9.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46</td>
<td>Esplanade Surroundings</td>
<td>6.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42</td>
<td>Jorasanko, MG Road</td>
<td>5.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45</td>
<td>Esplanade-BBD Bag</td>
<td>4.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>87</td>
<td>Kalighat</td>
<td>4.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43</td>
<td>Barabazar, MG Road</td>
<td>3.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>Kankurgachi-Ghose Bagan</td>
<td>3.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>37.88</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data Source: Census of India, 1971

5.04.01.02. Major areas of concentration
In the same year almost 42 percent lived on the pavements in the CBD and its surroundings. The major concentration was found in Ward No. 44 (Barabazar) being 9.98 percent, followed by 6.33 percent in Ward No. 46 (Esplanade surroundings), 5.22 percent in
Ward No. 42 (Jorasanko), 4.67 percent in Ward No. 45 (Esplanade-BBD Bag), 4.15 percent in Ward No. 87 (Kalighat) and 3.76 percent in Ward No. 43 (Barabazar and MG Road) and 32 (Kankurgachi and Ghose Bagan) respectively (Table No.5.01)

5.04.01.03. Ward wise distribution of houseless population
The Ward wise distribution shows that Ward No. 44 (Barabazar) and 45 (Esplanade-BBD Bag) had more than 10 percent of the population living on the pavements. Ward No. 42 (Jorasanko, MG Road), 43 (Barabazar and MG Road) and 87 (Kalighat) had 7-10 percent of the population living on the pavements (Map No.5.01 and Table No.5G). Almost 6 Wards in the vicinity of the CBD had 4-7 percent of the population living on the pavements. Nearly 49 Wards (mostly in South, East and South Kolkata) had less than 1 percent of their population living on pavements.

5.04.02. Houseless population in 1981
5.04.02.01. Share of houseless population dwellers, 1981
- In 1981 pavement dwellers accounted for 1.14 percent of the city’s population residing in 100 Wards of the city.
- 12 Wards had no houseless population.
- 58 Wards had a share of less than 1 percent of the total houseless accounting to 22.21 percent of the total houseless.
- 24 Wards accounted for almost 37.88 percent of the total houseless having a share of 1-3 percent of the total houseless.
- 3 Wards had accounted for 11.73 percent of the total houseless with 3-5 percent of the total houseless.
- 3 Wards had 28.18 percent of the total houseless with 3-9 percent of the total houseless (Figure No.5.04 and Table No.5D).

5.04.02.02. Major areas of concentration, 1981
The major concentration was found in Ward No. 84 (Taratala-West Port, South Port, Garden Reach) being 10.94 percent, followed by 8.66 percent in Ward No.36 (Sealdah), 8.58 percent in Ward No.51 (Muchipara-Taltala), 4.63 percent in Ward No.33 (Narkeldanga), 3.75 percent in Ward No.83 (Ekhalpar, South Port, Taratala) and 3.35 percent in Ward No. 42 (Barabazar) respectively. These 6 Wards accounted for 39.91 percent of the total houseless population in the city (Table No.5.02). The Ward wise distribution shows that Ward Nos.36 (Sealdah), 51 (Muchipara-Taltala), 84 (Taratala-West Port, South Port, Garden Reach) had more than 7 percent
of the population living on the pavements (Map No.5.02). Ward Nos.42 (Barabazar), 45 (Esplanade-BBD Bag) and 83 (Ekbalpur, South Port, Taratala) had 4-7 percent of the population living on the pavements (Table No.5.02).

5.04.02.03. Ward wise distribution of houseless population, 1981

Most of the Wards (27 Wards) in Central, North Central and East Kolkata had 1-4 percent of the population living on the pavements. Almost 55 Wards (mostly in South and North Kolkata) had less than 1 percent of their population living on pavements. Nearly 3 Wards in Central, and West Kolkata had 4-7 percent of houseless population. Other 3 Wards in Central, and West Kolkata had more than 7 percent of houseless population (Map No.5.02 and Table No.5.02).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ward No.</th>
<th>Name of areas</th>
<th>% of houseless population to total houseless population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>84</td>
<td>Taratala-West Port, South Port Garden Reach</td>
<td>10.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>Sealdah</td>
<td>8.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51</td>
<td>Muchipara-Taltala</td>
<td>8.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>Narkeldanga</td>
<td>4.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>83</td>
<td>Ekbalpur, South Port, Taratala</td>
<td>3.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42</td>
<td>Barabazar</td>
<td>3.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>39.91</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data source: Census of India, 1981

5.04.03. Houseless population in 1987

According to the survey made by the KMDA in 1987 in the 141 wards of Kolkata, the share of houseless population in the CBD was found to be 27,493 out of 55,571, which is almost 49.5 percent of the total houseless of the city. Nearly 55,005 (98.98 percent) lived in the Old Corporation Area. Table No.5.03 indicates the centers of concentration of houseless population in the city. Esplanade-B.B. D. Bag, Sealdah, Posta, Tirrita Bazar, Esplanade Surroundings were the main areas of concentration with the houseless population being involved in commercial and wholesale markets and in the informal transport sector (Table No. 5.03). The study revealed a relationship between the pavement dwellers and commercial, transport and the centers of collection of goods and services; and also between the density of pavement dwellers and the distance between the CBD and the living areas (Dutta, A.K., Haldar, A., Mukhopadhyay, A., & Mohanty, M., 1993).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ward No.</th>
<th>Name of areas</th>
<th>% of houseless population to total houseless population</th>
<th>Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>45</td>
<td>Esplanade-BBD Bag</td>
<td>8.66</td>
<td>Commercial, Wholesale markets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>Sealdah</td>
<td>4.16</td>
<td>Porters in the Railway Station of Sealdah, wholesale markets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Posta</td>
<td>3.63</td>
<td>Wholesale markets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43</td>
<td>Tirrita Bazar</td>
<td>3.44</td>
<td>Commercial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46</td>
<td>Esplanade Surroundings</td>
<td>3.24</td>
<td>Commercial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>23.13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data source: KMDA, 1987
Chapter V: Pavement Dwellers Of Kolkata City

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DISTRIBUTION OF PERCENTAGE OF HOUSELESS POPULATION TO WARD POPULATION. 1971
KOLKATA MUNICIPAL CORPORATION

Legend

% Of Houseless Population To Ward Population

More than 10 (2)
7 to 10 (3)
4 to 7 (6)
1 to 4 (54)
Less than 1 (49)
No houseless population (12)

N.B. Figure in parenthesis indicate number of Wards

Data Source: Census of India, 1971
Computation & map generated by author by using MapInfo Professional Version 7.5

Map No. 5.01

DISTRIBUTION OF PERCENTAGE OF HOUSELESS POPULATION TO WARD POPULATION. 1981
KOLKATA MUNICIPAL CORPORATION

Legend

% Of Houseless Population To Ward Population

More than 7 (3)
7 to 4 (3)
4 to 1 (25)
Less than 1 (55)
No houseless population (12)

N.B. Figure in parenthesis indicate number of Wards

Data Source: Census of India, 1981
Computation & map generated by author by using MapInfo Professional Version 7.5

Map No. 5.02

Geography Of Urban Poverty In The City Of Kolkata
5.04.04. Houseless population in 1991

5.04.04.01. Share of pavement dwellers, 1991

- Almost 41 Wards had a share of less than 1 percent of the total houseless population accounting to a total of 20.46 percent.
- But the maximum concentration of pavement dwellers were in 28 Wards amounting to almost 51.95 percent with a share of 1-3 percent.
- 4 Wards had a share between 3-5 percent with a total of 14.76 percent of the total houseless. (Figure No. 5.06 and Table No.5E).

5.04.04.02. Major areas of concentration,

The major concentration was found in Ward No. 45 (Hare Street) being 6.65 percent, followed by 6.20 percent in Ward No. 74 (Alipur, Wataganj), 5.49 percent in Ward No. 6 (Kashipur, and Chitpur), 4.44 percent in Ward No. 42 (Barabazar), 3.67 percent in Ward No. 9 (Shyampukur), 3.5 percent in Ward No. 26 (Jorasanko and Burtala) and 3.15 percent in Ward No. 37 (Amherst Street) respectively. These 6 wards account for 39.91 percent of the total houseless population in the city (Table No.5.04).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ward No</th>
<th>Name of areas</th>
<th>% of houseless population to total houseless population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>45</td>
<td>Hare Street</td>
<td>6.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>74</td>
<td>Alipore, Wataganj</td>
<td>6.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Kashipur, Chitpur</td>
<td>5.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42</td>
<td>Barabazar</td>
<td>4.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Shyampukur</td>
<td>3.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Jorasanko, Burtala</td>
<td>3.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>Amherst Street</td>
<td>3.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>33.10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data Source: Census of India, 1991

5.04.04.03. Ward wise distribution of houseless population

In 1991, 0.76 percent of the city’s population lived on the pavements. Altogether 65 Wards had no houseless population, out of which 34 Wards were in the added areas and the rest in the old Corporation area. Pavement dwellers were found to be residing in 76 Municipal Wards. Most of the Wards (38 Wards) in Central, South-central, few in North and West Kolkata had less than 1 percent of the population living on the pavements. Almost 23 Wards (mostly in North and North-central Kolkata) had less 1-3 percent of their population living on the pavements.
pavements. Nearly 11 Wards in Central and North-central Kolkata had 3-5 percent of houseless population. 3 Wards in Central, and West-central Kolkata had 5-7 percent of houseless population (Map No.5.02 and Table No.51). Only Ward No. 45 had more than 7 percent of its Ward population residing on pavements.

5.04.05. Houseless population during 1999-2005
An assessment of the poor in 1999 by Kolkata Municipal Corporation revealed that pavement dwellers comprised 1.3 percent of the city’s population (KMC, 2000). Kolkata Municipal Corporation had conducted a survey in 2005. The survey revealed that

- About 38 percent of the city’s population resides in makeshift tents on the pavements.
- The minimum income of the families surveyed is less than Rs.80 per day.
- About 82 percent of these families do not have a ration card or voters’ identity card (Express India, 2007).
5.04.06. Significant residential zones of pavement dwellers in the city
Life of the houseless population is often associated with a particular area or zone specially big market areas like that in Esplanade or wholesale market areas of Barabazar Canning Street and Dalhousie (Photo No.5.07), or railway platforms of Sealdah Station, important road crossings like Shyambazar and Sobhabazar (Photo No.5.08), Rajabazar-Maniktala (Photo No.5.09) of North Kolkata; Gariahat, Ballygunge Furry (Photo No.5.10), Tollygunge, Rashbehari-Kalighat-Southern Avenue, Hazra of South Kolkata; Park Circus, Moulali of Central Kolkata etc. According to the civic conservancy department, the areas worst hit by the influx of vagrants include Strand Road, Colutala Street, CR Avenue, Madan Street, Moulali, APC Roy Road (Photo No.5.11) and the stretch from Park Circus to Gariahat (Photo No.5.12). Often the policemen fleece them, and they have to protection money to ensure safety of the women. Though a comparison on the basis of concentration of houseless population according to different years have been shown it is really difficult to make an area wise comparison may be due to the migratory movement of these people within the city.

5.05. Social condition

5.05.01. Living conditions of pavement dwellers
Typically the pavement dwellers live under a fragile socio-economic condition in the city (Box No.5.01). With the rigidities of the rural social system they manage to mingle in the cosmopolitan city environment. With a minimum change of clothes, lack of privacy, minimum assets of pots and pans and a few belongings they manage to get along with their livelihoods. A most explicit portrayal of pavement dwellers is found in the writings of Jagannathan & Haider (1988 &1989); Dutta, Halder, Mukhopadhyay and Mohanty (1993) where they have illuminated the lives of the shelterless during the late 1980s. The intense poverty in many cases did not enable them to pay for housing and dwell on the streets.

5.05.02. Illiteracy status

5.05.02.01. Illiteracy status in 1991-93
During 1991-93 illiteracy rate of female pavement dwellers was the highest (89 percent) compared to female bustee dwellers (42.5 percent) and total female population (35
Plate No. 5.02
SIGNIFICANT RESIDENTIAL ZONES OF PAVEMENT DWELLERS

Photo No. 5.07
Wholesale market area of Barabazar in Central Kolkata

Photo No. 5.08
Road crossings of Seabahazar in North Kolkata

Photo No. 5.09
Rajabazar-Maniktala area in North Kolkata

Photo No. 5.10
Gariahat-Ballygunge Furry area in South Kolkata

Photo No. 5.11
CR Avenue in Central Kolkata

Photo No. 5.12
Park Circus area in South Kolkata
percent) of the city. Compared to female illiteracy, male illiteracy rates were lower (Figure 5.06 and Table No.5F).

5.05.02. Illiteracy status in 2001

Illiteracy among pavement dwellers continues to be high in 2001 census with 77.88 percent of total pavement dwellers, 78.2 percent of females and 77.79 percent of males being illiterate compared to 19.14 percent of total population, 22.7 percent of female population and 16.21 percent of male population of the city. If people without completing primary education are taken then the percentage will be much higher. 2001 census also reveals that illiteracy among child population in majority of the wards is between 80-90 percent. In 2001, 26.66 percent of slum dwellers are illiterate with 22.26 percent of males being illiterate and 32.22 percent for females. Leaving aside the slum and pavement dwellers of Kolkata the illiteracy rate works out to be 14.9 percent for the rest of the population and is the lowest for the male population being 11.21 percent (Figure 5.07 and Table No.5J).

5.06. Economic profile of pavement dwellers

5.06.01. Migration and employment

About 64 percent of the pavement dwellers are permanent migrants; others arrive and leave the city responding to periodic demands for labour or prospect for a job. Majority of the pavement dwellers were erstwhile cultivators or small artisans; the landless poor of the rural area. Most were unable to carry on living below the poverty line and migrated to the cities for a better living. Over the years the migrating trend has given rise to thousands of them on the Kolkata pavements. While selecting a spot for dwelling they judge the potential earning opportunities of the areas. Hence news about dwelling places and jobs are vital information to them.
Nearly 64 percent of the houseless population are main workers, 4 percent are marginal workers and the rest 32 percent are non-workers. Out of the total houseless population 53 percent comprises of male main workers and 11 percent are female main workers. 3 percent are male marginal workers and 1 percent comprise of female marginal workers. The rest 20 percent and 12 percent comprises of male and female non-workers respectively (Figure No. 5.08 and Table No. 5K).

5.06.03. Vulnerable occupation categories

The pavement dwellers cannot be deemed as a labour force. The two main categories of livelihood that these people take up are untrained labour and small scale trading. Transport workforce like cycle rickshaw, hand-pulled rickshaws and handcart pullers, cycle van encompasses many of the pavement dwellers (Photo No.5.13 and 5.14). There is also a minor segment comprising workers like shoeshine men (Photo No.5.15), masseurs, porters (Photo No.5.16) and rag pickers (Photo No.5.17). Some are also involved in begging (Photo No.5.18). While a fraction of them live by begging, the rest are wage earners and self-employed people living in desperate condition.

5.06.03.01. Beggary

Though the exact numbers of beggars are not known they constitute a conspicuous feature of city life. They tend to concentrate in certain zones of the city. Particularly they are visible around religious places and railway platform of Sealdah, and other public places like markets, bus terminus etc. Religious motivation have encouraged begging and large clusters are often seen in Kalighat Temple at Kalighat (South Kolkata), in the market areas of Shyambazar (North Kolkata), some in the market areas of Gariahat-Rashbehari area (South Kolkata), a considerable section at Sealdah Railway Platform (Central Kolkata), important road crossings and the rest are scattered in the busy areas of the city. Child beggary is a common aspect including parental pressure on children to beg. Guardians often sell their children to organize commercial gangs of children for begging in urban areas. Geoffrey Moorhouse has given an explicit portrayal of child beggary in his book ‘Calcutta, the City Revealed’ from his experience in the 1970s. According to him the scale of beggary in Kolkata is incomparable to other Indian cities. There have been no detailed studies on ‘beggars’ and of the functioning and impact of social welfare programmes for ‘beggars’ in Kolkata.
EMPLOYMENT AND LIVELIHOOD OF PAVEMENT DWELLERS

Photo No. 5.13
Informal transport sector workforce like cycle van puller

Photo No. 5.14
Informal transport sector workforce like hand rickshaw puller

Photo No. 5.15
Self employed workforce engaged in commercial activities like shoeshine men and cobblers

Photo No. 5.16
Workforce engaged in commercial activities like porters

Photo No. 5.17
Self employed workforce engaged in rag picking

Photo No. 5.18
Handicapped houseless population engaged in begging
5.06.03.02. Rag picking
Throughout the city scores of pavement dwelling families mostly are engaged in the job of sorting materials and various wares, from garbage heaps exposing themselves to serious health hazards. The main sources of collection are streets, lanes, by-lanes, municipal dumping ground, garbage heaps and sewers. It is to be noted that Rag picking does not figure in the 900 categories of occupation classified by the census of India. A fairly large number of children are engaged in such hazardous work. The reason that children work in this trade is because it requires no skill and can earn a child more money than other unskilled labour. Many children are introduced to the work when they are very young by their families and gradually increase their own work, as they get older. Collecting materials for 8-9 hours a day provides an average daily earning of Rs.5–10. A study made by the Centre For Man And Environment in 2004 shows that 75 percent of the rag pickers are women (Box No.5.02). Collection of materials from insanitary garbage has made them vulnerable to several health hazards (Biswas. A., 2004).

5.06.03.03. Rickshaw pulling
There are instances in the city revealing the stake of the livelihoods of the houseless, specially the hand-pulled rickshaw pullers. Hand-pulled rickshaws are restricted to the central and northern and a few stretches of the southern parts of the city. In 2005 the left front government of West Bengal decided to take hand-pulled rickshaws off the streets of Kolkata, since it claims it as an inhuman practice and is regressive to the city’s development and image (The Times of India. 2007). Periodically the government has threatened to stop renewing their licenses. Because of this almost 24,000 hand-pulled rickshaw pullers in the city will be losing their jobs without any alternative arrangements. Illiterate, unskilled and old many will be ending up doing more inhuman work (The Telegraph. 2005).

5.06.04. Average income of houseless population
According to a survey in 2005 the average monthly income of a beggar amounts to Rs.600, which is lower compared to other professions of the houseless population (The Telegraph. 2005). A rag-picker earns Rs.450 per month, which is the least. Porters and sweepers earn the highest
being Rs.4,500 per month. Rickshaw pullers have a fairly high income of Rs.3,000 and a domestic helper earns a moderately low wage of Rs.1,005 per month (Table No.5.05)

5.07. Status of rights of pavement dwellers

5.07.01. No legal residential address
Living on the pavements the pavement dwellers have no legal residential address, which does not ensure them with the right to ration cards as well. Being the most vulnerable and chronically poorer section out of the urban poor these people do not even have the right to apply for the poverty alleviation programmes that they are entitled to.

5.07.02. No importance in election
Despite their small numbers they hardly have any importance during election. They remain passive spectators while the ever vociferous politician never tires of speaking about "upliftment of the poor." The politicians however seem blissfully apathetic towards the 'homeless' when it comes to ensuring voting rights of the homeless - maybe because this floating population scattered all over the city does not add up to any sizeable vote bank of any given area. As there is no premises number of these people they have to do without voting rights. While thousands of people continue to live in sub-human conditions virtually all over the city, the vote-seekers continue to ignore them, as they are not important during election time.

Table No. 5.05
Average Monthly Income Of Pavement Dwellers Of Kolkata, 2005

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Monthly income (Rs.)</th>
<th>Income status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beggar</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rag picker</td>
<td>450</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rickshaw puller</td>
<td>3,000</td>
<td>Fairly high</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Porter and sweeper</td>
<td>4,500</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic helper</td>
<td>1,005</td>
<td>Moderately low</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data Source: The Telegraph, 2005

5.08. Vulnerable section of houseless population

5.08.01. Street and working children -- an urban phenomenon
In Kolkata Street Children have been marked as vulnerable section of the population. Most of them are left to fend for themselves, as their parents are busy working, raising serious questions about their safety. Sometimes they find themselves being active participants in the survival of the whole family. Unicef defines street children as 'those who are of the street and on the street'. Though there is no census of street children it was estimated to be between 75,000 and 1,00,000 in 1992 (Government of West Bengal, 2005). A study made by the IPER in 1992 shows the deplorable situation of their lives (Box No.5.03).
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5.03. Status Of The Street Children In Kolkata, 1992

- Nearly one lakh children of the age group 5-15 live and spend their time on the pavements of Kolkata and they constitute about 20 percent of child labour of the city (IPER, 1992).
- Almost 53 percent of them are boys and 47 percent girls (IPER, 1992).
- Only 10 percent of them have come to the city as runaways or have been deserted by their parents (IPER, 1992).
- Nearly 84 percent belong to scheduled castes and tribes (IPER, 1992).
- The average monthly income of a child labour is about Rs.100, that is, 2.2 US Dollars or even less (CINI ASHA & Save The Children, 1993).

Source: CINI ASHA & Save The Children, 2003

5.08.01.01. Habitat and work

Street children of Kolkata are spread over almost all its 141 municipal wards. However, their concentrations are higher in the areas close to the railway stations and market places, where job opportunities are better. The children do various kinds of work, including rag picking, begging etc., just to eke out their wretched existence. Some of them are often allured to petty crimes, like black-marketing, pick pocketing and drug trafficking. According to micro level surveys conducted by NGOs greater concentration of single migrant children (Box No.5.04) are found in areas where there are small enterprises such as bangle making, leather factories, hotels and so on. A greater concentration can be seen in areas of Narkeldanga (North Kolkata), Ekbalpur (West Kolkata), Kasba (South Kolkata) and Amherst Street (Central Kolkata). Most of them work in garages, embroidery shops and tailoring shops (Save The Children, 2003). Many are child labourers. A fairly large number of children are engaged in rag picking. Collecting materials for 8-9 hours per day provides an average daily earning of Rs.4–5. The nature of their job has made them vulnerable to health hazards. Many street children in Kolkata are employed in restaurants and roadside stalls, as child labour is cheap and can be forced to work for long hours. Many are engaged in begging on the city’s streets – they can be seen hanging around at stations and at traffic signals. On the street if a child cannot earn a living by working, they take up alternative means like begging, stealing, selling illicit liquor or peddling drugs. They are a mobile group making it difficult to survey their number. Most of them are non-going school children or dropouts.

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5.08.01.02. Girl street child - additional exploitation risks
Among these most of the girl street children face the risk of ubiquitous teasing, harassment by police or municipal functionaries and sexual abuse. City-level statistics on the girl street children, magnitude of female child labour, girl child involved in illicit trafficking and prostitution is unavailable. However, certain micro-level studies by NGOs do reveal the risk of a girl street child. For example the survey conducted by CINI on the homeless children on the platforms of Sealdah Station in 1989 revealed high incidence of abuse of a girl child (CINI ASHA & Save The Children, 1993). Similarly a study conducted by the Central Social Welfare Board in six metropolitan cities of India in 1990 revealed 40 percent of the commercial sex workers entering the trade before the age of 18 years in Kolkata (Save The Children, 2003).

5.08.02. Pavement women
Women on the pavements are not only disproportionately represented characterized by environmental burdens, but they are also more vulnerable to them due to both socio-economic roles or constraints and biological differences.

5.09. Contribution of NGOs and other institutions
There are several NGOs working in the city with the pavement dwellers and also the street children. These organizations' outreach involves work with children: street children, rag-pickers and child migrant workers. Because they face many challenges in their daily lives, these NGOs provide a variety of services to reduce their vulnerability. Through programs of non-formal education, vocational training, outreach activities for child rag-pickers, medical care, and saving, they empower these children, particularly girls, to break the cycle of dependency on illegal activities and hence reduce the risk of being subjected to abuse and violence.

- There are NGOs like Hope Kolkata Foundation and Right Track, which organizes night rounds of the city scanning the streets and pavements for children in danger and families in need (Bhattacharyya M., 2005).
- The HOPE Kolkata Foundation by acting as facilitator through community development through provision of education, vocational training, health awareness and service, shelter, nutrition, counseling, recreation, rescue and rehabilitation, repatriation, awareness on rights, emergency relief, capacity building, fund raising.
- The Nabadisha Education Programme for street children is initiated by the Kolkata Police and implemented by Vikramshila Education Society. It runs with financial assistance from Child Relief and You, food support from Catholic Relief Service, and a total support of the respective local communities. The target is to provide an all-round basic education to enable them to join the societal mainstream.
TSHED runs non-formal schools under the Integrated Programmes for Street Children.

FOCUS works among the street dwellers of Rajabazar-Sealdah area (Central Kolkata).

Loreto Day School, Sealdah have several pro-poor programmes. Located in Central Kolkata there are many pavement families in the vicinity of the school. The school provides night shelter facility for the women and girl children living on the pavements.

CINI ASHA provides non-formal education for the street children of Central Kolkata.

Apart from these the nodal agencies like Save The Children and UNICEF do have their individual sets of programmes and schemes for the street children.

Religious establishments do provide some facilities to the poor like proving meals and distributing blankets and polythene sheets during winter.

There are instances where aids and donations are siphoned off by the NGOs working for the poor. The organizations blow up the money without doing any work (Hindustan Times, 2004).

5.10. Attitude of Kolkata Municipal Corporation towards pavement dwellers

KMC is the major civic authority looking after the civic amenities of the city. The KMC do not have any specific programmes for pavement dwellers. A spurt in the number of vagrants, street children and pavement-dwellers is posing a threat to the city's already stretched infrastructure, according to KMC (The Telegraph, 2004). Several Ward Councilors have appealed to the civic authorities as well as the government about the problem demanding a drive against vagrants and pavement-dwellers.

To organize the rag-pickers, a Project was proposed in collaboration with NGO help -- rag pickers would move from house to house to collect recyclable garbage getting paid for the waste they collected. This does not appear to have been implemented yet. A similar scheme was also tried in 1998 but failed due to a lack of awareness in households about recycling. The programme for rag pickers under KEIP project has been a conspicuous failure (Naftalin, E. 2004).

In November 2004 the Kolkata Municipal Corporation wanted to get rid of the pavement dwellers as a part of the grand plan for beautification of the city; though it was not implemented. According the KMC the city will not look clean unless an overall eviction drive of the houseless population is launched (The Statesman, 2004).

In 2005 the KMC claimed that not a single houseless family in the city lived below the poverty line. Even the beggar earned more than the benchmark (poverty line of Rs.454 per capita as of 1999-2000) set by the Centre to identify the poorest segment of the population. The list was to be used to issue special ration cards, to offer financial grants and to help BPL families construct dwelling units under the VAMBAY housing scheme.
But as the KMC failed to submit the list in time the funds sanctioned for the purpose had to be returned to the Central Government. Just because the pavement dwellers in the city were not residents of any premise they were denied of their right to the BPL schemes (The Telegraph, 2005).

- In an attempt to issue identity cards to the pavement dwellers, Kolkata Municipal Corporation had conducted a survey in 2005. But despite getting the report, the KMC is yet to issue identification papers to the concerned homeless families. In the absence of identification papers, police regularly harasses them and at times, false charges are framed against them. If the KMC issues identity cards, they would no longer be targets of police harassment (Express India, 2007).

- Till present there has been no direct or indirect programmes launched for the pavement dwellers of the city by the civic authorities.

5.11. Conclusion

In a broad sense, pavement dwellers are basically people for whom the society has no space to fit in. Their life is of abject poverty, filled with illness and bereavement. They arrive from the poorest group of the rural areas. Except a few studies there are no detailed studies on the socio-economic conditions of pavement dwellers. A sample survey conducted by KMDA in mid 1970s produced socio-economic information regarding the pavement dwellers of Kolkata. In the late 1980s another socio-economic study was conducted by KMDA under the guidance of Jagannathan and Halder (1988 & 1989). Apart from such studies there are a few relevant research work on different functional or social groups of pavement dwellers like - by Institute of Hygiene and Public Health (1992-93) on the ‘reproductive health status of the pavement dwellers’, by CINI & Save The Children (1993) on ‘Child Abuse’, by NGOs like TSHED (1996-97), by Bhattacharyya and Kundu (1997) on ‘rag pickers’, and Women’s Interlink Foundation (1999) on ‘rag pickers’. Considered as eyesores the city has found convenient ways of getting rid of them by eviction drive. Apart from the further misery and degradation, which it involves, eviction of pavement dwellers is an ineffective remedy for decongesting the cities. Wherever the lapse may lie, the question remains that ‘does the mutual indifference of planners, civic authorities, politicians and those that the city could not provide with homes befit the world’s largest democracy?"

References
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