Chapter 5

Forms and Contexts Of
Marginalisation: From Family to State

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The experience of marginalisation by the people in poverty takes on different forms and occur in a variety of contexts - both formal and informal. As we will be learning shortly, there may be similarity in forms even when the contexts differ. The interplay of various institutions and the variety of interactions they entail, generate a great deal of compulsions and inequal opportunities to keep poor in poverty, if not render them poorer.

Hence this chapter attempts to capture the various processes that structure a particular way of ‘becoming’ of individuals in India - ‘being’ poor to ‘becoming’ poorer, and perpetuate a particular way of ‘being’, namely, the poorest, who are congealed in poverty forever and caught in some sort of a time warp, as it were. The marginalisation processes elaborated as operating on the lives of the ‘becoming’ poor and the ‘being’ poor are not exhaustive, nor do they claim to any degree of representativeness. They are the predominant tendencies observable in the lives of the people, selected for this study. The processes described below are derivative of the selected stories and thus are only reflective of the specific situations that have occurred in the lives of the people documented in the form of Lifehistories.* The following writing limits itself to describing only those processes commonly impacting and influencing the lives of poor in Madurai.

5.1. The Terrain Of Analysis

A close perusal of the lifehistories guided this study to organise the analysis of the processes along the lines of importance and proximity that various social processes have in the lives of poor. Thus this chapter moves from commenting on those dominant processes whose terrain is very proximate to the lives of the poor, to that of distant terrains whose impact and influence on the life-circumstances of the poor is as intense and as significant. In order of proximity, family, community (caste/tribal/religious), neighbourhood, nation and globe would occupy the sequenced spaces (see the figure 5.1).

* As requested by the respondents, the names of persons whose cases / life histories appear in the following chapters, have been changed to protect their identities.
Each of the circles contains forces that determine the life circumstances of the poor. They unleash various processes that have relevance for the impoverishment of the people. Each process has social, cultural, political and economics dimensions qualifying it. Thus gender, caste, religion, modernity all shade these processes.

These forces operate on people living in poverty either in unison, isolation or contradiction with each other. They set in motion a series of impoverishing processes that cause poverty. In the face of these, people who are disempowered organise their lives resolutely and imaginatively to be well.

5.2. Forms of Marginalisation

This study using lifehistory approaches and methods have explored and documented the lives and realities of those who are marginalised, despised, excluded and ignored. On the basis of the analyses, this study rallies its arguments around different manifestations of marginalisation mentioned below by people-in-poverty (see the diagram below) and elaborated in the following pages. The people-in-poverty considered themselves most marginalised when they were:

Figure 5.1
• Materially lacking

• Suffering from vulnerability and insecurities

• Forced to engage in bad social relations

• Physically weak - the body, exhaustion

• Lacking Location to sleep and stay - places of the poor

• Having poverty of time

• Lacking Capabilities

• Disregarded and abused by the more powerful

• Forced to live with ascribed and legal inferiority

• Lacking in information

• Lacking access to services

• Lacking political clout

  o Suffering from a sense of isolation, from services, markets, government institutions and information, with physical isolation a key factor

• Lacking in security of life and livelihood options

• Lacking access to curative health

• Hungry

  o Forced to grapple with declining traditional support structures, and insufficiency of alternative, safety nets.
5.3. Social Institutions

5.3.1. Family

The family is the most proximate institution to most people. Till recently, the family had assumed many roles and responsibilities vis-a-vis its members, including nurturance, support and protection from external exigencies. It cared for the health of its members through use of indigenous medical wisdom that drew resources from the ecology around, provided economic security under times of financial stress, gave psychological security to its members by ensuring a readily available collective strength derived from geographically proximate kin groups, provided care for children and the elderly. The family also provided a long period of apprenticeship to its younger members for acquisition of skills specific to the kin group, such as pot making, basket weaving, carpentry, magico-religious art etc. These skills had an
assured clientele within the traditional community structures, thus leaving room for learning, improvisation and artisanship, and opening the possibilities of increasing economic well-being. However the nature and character of many of these functions are specific to the caste, ethnic and class identities of each such groups and are not uniform in all groups (Uberoi, Patricia, 1993).

The life histories recount the increasing fragility of this institution. The family in modern times has been unable to mediate impoverishing processes authored by other institutions in a critical and conscious manner. The checks and balances that it possessed to buffer its members have withered away under the increasing stress that it has become subjected to in recent years. Co-opted by the exploitative economic logic of the public sphere, the families of poor in contemporary times accelerate the processes of reducing their members to body-dependent survivors.

There are two trends clearly visible. One, the family as an institution has been dissolving gradually in the recent past of the poor, losing its support and nurturance functions and forcing its members to engage with the harsh public sphere, usually leading to their impoverishment. Two, in the resulting vengeful search for its relevance under threat, the family has come to rely more and more on its exploitative values for solutions. The members of the family too, in the face of these trends are striving to re-establish family in its classic joint family lines. This attempt though seems doomed to failure in the absence of radical reorganisation of society at large.

It is true that family is an important institution for all the negative reasons. It always possessed terrible exploitative and discriminatory character notwithstanding the shock absorbing roles it played in the lives of its members. In the present situations, the family has been reduced to perform mostly its residual functions, that are deleterious to the lives of the members, particularly that of women members. In poor persons’ lives the circulation of poverty to the next generation is activated through the family. It is the family which gives least importance to human investment made in the forms of education and acquisition of other cultural capital. It is the family which inaugurates the period of harsh labour for the young ones. It is family which socialises its future members into a life in poverty by normalising body-dependent survival, so much so that childhood spent without
gainful work is treated as idle phase of life. Thus a ten year old boy discusses (see The Story of Easwaran below) discharging family responsibility and sharing the burden of family through the use of his body and its raw resources.

**Case Study-1; The story of Easwaran**

When I decided to go away from my village to work in the confectionary in Madurai there were several reasons for it - primarily my family’s poverty. My parents had twelve children of which I am the last but one. My biological mother is also the stepmother for six of my father’s first wife, who died young. My father had a job in the nearby cotton mill. He was getting very little as salary - a mere 25 rupees per day when he last lost his job some seven years back We had extremely difficult time as we had to make do with those 25 rupees. We lived in all kinds of places - sometime in the middle of the dried tank sometimes on its banks and sometimes in a government land illegally.

My mother’s suffering was unbearable as she used to cry and agonise over having to keep many of us starving for want of money. All my sisters and even my frail looking mother went to work in the fireworks industries. The money was very low even when all their wages were put together. It could not help the big family of 14 members sufficiently. Though I was only 10 years old then, I could understand that life was difficult for my parents. It was around that time one Pandi met my mother and promised to get me a job in a place near Madurai where a confectionary unit needed a boy for help. He paid 500 rupees to my mother as an advance. Few days later on a grim evening when all other children were playing I set out for Madurai along with Pandi. For the next one-year my parents were paid another 1000 rupees for my hard labour in that snack making unit. Life was very tough there, as I had to wake up at six in the morning and work till 10 in the night with just half-an hour break for meals. More often than not the night sleep would be possible only at 12 midnight. But still I did all that for the welfare of my family.

5.3.2. The Position of Women in Family

In this context patriarchy assumes enormous importance. Patriarchy remains the most exploitative social institution in the current world and pervades the experiences of all the people (De Souza A, 1975). The family is the central site for the inscription of patriarchal norms (Altekar AS, 1962). Women are valued less than men in a patriarchal society, and they remain under greater stress for survival. They have lesser decision-making powers and control over resources. At the time of economic crisis, they are fed less compared to the men in the household.

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1 According to National Family Health Survey-II (NFHS-II) women have some power to take decisions over matters related to cooking which 71.2 per cent. Obtaining health care herself, going and staying with her parents and gerring major household items all rest with husband’s decision which comes as 39.3 per cent, 39.9 per cent and 33.89 per cent respectively.
Within the family women’s labour - both productive and reproductive goes unrewarded and grossly undervalued. A girl child enters worklife much earlier than male children. She also gets initiated into reproductive work once she attains puberty, both because of tight control over sexuality and for the arrival of new workforce in the form of children. Within a male-headed household, there is little investment made in her skills and capacities both during her stay in the family of birth as well as in the family of marriage. This renders her incapable of overcoming her poverty in all its forms. If anything, her marriage heralds an end of new investment in her skills forever as in the case of Chandra.

Case Study -2: Women in Bondage

Chandra, (29 years old) of Alwarpuram in Madurai city got married to Murthy at the tender age of 14. For the past 15 years, her day begins at five in the morning. After doing the usual household chores and feeding the children, she sets out for work at nine, only to return at five in the evening. She works in four households which have a total 16 animals, cleaning cattlesheds, disposing cow dung and making dung cakes besides washing vessels and clothes. All this for a mere total of Rs 500 and some food a month. This money she says she uses for buying rice and keeps remainings to buy clothes for her growing children and meet any medical needs.

Chandra leads a somewhat lonesome married life, as more often than not, her husband does not come home for many days. Chandrs admits there is little of a family life one can have with an absentee husband and father. She alone looks after all the household needs and the children. She adds, rather softly, that there is little that Murthy can contribute even when he is at home in the evenings, under the influence of alcohol. Murthy has gradually grown indifferent to his family and most things around him and can only work in the ‘high ’ of drugs.

Chandra at 29 years looks beyond her years. Today she is mother to three children, but she has lost four in the early years of her marriage. As she put it rather matter-offactly that such would be inevitable in a situation where she as a teenage wife had no one to look after her or assist her while she was carrying. She had to do her own household chores, in addition to working in three houses, cleaning cattlesheds. What is more her husband had taken loan from some other houses where she works. Hence she is not paid or given anything in two houses, as it is taken for granted to be part of the debt payment owned by her husband. With an expressionless face, she explained how she worked as usual through out her pregnancies and miscarriages, and how she would have to get back to work within a week or two of her deliveries. Until then the landlords would keep her share of the work piled up and go to remark, “pillai pethukurathu onnum pudhusu ilia unakku, seekiram velakku vara paaru” (having children is nothing new for you, come back to work soon). With a tinge of remorse in her voice she shared that she neither knew nor had the time to nurse her newborns, who would soon succumb to illness and then die.
Chandra’s latest worry is that she has to leave her ten-year-old daughter unattended while she goes out to work. Her daughter looks after her two younger siblings while her mother and father are out to do their daily drudgery. Hence, Chandra revealed her plans to get her married off by the coming year. She accepted that her daughter is rather young for marriage, yet she feels rather helpless. She calculated the wedding cost to come up to Rs 20,000, which she feels, would further push them into debt. But she quickly dismissed the thought by saying there is no alternative but to take the advance from the landlord and bear the brunt, as they have already been doing all their lives. With this happy thought she gets engrossed into planning the dowry items for her daughter.

Consistently across age, women and girl children cannot make decisions about their body or over resources that they earn or manage. Girl children are fed less, are treated more instrumentally and are allowed less time for leisure, play and recreation. In the extreme manifestation of this form of inequality, girl children die, either because they are murdered or because of neglect.

5.3.3. Education and Health:

Girl children have lesser access to education and health than male children do, consistently across rural and urban societies. Education is often considered superfluous to the roles women are expected to play. In a situation of constrained resources, families tend to invest in education of the boys rather than girls. Women are seen to be dependent on their fathers, husbands and sons. It is considered less important to educate girl children as compared to boys who are expected to grow up and support their families - marital and parental, (the Story of Reshma) Girl children are denied education even when they seek to be educated and employed to support their parents, (the Story of Rani)

Women’s health care needs are usually not considered as valuable to resort to outside care. It is exactly because she is only eligible for self-care that she faces health risks, for only lesser or no investment is permitted to be made in her health. Men’s health is considered more valuable to the family. In the cast study Poverty is the Life Time Partner of Narayanamma, we hear Narayanamma saying, “when it comes to falling ill, I always wait until it gets worse to the extent that I cannot go for work. But when my husband falls ill I try to attend to him even before it gets severe at least in the form of preparing home remedy.”
5.3.4. Sexuality:

The lack of education is compounded by strict control on sexuality as well as their vulnerability to sexual violence. Girls are often married earlier than men, usually at the time of puberty. Control over women’s sexuality and their bodies holds strong. Virginity is still essential for marriage in many societies and unmarried girls who have attained their puberty are considered to be under greater sexual threat. In those cultures where this sexual control is encoded in religious practices (as in the case of Mookkamma, Vijayalakshmi and Kalaivani) or within the Code prescribed by Manu (Buhler, G, 1964) the control is even stronger. And while these codes hold for members of all strata, the vulnerability and lack of protection of the disempowered and impoverished families to outside influences means that the vulnerability of the girls within the family is increased. In Kalaivani’s case, she narrates, “Once I eloped with a man of my choice my family abandoned me. Then when I was cheated by my husband who went away from me vowing never to return, I sought to return to my parents. But they refused to accept me. Hence I had to resort to sex work for survival eventually.”

Families and communities punish individuals who transgress sex role stereotypes. These are seen as inappropriate and immoral and often draw their power from patriarchal interpretations of religions. These interpretations emphasise that reproduction is women’s responsibility, and that sexual experience for pleasure and beyond procreation is evil and dirty(Sukanya Das and Rehana Ghadially 1988). Thus, expressions of women’s sexuality are seen as something to be decimated or controlled. And women are held responsible even when they are sexually victimised within marriage (the Story of Vijaya) or as sex workers (Mumtaz and Malliga). In almost all the stories we have instances of families not supporting their daughters when they were faced with violence and aggression from their spouses. Vijaya says, “On those occasions when I sought relief and understanding from my parents and relatives on being chased away by my in-laws for no fault of mine, my parents would chase me back to my in-law house again, saying even when the fault is theirs (in-laws’), I should live there only.”
5.3.5. Marriage:

In many contexts, keeping a girl child in the family beyond puberty is seen as a dysfunction within the family, where the family and the girl are considered inadequate and inferior. This means that the girl child is married off even when their partners are eminently unsuitable or much older, so that the “burden” is reduced. Thus, girl children are often married to men much older than they are or to physically challenged men. (Mookkamma) This contract usually scripts an economic transaction where the young girl’s sexuality is exchanged for ensuring her survival in a patriarchal society. This transaction is often no different from that within the sex trade wherein the girl-child is not free to exercise her agency.

Community disapproval of having a girl who has attained puberty in the house adds further pressure to get girls married. (Lalitha) Once married, there is little option of further education for the child. This is especially true when the education process threatens the power of her husband who may be less educated. Lalitha who is educated more than her husband often faced ridicule because of that.

It also means that the girl is dislocated from her natal family earlier and enters a new family at a more vulnerable age. Marriage within patrilocal societies means displacement from all that is familiar. Within certain contexts, especially in India, girls are already treated as pariah dhan ‘someone else’s wealth.’ This ‘othering’ of women ensures that as children they do not belong with their parents and that after marriage they are still alien to their marital homes.

Often men have the option to move out of the marriage, deserting their families. This desertion coupled with the prohibition of women / widows remarrying means that many of the families are women-headed. In a similar position, the man marries again. (Mookkamma Story)
5.3.6. Decision Making:

Within the family - both natal and marital - the women are expected to obey the men. Their opinions maybe sought but remain opinions and rarely have the power of decisions. This is most marked in the stories narrated by men in Madurai where they reiterate that they ‘consult’ their wives, but they make the final decision.

5.3.7. Property:

Men often retain legal control over any fixed assets - land, house, and productive instruments - that are jointly earned. In times of conflict, women are forced to leave with little to show for their labour. Men tend to spend most of the household income on alcohol and wasteful expenditure, while women attempt to garner resources for nurturance of the family.

Women have no rights over the property that they acquire and manage. They are often coerced to hand over their rights over the property they inherit or are gifted. Women’s claims to their inherited or acquired property at times of separation are punished.

5.3.8. Mobility:

In the lives of the poor, women are usually not allowed to enter or are withdrawn from public spheres and confined to private spheres wherein they are expected to engage in economically gainful work, apart from reproductive functions - reproduction of labourers and labour readied for next day’s circulation.

Their entry into public spaces is usually difficult - this becomes particularly true when it involves powerful forums that gather for decisions around division of labour and resources like community meetings and governance spaces. Even when women are allowed into these spaces, they are expected to be mere spectators (Leela Dube, 1982)
This circumscription about space starts at the time of childhood and becomes severe around puberty. Thus girls who play in public once they attain puberty are considered immoral and ‘bad’. The control over their movement gets progressively tighter with marriage and their movement is usually restricted to within the ‘family’. They rarely have access to information about the outside world beyond their immediate survival circles. Their knowledge and experience with their bodies and their environment is trivialised, women are silenced both in their private and public spaces. Attempts to cross boundaries are usually severely punished often at the time of childhood so as to inculcate the habit (the story of Reshma). Even spaces that are created for women often remain inaccessible to poor women because of the numerous commitments they have to fulfill. Thus, women living in conditions of extreme impoverishment are unable to attend self-help groups because they do not have time beyond the requirements of their labour. Thus, a combination of time and space restrictions on women prevents them from using their agency.

Women’s mobility within societies is also strictly restricted. Confinement to the family spaces means that women cannot augment their productive income - and more importantly cannot seek greater understanding of the world they live in. This confinement into small spaces means an automatic reduction of their ability to generate / earn resources and therefore to control them. This norm is reinforced by beliefs that women who don’t have to work and are confined to their homes are a symbol of their husband’s potency to keep them comfortable. (Arumugam’s wife in the story When Diamonds Shined Brightly)

5.3.9. Women outside Patriarchal Family:

Often when women are not able to exist within the straight lines of patriarchal structures - particularly the heterosexual, patriarchal, patrilocal family - and are single, widowed, deserted or in institutions - they are often isolated, excluded and violated. There is very little possibility of sex education and discussion on sexual values in the society. Thus pre-marital and extra-marital sex is still frowned upon with women having to bear the consequences of societal disapproval. They very rarely can access knowledge fora, both because they are women and because they are poor.
lack of interaction with the outside world often increases their vulnerability even more. Women are punished with divorce or abandonment when they are seen to transgress gender lines or for not fulfilling their reproductive roles (Stevi Jacson and Sue Scott, 2001). Nirmala of Madurai says, “My in-laws’ family totally abandoned me when I could not deliver a child for the family. My insistence for a medical check-up for me and my husband fell on deaf ears. Finally they expelled me and he married another girl.”

Among the poorest, there has been an increase in Female-headed households. Various forces are at play in weakening or breaking the ties that people had towards their families. More sons desert the families of their birth (the storu of Laksmi Animal), more husbands abandon their wives (Nirmala), sometimes as punishment for not fulfilling their reproductive roles and more brothers refuse to assist their sibling. The women are forced to handle both the reproductive and productive labour within the family. They are rarely prepared to shoulder this burden within their strictly prescribed gender roles. In the hostile world of work, women, thus, suffer the most. Unable to cope with the demands of the rugged public sphere and the ruthlessly competitive world, and harsh expectations of the families they belong to, many women find themselves in streets, prisons, brothel areas and mental asylums (Past imperfect, Future Perfect - India).

5.3.10. Labour:

In impoverished situations, poor women start working early. Young girls care for and nurture their younger siblings, so that the adults can seek work. In addition, they might also work to augment the family income. Between the two tasks, they are left with no time to play or learn, whereas boys are expected only to engage in productive labour when they do work, (the story of disabled Nagamani) The moment the girl child is forced to care for newborn siblings or to undertake domestic care responsibilities to free the adults to labour , the script is written for the future poverty of the female children. This marks the beginning of loss of access to education or any other capacity building opportunities along with a simultaneous loss of mobility. (the case of Thenmozhi in the story When Seasons Come Flowers Bloom Too).
5.3.11. Reproductive Labour:

Patriarchal notions of gender encoded through the “noble tasks of mother and wife” continue to place the burden of reproductive labour on women. Women’s reproductive labour is both invisible and undervalued (Jeffery, Patricia, Roger Jeffery and Andrew Lyon, 1989). They maintain and manage the daily resources of the household economy - essential for survival. Thus getting water to drink, gleaning resources from the natural environment to supplement incomes and diet, maintaining cleanliness of the home, giving birth to children, nurturing them - the endless list all fall within the purview of the women’s work. She travels twice the length of distance on a given period of time both in pursuit of work and in search of water, firewood, grains and medical care for her children, or even credit (as in the story The Silent World of Mayakka).

The compulsions of immediacy are exacerbated for women, wherein they operate not merely under the immediacy of poverty but also under the immediacy of unvalued reproductive labour. Their bodily discipline is far more severe, wherein they have to provide for their own bodies and those of their family. This labour is rarely valued in economic terms, and therefore a significant portion of it does not translate into money - a means of retaining control over resources beyond the immediate
Within the patriarchal and patrilocal families, the organisation of gainful work around the male-head of the family has tragic consequences for the women. Gender stereotypes of women’s roles as nurturer does not acknowledge the productive work that she has to undertake. Her work is usually undervalued in comparison to equivalent amounts of work performed by men.
Several consequences fall out of this primary undervaluation of women’s labour within the family. Most of the family’s share of resources are allotted to maintain the working body of men. With this kind of allocation, there is little left for investing in skills and capacities of other members, especially the women (Razavi, 2000). When productive labour is confined within the family (working on the family fields), it is rarely reimbursed monetarily.

Thus they enter the productive informal market with reduced skills and resources. This condition is exacerbated by lesser pay than men in spite of working equivalent amounts. This work is usually informal and insecure (see the table above).

Often the only skills that they have are reproductive. This takes two forms - sex work and domestic work (from the stories of Mumtaj, Kalaivani and Malliga). The line between the two kinds of work often blur with many of the women working as domestic labour being sexually harassed.

In the face of sudden abandonment or demise of the man, the family’s continuity is endangered. On being forced to fend for the family, women are forced to undertake economically under-rewarding yet physically exhausting works they did several years ago as members of the natal family. Further the family is often displaced from the locality with the loss of its male head and is forced to migrate to newer places for work and survive in excruciating conditions of assetlessness - both social and economic - anonymity and insecurity. Subsequently the family circulates other members of the family, at whatever age they are in, in the market for gainful work. Women and children face the brunt of abuse as a consequence.

5.2.13. Violence:

A direct consequence of patriarchy is sanctioning of violence against girl children and women. Thus girls and women are beaten, locked up, sexually forced / violated within the family and outside. These acts are life-threatening and the women have no way of escaping their situation. Any attempts that women do make in trying to escape their situation is met by disapproval and lack of support. They may be even ostracised, forcing them to stay within the violent relations (Abraham, 2000).

Many of the women face some form of violence either within the family - natal and/or marital. While violence against women may not be necessarily a class phenomenon, women from impoverished background find it more difficult to escape
the violent situation or seek protection, \textit{(as in the story of Reshma)}. Boys and men in similar situations have easier access to public spaces and mobility. This violence - sexual and physical - serves two purposes. One is to underline the subservience of women and the other is to punish women for role ‘infringements’ and keep them in their place. The violence is often tacitly or explicitly sanctioned within the family (Moser, 2001, Vindhya, 2003).

The violence against girl children often begins from the time of birth. Boys are preferred to girls, and when women fail to have boys, the wife is blamed. Taken to extreme, this hatred towards women result in female infanticide, \textit{(as in the story of Sathaya)}

\textit{Case Study-3':Muthamma’s Agony}

Muthamma decided to collect her monthly wage of Rupees 750 due to her, from the houseowner’s wife in whose house she worked as a domestic servant. She needed the money. Her only daughter has come to see her from the neighbouring village to which she has been given in marriage. Muthamma wanted to treat her daughter to good food. She also needed the money to buy some medicine for her one-year-old grandson. It seems that her son- in-law advised her daughter to go to her mother’s house and take some money for their son’s medical care, as he did not have money with him.

Muthamma wanted to help her daughter as she loved her so much and so deeply. She could not afford to say ‘no ’ to her. Before her daughter departs for her in-laws house, she wanted to treat her to sumptuous food served with meat, apart from giving her the 100 rupees that her daughter required. She wanted to be very good to her daughter and she meant a lot to her as she is the only blood relationship she has after her husband’s death many years back, leaving the only daughter to be brought up by Muthamma.

The monthly salary that she would collect from the owner’s wife would be sufficient to buy grocery items and meat as well as to give away the required money to her daughter. Muthamma was very sure that she would be able to collect the money from the landlord’s wife, despite the fact that she is a tough lady who does not show sympathy that easily. “But I am not asking for loan. I am only asking for my wage due to me ” Muthamma convinced herself. When she reached the owner’s house it was noon already and she saw the owner’s wife sitting on the front portion of the house cutting vegetables as she was chatting with another woman. Muthamma, with all her respect and deference stood at the portico of the house, hoping to draw the attention of the landowner’s wife.

When she looked up, stopping the conversation with the neighbour, Muthamma made her request, asking her politely if she could collect the three-day wage, as she has to help her daughter out.
The lady retorted saying that she could not give the money as and when Muthamma wanted. She also told that she did not have money with her and had to wait till her husband returns to take money from him. She told Muthamma very curtly to go and come back in the evening, by which time she would collect the money from the landlord. Disappointed and clearly aware that the owner’s wife is lying, as she is the one who keeps all the money and not the landlord, Muthamma returned home. She promised her daughter that by the time she leaves for her in-laws’ home by the last bus, she would cook goodfood and give the money.

In the evening around four o’clock, she went to the owner’s home. This time the owner’s wife was sitting with her neighbouring women gossiping and laughing. On seeing Muthamma, her face stiffened. And even before Muthamma made a renewed request, she replied sternly that she had not yet spoken with the husband and she had a handful of work to do at the moment, so she would not go into the house to discuss with the landlord who was resting inside. Because of all these she commanded Muthamma dismissively to come later when both her husband and herself are free.

Muthamma returned home even more frustrated and helpless, as she could not hope to argue with the landlord’s wife. She told her daughter about this and took the pot away to collect water in the well, as a strategy to keep her engaged and to while away the time, before she goes back to landlords house for collecting the money.

As the water source was a bit crowded, by the time Muthamma returned home after collecting water it was dusk. She hurriedly kept the pot at the entrance of her house itself asking her daughter to keep it inside and rushed to landlords house. This time when she approached the landlord’s house the electric lights were on and no one could be seen in the front portion.

Muthamma stood at the portico and called for owner lady, who finally appeared at the door only a couple of minutes later. She looked visibly angry, as she had recognized that it was Muthamma with the request for her wage.

With the voice that reeked of irritation, authority and arrogance the landlord’s wife told Muthamma that she was late as she had told her to come before sunset. Now she won’t give her the money, since it is inauspicious to exchange money after the sunset and doing so would bring doom to her family. She told with a touch of finality that only tomorrow would she give the money. Even as she uttered these words firmly, she went inside the house waving her hands to suggest that Muthamma had to clear the place.

Overcome by immeasurable frustration, helplessness and the thought that her daughter needed to go back to her in-laws house that evening itself, Muthamma walked back with her body limp. On reaching the house Muthamma broke down and cried loud. Her smart daughter could guess as to why her mother was crying.
5.4. The Position of The Disabled in the Family

Physical and mental disability often marks one of the primary reasons for discrimination. At the very worst, being born disabled is considered a punishment for sins committed in previous lives and at the very worst as a burden on society. When coupled with gender, disability often lead to violence and neglect. The stories of the differently abled collected for this study suggest that many families regard the birth of disabled members as expression of sins. Arokyadas says, my parents thought that I was born as disabled as a punishment to my grand father’s sinful past.”

Often the reason for the disability is the result of inability to care for the mother’s health during her pregnancy and the child’s health after its birth (Harris, B 1999). Children born disabled or those who have been disabled by discriminatory practices in childhood continue to face discrimination into their lives. Within families, disabled children are seen as burdens to be endured, threats to the family and are neglected, abandoned with relatives, detested, unwanted, uncared and allowed to die underfed (see the stories, Fenita’s Ever Lasting Childhood; Sushmita’s First Smile; Light at the End of the Tunnel). Girl children who are disabled are even more undesired both on account of their gender and their disability.

Case Study-4: Fenita

Fenita was born as the second child among the five children. Her brother too has slight symptoms of mental retardation albeit his normal physique. In Fenita’s case the abnormality was becoming noticeable only in the ninth month after her birth. Soon after that Fenita’s mother left her in the custody of Jyothimani Patti. Fenita’s mother was carrying the third child and could not hope to manage Fenita, then detected to be below normal. Since then Fenita is growing under the close supervision of her grandmother.

This is very much in keeping with what is happening in this part of the country, particularly in rural areas, where children diagnosed to be afflicted with mental retardation or cerebral palsy are immediately abandoned by their mothers at the instance or under the compulsion of the husband’s family. The retarded child is seen as a threat to the manliness and virility of the husband, and his family treats the child as source of threat to its self-perceived eugenic lineage. Under these circumstances the abnormal child is invariably adopted by or handed over to the maternal grandparents. The mother of the abnormal child too agrees to this arrangement in order to ensure that her other normal children grow with healthy self-image and a sense of normalcy about their own selves.
Jyothimani Patti too accepted Fenita both with a sense of moral responsibility to share the burden of her daughter and also with a fragile hope that some miracle would turn Fenita into a normal child one day. It was a stubborn hope that Jyothimani Patti has been nursing despite all the odds stacked against it. Above all, Fenita had brought a sense of purpose in Jyothimani Patti’s life that is otherwise spent vacantly in the company of her mentally unstable husband, Abraham. Abraham had worked as labourer in Sri Lanka in a textile factory. He returned to India about 15 years back after nearly two decades of not so successful employment there. Ten years older than Jyothimani Patti, Abraham aged 65 has been suffering from scary hallucination and paranoia ever since his return. He would suddenly scream “fire” and rush to seek shelter in the lap of Jyothimani Patti like a frightened chick. This illness combined with his already failing mind meant that he could not do any productive work whatsoever. He was the only companion to Jyothimani Patti before the arrival of Fenita in her life. Of her married children, one female (Fenita’s mother) and four male, the sons went to live in far away places. Only her daughter is living in a nearby town. Jyothimani Patti now lives with Fenita and Abraham in that small one room house, their only family property.

In her efforts to bring up Fenita, Jyothimani Patti is all alone. Fenita’s mother seldom visits her daughter and is mostly content to part with some money to Jyothimani Patti for she cares for Fenita, whereas her father makes quick visits to Jyothimani’s house, which many a times had been over without having even seen Fenita.

This domestic hostility and devaluation is aggravated by insensitive and hostile social and political institutions. Thus disabled children are humiliated in school. There are not facilities for the special care for the disabled child in most instances that will build their capacities to negotiate their disability in life (see the story of Manjunathan in the box below). Only inadequate support is available to them through the state and NGO sources. The disabled person who lives in impoverishment may still have to find some livelihood for survival. And this places undue pressure on the person.

Case Study-5; The Story of Manjunathan

Playing gleefully with the coloured marbles, Manjunathan can pass off for any child in the Slum of Melavasal in Madurai. A bonny face with a 100 watt smile, a feeble frame but full of energy. As one comes close to his house, a beaming smile welcomes one and he beckons with his hands to come and sit in his house. It’s only when one shakes hands and asks about his well being, that one realises that he speaks rather incoherently. More questions bring about more vague answers and slowly the realisation that Mcmju, as he is fondly called, may not be a very ‘normal’ child, dawns, only to bring about more doubts and questions.
So, this is the story of Manju, a fourteen-year-old child. He is one of the thousands of children who are disabled and have been denied the right to get education, mingle with the other children of the village or even lead a life like any other person.

Manju wasn’t born with any disability. In fact, till the age of five, he was quite an active child. He was good in his studies, in sports and a darling of his parents. Sitha, his mother, a frail woman draped in a tattered sari, seems to be very perturbed as she describes the ill fated day when her little child fell ill, never to be okay again. He had fever all of a sudden and despite the frequent visits to the doctors in the nearest Government Hospital, the fever did not subside for thirteen days. In accordance with the superstition that it was the effect of some bad soul on their son, the family, then rushed him to the traditional healer. Apart from this, there was also an ayurvedic doctor who frequented the area. Both of them thought that the situation of Manju was grave. In fact, the ‘gravity’ of the situation showed in terms of the amount of money milked out from his father. Ganesan, a daily wage labourer, could not meet the demands from his meager income. So, he borrowed Rs 600 from the moneylender which was also usurped by these two with impunity. Ganesan, wipes away the tears from his glistening eyes as he conveys that the above stated efforts were futile as there was no change in the deteriorating condition of the child. To add to the misery, the so-called healers also disappeared...

The fever did subside. It not only subsided, it left behind the indelible impression on the mind of their precious little one and in their hearts. For a family where the parents struggled day and night to make both ends meet, their dream of educating their two sons seemed to have been washed out in this deluge of ill happenings. It took them a while to assimilate that their child was not the same anymore. He was a ‘mandha-budhi’ or a mentally retarded child. To add to the misery, Ganesan had to work for three months in the fields of the moneylender to repay the loan.

It is disheartening to know the reactions of the people. Once the family recovered an iota from the shock, he was sent to the school again. Since there are no ‘special’ schools or educators, the family assumed that Manju would take time, but get educated all the same. It seems even this was not acceptable. The child was met with teachers bereft of any emotions. Initially, they complained of his inability to learn and keep pace with the children of the same class. There were repeated efforts by the teachers to force the parents to withdraw the child. Later on, Manju was made an errand boy of the class. This means that instead of getting education, he was made to fetch water for other pupils, sweep the floor and do other such errands. He wasn’t allowed to sit in the class. It was only later when the family came to hear of this that the child was withdrawn. Now Manju has been roming the area sometimes under the supervision of his mother. But most of the time unsupervised as she has to go for some work.
5.5. Communities

Like the family, communities are also undergoing transition under globalising forces. Contemporary collective life, as the stories make abundantly clear, is characterised by the dissolution of communities, and the arrival of neighbourhoods. This transition means withdrawal of essential functions of support and resource sharing within communities as collectives and a hardening of discriminatory values that inform these structures.

This process generates severe shocks and offer cruel challenges for all caught within it. For those with power, these transitions are cushioned by cost-specified solutions and services provided by capitalist interests. People who are disempowered remain gravely affected by it and are steadily impoverished. This is both in absolute terms wherein their few assets and resources are undervalued rendering them unable to purchase commoditised solution and services and in comparative terms wherein they perceive themselves more and more deprived.

These communities - especially rural ones are deeply divided along caste, religion and ethnicity. The discrimination inherent in this striation has resulted in severe loss of dignity and impoverishment (see the *Story of the Little Shahirn* below). Within these contexts, remnants of feudalism - both through oppressive labour patterns as well as through unjust grievance redressal systems - render life unbearable. This is more so in the case of women who are severely impoverished because of their reproductive responsibilities, feudal productive work and discriminatory traditional and religious structures. Escape from these community structures are rarely possible - both because such a desire is considered illegitimate and wrong and because alternative locations are few and usually require alienation from other life engagements. Finally these women often reach prison, asylums and orphanages that are relatively free from the grip of traditions or religions.
Case Study-6: Abdul

Abdul of Melavasal slum in Madurai is the only earning member of the family of four - himself, his wife and his two children. He had to earn enough to satisfy the basic requirements of the family. But all that he had as a job is to do waste paper collection from the neighbouring middle class areas. He used to hire a bi-cycle. It was a very tiresome and engaging daily schedule. He used to get up at 5 A.M. and leave for his daily collections in different areas of Shanthi Nagar, Ellis Nagar and Vilangudi etc. He could never return back before 3 PM. That time he used to come with a large sack on his back. The next phase of the work was to sort out different materials and distribute that under several categories depending on the selling rate fixed by the shop owner in Subramaniyapuram. Every polythene pack, bottle, can etc. had to be opened. The waste material, dirty water, mud etc. deposited inside the containers or packets had to be cleaned and then separate bundles had to be made. They have colloquial terms also for each group of materials. This is the most minute, tedious and untidy part of the whole work according to Abdul. But he did not have any choice.

After those bundles were made he used to carry them to the collecting shop to sell them. He could move on for his lunch only after settling his accounts for the day. Sometimes he had to leave for the second time in the afternoon. That meant bringing another lot in the evening and carry on with the work till late night. Such exhausting work schedule used to cause health problems for Abdul and then he had to take rest for few days, resulting no income for those days.

Abdul’s wife also began working in nearby colonies as domestic maid. She used to earn around one and half thousand per month. This way the economic problems were somehow sorted out. But their girl children, one of them slightly retarded had to be left uncared. Since the old family system, which they were familiar, had almost gone, they do not have the luxury of elders taking care of their children. Nor the community they live in attend them, as all the members of the community are busy in their own ways. Everybody used to leave early in the morning and return back late in the afternoon. The working schedule of their mother was also not favourable. Sometimes it was more erratic than Abdul. She used to, and still is, leaving for her work around 6 A.M. and return back at around 2-3 P.M., quickly finish her cooking, have Imch and leave for the second shift. After that she used to come only in the evening. Nobody was there to take care of little girl Shahira except her elder sister who was only two years elder to her. Most of the time these two kids, Shahira and her sister, used to stray around in the small lanes of that slum and play in the nearby areas. The usual practice was to leave little rice and dal, left over of the dinner cooked last night, for them as the only back up for them to support. It is saddening sight to see them playing alone in the company of children, like them, without adult supervision.
Chapter 5: Forms And Contexts Of Marginalisation: From Family To State

5.6. Caste System

The caste hierarchy prescribed by the Hindu code of ethics is a significant social institution that structure communities living in India. The caste hierarchy is an essential aspect of the Hindu religion wherein all the members are divided into members of four *varnas* or castes. Each of these castes is expected to play a certain occupational role within the society that is defined by birth into the caste (Desai 1992, Srinivas M.N 1986).

On the highest rung of the hierarchy are the Brahmins who are mythically believed to have emerged from the mouth of Brahma - the creator. This section of people was designated as the keepers of knowledge - *the vedas*, the interpreters and the teachers of the scriptures, as well as the keepers of the temples. They not merely acted as keepers but also as gatekeepers - wherein the knowledge that they had access to as part of the birthright were protected from the reach of the other castes. This access and control of knowledge has historically been one of the primary ways of ensuring that this section of people remains at the top of the hierarchy.

The second rung was the Kashtriyas/Chettris who were supposed to have sprung from the arms of the creator. These were the warrior class and the class from which kings were to emerge. They reigned and protected the kingdom with the guidance of the *brahmins*. They were also traditional landholders. In reality, their caste status was almost equal to the *brahmins*, and the rights over land and governance that their position allowed them also allowed them the capacity to maintain and hold land.

The third rung was the *basyas/vaishyas* who were the traders and merchants. They were to have sprung from the lap of the creator and were responsible for providing nourishment for the entire society. They were in charge of the different markets and ran the economy.

The fourth were the *sudras* - sprung from the foot of the creator - the artisans whose services and products were used by the other castes. They were entitled to do the non-polluting work - goldsmiths, tailors, entertainers, etc.
The last who were the invisible part of the caste system were the waste managers - the untouchables - who were to undertake the polluting work of society. Management of human waste, disposal of dead bodies and animal carcasses, and leather work all fell into the purview of this caste.

Entry into the castes was through birth and was through the sum total of karmic good and bad committed in the previous birth. Relief from the hierarchy of the castes were through death, when an account of how well they performed their duties in that life within their castes would determine which castes they would belong to in the next. This concept simultaneously ensured that people of different castes could not seek to move from their allocated positions, since any attempt to do so would increase the bad in the karmic account ensuring that they could not be born into a better caste the next life (Ghurye G S, 1991).

By making the right to knowledge about the world and the universe a divine right and vested only in the brahmin and the right to govern and own land in the kshatriya also ensured that their power remained undisputed. The rest of the people were prohibited from accessing this knowledge and these functions. While Hinduism being polytheistic could be understood as being inclusive of different spiritual practices, the practice of caste system ensured that it was truly exclusive, wherein entry to the highest strata was only through birth. All other practices were incorporated at the lowest rungs of the hierarchy. Thus, indigenous groups with animistic practices, Muslims and Christians automatically became equivalent to the lower castes. This form of inclusion ensured that the religion while including new groups and changes automatically also placed them into existing hierarchies. Thus when a Brahmin married a non-Brahmin, depending on the hierarchy of the caste it was likely that their progeny would become non-brahminical.

In India (where a vast majority is Hindus) the caste system still exists. The system has come under the pressures of modernisation and the market, wherein its form has been readapted. The most significant adaptation of the institution has been the ability of the Brahmins and the Kshatriyas to translate their traditional power
holdings (including land ownership) into better opportunities for education and for positions within the modern bureaucratic state.

**Table-5.2: The Extent of Practice of Untouchability in Tamil Nadu villages**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FORMS/SITES FOR THE PRACTICE OF UNTOUCHABILITY</th>
<th>NUMBER OF VILLAGES WHERE Untouchability is PRACTICED</th>
<th>Untouchability is NOT PRACTICED</th>
<th>Situation is UNCLEAR</th>
<th>Form/ Site is NOT APPLICABLE</th>
<th>Total Number of Villages Visited</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Entry into non-Dalit house</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Inter-dining</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


In daily practice, the caste systems operated not merely in exclusion of the vast majority of people from the opportunity of education, but from different aspects of life itself. The closest phenomenon in the western world to caste discrimination is racism. However, it is only in the past year that this recognition has been accorded in the world.

For the members of the other castes, especially the artisan groups, their traditional livelihood patterns have suffered significantly faced with the mass-produced competitive goods of the market. The social exclusion practices of the caste system remain intact even when traditional artisan work products have been replaced with modern factory produced goods. Thus, the members of the lower castes are still not allowed to enter religious spaces, education spaces and access common natural resources at all or with the same degree of ease that members of the upper castes do. Attempts to do so are loaded with risks of life and dignity.
Case-7: Between Devil and Deep Sea

Murugesan was preparing to stretch the blanket on the floor, as the time was soon approaching midnight. At eleven ’o clock after finishing all the menial works in the Nayudu’s house in Keerathurai area (that still retains touch with rural Madurai) Murugesan would retire to sleep in the front veranda of the owner’s house, in whose house and farm Murugesan worked. In the evening he would come from the field and start cleaning the cowshed and do other chores. He will get his food served by the owner’s wife in the backyard in a vessel kept for him.

Just as he lay on the blanket, Murugesan was reminiscing the drama that happened during the course of the day.

He was with his Nayudu landlord this morning when the latter went to file his nomination for the Panchayat president election due in another two months or so.

Nominations were also filed by another influential leader from the other dominat caste. It was outside the Union office that Nayudu and the other man entered into a verbal duel that soon threatened to escalate into an ugly scene. The supporters on both side pulled Nayudu and other dominant community man away even as they vowed revenge at each other fiercely.

Murugesan was well aware that both had good support, as both were influential leaders in the village. With both of them in the field the competition would be fierce, he concluded. He secretly wished that his landlord Nayudu would win.

He fell into deep sleep thereafter, only to be awakened by loud noise and thudding of running feet all around him. What he saw was shook him completely. There were few men carrying all sorts of weapons rushing menacingly towards the door of the Nayudu’s house. He soon realised that they were other dominant community men. They attacked Murugesan, as he was the first to be seen while another group was trying to break open the door behind which Nayudu family was sleeping.

Meanwhile the Nayudu, sensing the imminent threat, sent for his own men through a messenger who used the backyard door to call for help. Within minutes Nayudu men outnumbered the other community members and the latter fled the scene forthwith. In the whole melee no Nayudu men was injured, but Murugesan sustained some injuries. The next morning, Nayudu took Murugesan to the Police Station and demanded a case be registered under PCR and PA Act 1959 and 1985 respectively. The case was registered. On knowing the serious consequences that these cases under three provisions would entail, the other community members decided to meet Murugesan in his colony and ask him to withdraw the cases.
When they met them and convinced Murugesan that their confrontation is not with Murugesan but with Nayudu, Murugesan too felt convinced and agreed to withdraw the case. He met his the Nayudu and told about whole thing that happened in the morning when the fisher community men visited him and the subsequent plea they made about withdrawing case. Nayudu looked stiff and inquired in his deep voice whether Murugesan had agreed to withdraw the case. When Murugesan nodded positively, Nayudu retorted and vowed that he would never permit that to happen.

Murugesan with all reverence for him tried to narrate to his Nayudu about the need to go on a conciliatory mode as the election was fast approaching. This would not ease the intransigent Nayudu, who told firmly “Murugesan if you listen to them and withdraw the case I would treat you as my enemy and reserve for you what I have reserved for them, revenge!”

Not getting a positive response from Murugesan and the Police too was on the look out for the other community leader, their men returned to Murugesan house- this time to threaten him. “Murugesan we expect you to withdraw the case immediately. If you delay it any further you would see the brutal animal in us.”

Caught between the devil and the deep sea Murugesan has been forced to seek asylum in the house of Nayudu for whose plan to settle score with opponent leader, this poor Dalit is an unwilling yet helpless pawn.

People from different castes were also physically secluded, with those from the ‘polluting’ - Dalit - being excluded from social practice, and geographical proximity. Thus to see a Dalit or to be touched by one was considered bad luck and polluting the purity of the upper castes. They were not allowed to share the same sources of water, with the Dalits having to use water that was downstream or from a different source or after the requirements of the upper castes were satisfied. They were not allowed into the homes of the upper castes and many times into the streets of the upper castes. Health care and education was mediated by similar notions of purity and impurity.

This segregation was however mediated by instrumentality. Lower caste people were allowed back door entry for performing cleaning or waste disposal functions. The space that they entered was sanctified after they finished their tasks to make it pure again. The food and water given to the Dalits were usually in leaves that
could be disposed. When it was given in utensils, a separate utensil was kept which had to be washed by the Dalit. Underpinning these discriminatory attitudes is continuous humiliation enforced in every form of relatedness that reemphasise the oppressive patterns and aim to keep these peoples subjugated. This form of caste discrimination ensured that a steady pool of physical labour existed for doing the waste management tasks of the upper castes, as well as the menial, hard labour - work that was the most difficult/unpleasant to do. Upper castes retained the right to enter lower caste households, especially for the consumption of alcohol and meat. They could not be barred from this entry.

**Case-8: To Err is a Crime**

Ramu was preparing to go to the area (Subramaiyapuram in Madurai) shop run by a man from a mercantile community. Initially he thought he would send his son to go and purchase the provisions. Only then he realised that his little son would not be able to convince the tough-talking shop owner to give the grocery items on credit. Ramu thought that it needs lot of cajoling, entreating, and deferential requesting to get few more grocery items for the day from shopkeeper. Those skills his small son does not posses. He will be easily chased away by him.

When he reached the shop located in the non-Dalit area, there was none waiting to buy. He approached the shopkeeper, who on seeing him and his demeanour sensed his approaching for credit purchase. He never took note of Ramu. To break the silence and draw his attention Ramu cleared his throat and it was just about that time a upper caste woman approached the shop.

On seeing her Ramu quickly moved away from the front portion of the shop, as standing on par with him would be resented heavily by non-Dalits of the area that still retains old world character.

The upper caste woman was choosing vegetables even as she was making complaints about the lack of freshness of the vegetables. To support the shopkeeper and to please him, Ramu gave his piece of opinion on the vegetables saying, “Amma these vegetables are not as bad as you complain.”

It was not only with politeness he made known his opinion but also with all his innocence. And he never thought that it would infuriate the lady. She gave a tight stare and went away. After a long cajoling Ramu succeeded in collecting the grocery items from the shopkeeper and went home.
It was later that night as he was about to retire in his usual place in front of his house, that he saw two men fast approaching the house. As they came in front of Ramu’s house, they stopped and the elder of the two was the husband of that upper caste lady whom he had met in the grocery shop. He shouted, ”How dare you fought with my wife?” Even before Ramu could muster up the courage to reply, both men slapped him and hurled abuses at him. His wife, on hearing the noise outside came out of the house. Her plea for forgiveness fell in deaf ears, as the upper caste men continued to hurl abuses at Ramu. He did not talk back, fearing bigger retribution later.

When they left, they warned him not to dare doing anything like that to any other caste Hindu woman in future.

Children from lower castes are prevented from going to school; in school they are humiliated, discriminated against and neglected, causing them to drop out of the school system faster. If they do finish schooling, they are prevented from taking work within the same locality that would entail them to move into common areas and / or upper caste areas under fear of physical threat. Thus even those lower caste people who manage to educate themselves against odds, find themselves pushed back into manual labour once they enter the job market. This ensures that they receive no impetus to educate themselves since it would not guarantee them upward social or economic mobility. Their aspirations are confined to the minimal and this has a cyclic effect. While this practice is wearing down with the passage of time, and more importantly the anonymity engendered by urbanisation and money market processes, the institution still survives strongly within rural areas geographically. The historical effects of the caste system also exists wherein families belonging to upper castes tend to prioritize education and state jobs, while the lower castes are still confined to manual labour over generations. Thus children from upper castes tend to have greater support for their education within their family networks, while those from the lower castes tend to be first generation learners and are likely to receive lesser support within their families in learning their lessons.

Especially for Arundhathiyar children in Madurai, school-going experience is beset with many forms of discrimination that can be extremely distressing. What is even more worrying is that public secular institutions like school tend to faithfully reproduce the caste logic and hierarchy intensely practiced in the community.
Tragically, the very institution - namely, the school - that should have set an example for the community to follow, has sincerely been replicating caste logic. This logic appears in the way it hierarchizes and spatializes different categories caste-groups, by assigning places in different spheres (entrance, interior and open ground) within the school premises. When we say school we refer an undifferentiated category, buy including the teachers, administrators, students from non-Arundhathiyar community and their parents as constituting one single whole.

5.6.1. Discrimination Starts Early

For the Arundhathiyars children, the troubles and tribulation of staying in education are not just limited to the school-going boys and girls, even for those toddlers who go to Anganwadis, life is no better. In fact, the disciplining of Arundhathiyars in subjugation starts early in their lives when their children enter into public domains, and when they have to interact with other caste members.

The conspiracy of upper caste in spewing out discriminatory venom upon the oppressed castes occurs in two forms: One, active denial of rights, privileges and access to services and public goods; second by conferring more prestige and privileges to its own members thereby discriminating the oppressed castes by contrast. This act of discrimination by contrast, is quite acute in the way children are treated in Anganwadis. For example the Anganwadi workers (drawn more often from non-Arundhathiyar communities) who visit the non-Arundhathiyar areas to bring their children personally to Anganwadi, refuse to extend the same facility to Arundhathiyar children, who have to be dropped by their parents or will have to reach Anganwadi on their own. The same applies to dropping also. While non-Arundhathiyar children are dropped by the Anganwadi workers in person, Arundhathiyar children are left either to be picked up by their parents or will have to find their ways back home on their own. The fact that in most villages, Anganwadis are located in the non-Arundhathiyar areas makes it a difficult experience for Arundhathiyar children.

At the premises of Anganwadi, the treatments are different too. While the Anganwadi workers attend to the needs of non-Arundhathiyar children including cleaning their bodies when they respond to natures’ calls, they chase away the
Arundhathiyar children when they defecate or urinate. When not chasing them away, they send for their mothers so that they would come and do the cleaning work. This disrupts the work life of women, as these day care centers do not effectively free them from caring for their children so as to attend to other chores. Thus, even after sending their children to school, or Anganwadis, the Arundhathiyar parents have to keep themselves ready to take responsibility for such petty things like resolving fight among Arundhathiyar children in schools or Angawadi, cleaning their litter and bodily excretions.

Even at this tender age, the children are seated differently, with Arundhathiyar children sitting in the rear portions and non-Arundhathiyar children occupying front. The Anganwadi workers use caste names when addressing the Arundhathiyar children in the most demeaning manner. If the Arundhathiyar children litter in the school premises they have to be cleaned by themselves, whereas the same done by non-Arundhathiyar children will be cleaned by Anganwadi workers. In other words, the disciplining of Arundhathiyar children so as to perform their ‘caste occupation’ is initiated at such an early age.

What is worse, in some places, there are two plate system adopted in such a gentle and subtle way, that Arundhathiyar children plates and vessels are often used only by them and never get mixed up with other children’s vessels. Rarely would Arundhathiyar children be allowed to touch, leave alone use, non-Arundhathiyar children’s plate.

5.7. Life at School

Once entering school, the caste-based discrimination chases these hapless Arundhathiyar Students. What is worse, it assumes even more pernicious forms and manifestations. Firstly, when entering school or class rooms, Arundhathiyar children are prohibited from wearing chappals in just the same way their parents are prevented from doing the same in the upper caste areas of villages. And Arundhathiyar girls are prevented from wearing flowers on hair. This way the school establishes itself as the upper caste space into which Arundhathiyar are allowed only as a matter of concessions and charity. One would have expected them to be de-casted spaces, rather than clean-casted spaces.
If one imagines caste-systems as concentric circles, with each circle representing different varna, the concentric circle of caste system follows Arundhathiyar children wherever they move, even schools are no exception. In this cruel concentric circle, Arundhathiyars are forced to inhabit the outermost regions of the circles, if not the space outside the last perimeter.

This caste-driven spatialisation continues outside the class rooms even on to the open spaces. Here again the Arundhathiyar children will have to sit under the trees during study hours, whereas caste-Hindu children can remain in the class rooms during study hours.

Spatialisation combined with hierarchisation results in more distress for Arundhathiyar children. In class rooms where benches are provided for children, Arundhathiyar children are forced to remain content with a place on the floor when it comes to seating. Not only here, in any places, the elevated spaces/platforms are reserved for upper castes. Spatialisation/Hierarchisation joins hands with separation in further harassing Arundhathiyar children. In many schools, there are separate water facilities and water tanks.

Some Arundhathiyar children narrated about subtle form of untouchability being practiced in the form of not touching the note books of Arundhathiyar children and not touching their Tiffin carriers - not only the untouchability of persons, but even untouchability of the objects used by them. The Caste-ridden society finds new ways of practicing untouchability. It creates a universe of objects touched and used by Arundhathiyars.

In addition to the invisibilisation of the needs and aspirations of Arundhathiyar students, their desire for friendship with other caste members is also denied. Students from other castes are severely reprimanded for the friendship with Arundhathiyar students. Thus, they are compelled to remain friends only to with their own caste members.
### Table 5.3

**The Extent of Practice of Untouchability in sites of Public Sphere in Tamil Nadu Villages**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FORMS/SITES FOR THE PRACTICE OF UNTOUCHABILITY</th>
<th>NUMBER OF VILLAGES WHERE</th>
<th>Total Number of Villages Visited</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Untouchability is PRACTICED</td>
<td>Untouchability is NOT PRACTICED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Entry into village shops</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Giving/receiving things in shops</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Barber services</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Buying of pots from potter</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Tailor taking measurements</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Washing of clothes by washerpeople</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Carpenters’ services</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Entry into private health centre/clinic</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Treatment in private health centre/clinic</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Entry/seating in Cinema Halls</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Access to restaurants/hotels</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Separate seating in restaurants/hotels</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Separate utensils in restaurants/hotels</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Agricultural labour – access</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Payment of wages – physical contact</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Payment of wages – wage rates</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Employment of SCs in house construction</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Selling of products by SCs in local markets</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Peoples Report on the Status of Untouchability in Tamil Nadu: An Actionaid India Study. 2003*
5.8. Economic and Political Institutions

The last fifty years have seen escalated global processes of threat, insecurity, destruction and slaughter across the third world. Many of these processes are played out in the lives of people who live in poverty in all their ferocity. Global capital and labour markets have lent relentless urgency to these processes at a level, intensity and scale that was previously inconceivable. Their effects range from inflation and economic insecurity, to aggravating internal conflict within communities and countries (Abu-Lughod 1991). This pace is fueled by the rapid advances made in western technologies achieved in the past 200 years, and especially in the last half of the past century. With globalisation, the urgency has increased. In the face of these changes, most people feel unable to draw values and purposes beyond immediate survival (Appadurai 1986, Ilean Suzan & Lynne Philips, 2000).

Three modern institutions are a significant part of these processes - modern nation-states, corporate bodies and the development sector. In the last 50 odd years, they have created a pace of human transformation that is both relentless and rapid. Many of these changes have been authored on an implicit belief in the value of western rational-scientific thought and “objective” truths. They operate on the logistics of numbers, scale, planning and strategy, management and distribution. They instrumentalise and commoditise human beings, their experiences and relations so that these can be counted and controlled. These then are directed for the achievement of preset plans. Scientific objectivity is used to justify the creation of these plans since this knowledge is considered universal truth and therefore replicable. Ethics and values that underpin these plans are considered subjective and therefore personal and individual (Navari 1991).

Most people find it difficult to get information about western science and about the degrees of specialization and expertise within. This takes financial and temporal resources. Thus most of the people are excluded from creating plans that involve them intimately. These knowledge bases become barriers against transparency needed for informed consent. While these institutions may not themselves articulate an exploitative position, their very prioritizing of ‘neutrality’ over the ethical and personal creates a “value” vacuum that is rapidly occupied by the most powerful and often oppressive forces currently under play (Hannerz Ulf 1991).
The indifference of modern structures to the personal and ethical means that many of these values carried by traditional power-holders within are a tacit part of their construction and are often strengthened by the scale of imagination that modern institutions carry with them. The consequences of this prioritising and the subsequent ethics confusion is through four processes: alienating human livelihoods from their environment; the continuous, unaccounted exploitation of non-renewable global natural resources and the subsequent ecological degradation; restructuring labour and human resources into more informal, flexible and feminised systems of deployment that has made them more vulnerable in labour negotiations; while simultaneously creating global capital pools that move through national boundaries freely (Ohmae 1990).

5.9. Nation-state

All nation-states in contemporary third world face dual stresses: those related to managing internal traditional value frameworks and those of the commoditised world of global capital. Between these two, they are reduced to ineffective and often damaging institutions. Their commitment to support their citizens’ survival and to protect the rights of its most vulnerable is being steadily ignored. In all the countries that have decided to march on the neo-liberal path, education and health remain expensive. Essential service delivery like public transport, housing where it exists remains inadequate. Those on review are often withdrawn under structural adjustment programmes rather than improved. Simultaneously there is a withdrawal of compassion by the national imagination for those people who are impoverished. This loss of compassion has strengthened the environment of threat and militarisation wherein the well-being of all is challenged.

The nation-state is being torn apart by the contradictions of maintaining a balance between its traditional powerholders, private interests and its commitment to all its citizens. It is heavily structured through traditional power relations - gender and community, in particular. Countries like India, that claims to be secular contend with increasing fundamentalist factions and ethnic conflicts. These often augment the vulnerability that many people who have been structurally disempowered (Smith 2000).
India, as elaborated above in the section on caste system, has stratified societies with strong hierarchical forms of organising. Simultaneously India has had to contend with globalisation and market forces. Caught between several value frames, the India state has been unable to maintain its integrity resulting in a general corruption of the state welfare functions (Kennedy, 1988, Landes 1998).

In India, the modern state entered the nation with promises of equality and prosperity for all its citizens. When it was formed, most of their citizenry had complete faith in the State apparatus to provide them vision and support to move forward after prolonged histories of colonization and exploitation. This faith meant that the citizens unconditionally supported the state policies as representative of their collective aspirations. The State in the initial period of enthusiasm and promise was given untrammeled power to systemically reorganize traditional institutions, their practices and residing wisdoms. Even if this involved discreditation and distortion of these traditional institutions, the powerholders often consented to these processes. This was based on their faith on the modern state to protect and buffer their existence and that what was good for the state was good for them too. In this process of consent, traditional powerholders retained those edicts - social and religious - within these traditional institutions that suited their private purposes (Smith 2000).

This faith in the modern state however wore thin. Within India, the national government imposed military emergency. With that, the repressive powers of the state became more apparent. The states in India realised the extent of its powers through creating national repressive processes. With this realization of power, these states showed increasing intolerance for dissenting voices. These voices were seen as attempts to weaken their national base and challenge their legitimacy. This intolerance was expressed as suspicion against the people groups that existed before modernization and even those that were created, nurtured and legitimized by the state in its visionary days. They were severely restricted, perhaps less obviously in India (Khor M 2000, Madeley J 1999, Strange S 1999).
5.9.1. Citizenship and Enumeration

State policies, that emphasise numbers, consider enumeration and documentation essential to determine citizenship. Often being enumerated and getting the required documentation is expensive. This forms the first barrier to accessing state services and the first means of delegitimising an individual and depriving them of their citizenship rights. Thus people in the study area have to bribe the local officials to acquire certificates of different varieties. In India, people who are relocated in New Economic Zones cannot survive in the zones that they are placed in. They rarely have the essential skills to manage in the new environment and often the environment is too poor to support them. They then are forced to migrate to cities without the state’s knowledge or consent. Thus they lose their citizenship and the rights that correspond with this status. They cannot access education and health care, housing and rights to vote. This grey existence further makes them illegal and puts them in direct conflict with the legal system. When people were shifted to the new plots and zones in a different terrain, often they did not have the skills required to survive there. This trend coincides with excessive urbanization in India (see the table below).

Table-5.4: Population of India by Residence (1901-2001)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Census years</th>
<th>Number of Urban Agglomeration / town</th>
<th>Total Population</th>
<th>Urban Population</th>
<th>Rural Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>1827</td>
<td>238396327</td>
<td>25851873</td>
<td>212544454</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>1825</td>
<td>252093390</td>
<td>25941633</td>
<td>226151757</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>1949</td>
<td>251321213</td>
<td>28086167</td>
<td>223235046</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>2072</td>
<td>278977238</td>
<td>33455989</td>
<td>245521249</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941</td>
<td>2250</td>
<td>318660580</td>
<td>44153297</td>
<td>274507283</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>2843</td>
<td>361088090</td>
<td>62443709</td>
<td>298644381</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>2363</td>
<td>439234771</td>
<td>78936603</td>
<td>360298168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>2590</td>
<td>598159652</td>
<td>109113977</td>
<td>4890455675</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>3378</td>
<td>683329097</td>
<td>159462547</td>
<td>523866550</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>3768</td>
<td>844324222</td>
<td>21717625</td>
<td>627146597</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>5161</td>
<td>1027015247</td>
<td>285354954</td>
<td>741660293</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>7935</td>
<td>1210193422</td>
<td>377105760</td>
<td>833087662</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources various census report
5.10 Banking Sector

Credit, an essential buffer for survival is rarely present in the lives of the poor. Since credit in the larger globalising world is a profit-driven activity, extension to poor households is almost non-existent. Usually most formal credit organisations require collateral or extensive documentation, both of which very poor households are unlikely to have. These institutions also tend to be impersonal and alienating. Where credit to poor households are seen as extension of welfare, the institutional delivery systems are inadequate (Debraj Ray 1988). In many poorest people’s lives the availability of credit remains elusive. This has been one of the severely marginalising factor in the lives if the poor. When asked Dandapani, who became a transgender later in life, if only the banks or other credit issuing agency had supported us we would not have taken to sex work”.

Case Study-9: Dandapani

Dandapani was determined to go the whole way, to not only dress like a woman and adopt a female name Dhanam, but also to sever from his body his male organ. It is the hardest, most painful decision that a eunuch takes in his life. It is an affirmation to the world of one’s identity, however despised, however marginal, a thrusting aside of all veils of secrecy and a dual existence. It is irrevocable, in a terrible way, more so than a vow of marriage or priestly celibacy. After it, there can be no going back. They call it ‘nirvana or the attainment of enlightenment. It is the one aspect of their collective lives that they still shield most doggedly, from outsiders. Over the centuries, little-known elaborate folk rituals surround traditional models of castration. From what we could gather - and Dhanam refused to speak about this at all - the folk operations occur at the hands of specialised traditional medicine-men, in remote forest retreats far away from the reach of the law. The operation probably involves the use of narcotic drugs, possession and trance, to help deal with the excruciating pain. Healing is by herbs and oil, but many are known to die before then can recover. Today, most of those who can afford it prefer modern surgery. But very expensive as it is done ilegally by a quack. Since none including the state instations or banks was willing to lend credit, Dhanam had not other options but save money through sex work for three years, before she was ready for the operation. But sex work had to be the only choice left after the operation.
This forces people to resort to private creditors as a way of survival. These moneylenders are mostly exploitative. The rates of interest are prohibitive, and the means of lending usually is structured to play on the vulnerabilities of people. Veerammal from India has been lured into credit - she works in the municipality as a sanitation worker. Since her pay is regular, moneylenders see her as easy business and seduce her into taking loans usually beyond her means for consumables - marriages, and other needs of her children. This then turns into a burden wherein every month, her salary usually disappears on the day of her payment into servicing her loans. She lives in chronic hunger, working from morning to night supplementing her municipal pay through scavenging.

Case Study-1Q: Veerammal

In the early two years Veerammal was assisting her husband in rag picking. It brought them a sum of 50 rupees per month. Later when her husband learned that the municipal office was recruiting sanitary workers, he persuaded Veeramma to take it, as she has studied up to 5\textsuperscript{th} standard, the minimum requirement for the sanitary worker job. Her husband had not gone to school so he became ineligible.

It was not that the job came on a platter. Veeramma discovered that to get the sanitary worker job she had to oil so many palms. They borrowed money from various sources at exorbitant rate of interest and she got the job, ultimately.

Though it brought some relief to their life, it did not mean the end of starvation and poverty. The beginning she made in clearing the debt incurred in paying the bribe for getting the job, has never ceased. She has never taken the salary home, not even till date.

The repeated borrowing of money and pressing expenses due to the arrival of children one by one - she has six children of which four are girls - and the subsequent marital expenses of the first three daughters meant the debts only mounted beyond manageable proportions. “All the money I collect as monthly salary disappears as I come out of the office. The moneylenders from whom we had borrowed the money will pounce on me to take their dues, leaving me penniless on the salary day itself” she laments.
This is starkly evidenced in what has occurred when poor deal with credit-providing institutions like bank or co-operative society. In these places the insensitive demands for collaterals, documents in proof of residence, citizenship, death of the family members, loss of property in natural disasters etc. consume a lot of time, apart from forcing them to deal with corrupt, insensitive subsidiary wings of the State like panchayat office, village development committee, disability rehabilitation officer etc. In contrast, the poor find the local moneylender’s readiness to give the needed money without all these foot-dragging requirements a humane, timely and responsive gesture, albeit the crushing interest rate levied upon the capital.

5.11. The Market

![Manufacturing Share of GDP: World vs. United States (1970 to 2009)](source.png)

Figure-5.4


With liberalisation, especially in the last two decades the relationship between state and capitalist institutions has increasingly become more intimate. It has entailed a situation wherein these two institutions have brought about a shift in production from manufacturing to services globally (see the table above). India is no exception to this trend. This means that there has been a progressive loss of manufacturing jobs, in which large number of the now-poorest were engaged. Both have sought to translate
their visions through modern structures and processes that prioritised rational-western science. What this has meant was creating a rapid pace of change wherein the purpose and goals originally set out are increasingly blurred with the coincidence of methodology. In the chaos following these changes, traditional power-holders have consolidated their private capital, now across geographical and social boundaries. They have simultaneously colluded with the state to make its boundaries permeable to creating labour pools that serve their interests (Jaeger 1994, Nayar 2001).

Most citizens are disillusioned with the reality of the modern and often autocratic states that exerted tremendous power within their lives. Particularly in Third World, the increasing collusion between the State and Market has emptied the wealth from the working class and put it on the hands of the rich within the nations and globally across the nations (see the Table below). Hence there is this natural disillusionment. This disillusionment became more apparent within international bodies, and weakened negotiations of democratic efforts like SAARC. Private corporate interests and credit groups - the World Bank and the IMF - that perceived no ethical responsibilities, quickly used these opportunities to increase their power. This further eroded the state’s legitimacy within their countries, and the state responded with increasing punitiveness (Mookherjee 1998).

Figure-5.5
152
These global capitalist institutions especially the World Bank through its structural adjustment programmes have determined internal policy of different nation-states. As part of this determination, the state has been forced or is willing to abdicate its welfare functions as well as those related to international trading - especially those relating to the economy and its management to capitalist forces. This convergence parallels international convergence of capital and elite interests along economical grids. Within this, colonial legacies inform many of the global market moves and strengthen northern interests concertedly (WDR 1997).

While the nation-state, the development sector and corporate bodies all reflect modern organising, the first two differ from the last in their stated goals. While the former has part of its mission, the responsibility to look after the interests of the people who are most vulnerable, the latter’s singular goal is profit. The corrosion of traditional organizations and the inability of the nation-state to protect and care for its citizens has meant that the responsibilities of collective institutional nurturing for labouring citizens in now left to the personal, individual and private realm. Often this is beyond the means of the individual. (Ritzer G 1993).

This personalisation of structural difficulties is a consequence of the denial that private corporate interests show towards inequities of older institutions. The powerholders within these institutions are aware of these inequities. And there is a tacit and personal support for these traditional inequitable relations. This support then forms the basis of many of the damaging interactions that modem institutions create for profit and ‘efficient’ task completion. Publicly though, these modem institutions deny their presence or justify them, while simultaneously professing values of human autonomy, dignity, equality, freedom of choice, etc. The consequence of this contradiction is an explicit silence about oppression and implicit actions that strengthen and aggravate inequity. Most people forced to be part of this process feel increasing alienated, used and lonely (Mehta 1990, Srinivasan TN 1998, Gilpin 2000).

In its persona as a market state, there has been rapid restructuring of its governance and political functions through economic functions and a greater pressure from global economic institutions to reconfigure state boundaries to allow greater
market and labour permeability. This has in essence meant withdrawal from earlier ‘welfare’ functions of the state and facing competition from global levels. This withdrawal from welfare and social security functions has had disastrous consequences. Traditional structures of support have been distorted and eroded by modernising forces. The nurturance and constructive interaction that these structures carried within them have been erased. One of the guiding missions of the modern nation-state was to give support to its citizens in this transition from pre-modern to modem times. With the transition into market state, this support has been withdrawn and left to private capital interests. The cost of this transition has been squarely placed back on the individual citizen. Simultaneously, the collective resources of the nation have been laid open for global capital interests with tacit state consent. Often the members of both the global elite and state bureaucracy and electoral politics coincide and so do their private interests.

Thus the welfare state is gradually receding or forced to recede from the public sphere shrinking its range of responsibilities to merely those related to militarisation and autocratic control (Sheila Pelizzon & John Casparis 1996). Many traditional institutions have been left corroded in its wake. Private capital forces have rushed to occupy these zones. This has created unbridled commoditisation and commercialisation. This commodification begins with the body of the human being and extends into all the relations that s(he) chooses or is forced to have. People are forced to purchase or perish (ironically, in lives of people living in poverty, it is purchase and perish).
5.12. The Receding Welfare State

Table 5.5: Increasing recession of Welfare State and Engagement of Private Business in Social Sector

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social spending indicators</th>
<th>Nicaragua</th>
<th>India</th>
<th>Republic of Tanzania</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public spending on education as % of GDP, 2002-2005(^a)</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public spending on health as % of GDP(^a)</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private expenditure on health as % of total expenditure on health(^a)</td>
<td>45.3</td>
<td>80.4</td>
<td>40.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Per capita government expenditure on health [PPP $](^b)</td>
<td>137.0</td>
<td>21.0</td>
<td>27.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social outcome indicators</th>
<th>Nicaragua</th>
<th>India</th>
<th>United Republic of Tanzania</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Infant mortality rate (per 1,000 live births)(^a)</td>
<td>30.0</td>
<td>56.0</td>
<td>76.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Births attended by skilled health personnel [%](^b)</td>
<td>67.0</td>
<td>47.0</td>
<td>43.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population with sustainable access to improved sanitation [%](^b)</td>
<td>48.0</td>
<td>28.0</td>
<td>33.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net primary school enrolment [%](^c)</td>
<td>89.8</td>
<td>88.7</td>
<td>97.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: \(^a\) UNDP Human Development Index 2005 or latest year available. \(^b\) WHOSIS (WHO Statistical Information System) 2006 or latest year available. \(^c\) World Bank 2006.

A journey through the life events of the poor repeatedly highlights the colossal failure of the nation-state to provide for and protect its poorest citizens. The state in failing its welfare and security functions can be characterised as the most important impoverishing force in the lives of poor (see the table above). The modern state has not been able to create reliable structures that offer services and resources that were originally provided by the traditional ones that it corroded. It has also not been able to create new equity and justice structures that are accessible by all its citizens. Poor people are now witness to the disappearance of many familiar, intelligible, relatable, traditional structures and their inbuilt functions that provided crucial support, with no new mechanisms in sight (Atkinson 1999, Swaminathan 2000).

When people who live in poverty are compelled to seek the welfare or redressal services of the state, often the engagement leaves them exhausted and irrevocably impoverished. In the life of Baskar the fact that he had to seek medical support for his ailing heart from private hospital had rendered his family irreparably impoverished.
Case Study-11: Baskar

Baskar had a congenital heart problem. But his family was very poor and could not afford a diagnosis to find out his heart problem for long time. The maximum they could do was to take him to the Government hospital. The services were very poor and the crowd there in large number meant that they had to spend long hours. The intense poverty worsened by the lack of education rendered the family members content with the periodic to visit to a government hospital and the administering of the medicines prescribed by the doctors therein. On many occasions Baskar went to the hospital unaccompanied by any of his family members because they could not risk losing their one-day wage. The visits to the hospital were on the complaints of fever, vomiting and coughing that afflicted him at regular intervals. The family members themselves did not believe that the illness Baskar was suffering from could be serious. They thought that since all other family members were hale and hearty, Baskar too could not be near a fatal sickness. The general robustness of other family members was simply extended upon Baskar. It was this naïve denial coupled with moneylessness that delayed their seeking an appropriate medical advice and proper diagnosis. But when they finally diagnosed it, they were devastated, since they could not afford the expensive operation required for healing him. They finally sold the small hut and borrowed money at exorbitant interest to pay for the operation in a private hospital. Though Baskar is better now the family has fallen deep into poverty.

Usually these engagements are at the edge of survival and made with great courage. The subsequent failure and exhaustion often pushes the person into the final abyss of poverty, (see the above case study of Baskar).

Often modern state agencies and their services are far away geographically. Accessing them requires financial and temporal investment of time and money that the poor rarely have. Then there is the mastery that the poor have to develop over the array of practices and knowledge systems privileged and legitimised by the State to avail its services. Since the person’s indigenous wisdom and capacities do not have any credit with state institutions, she must reacquire them in forms validated by these agencies. This requires both time and money to spend in educational institutions, training programmes and other industrial work spheres in the “economically unrewarding capacity’ of a student or an apprentice. For the person who has to work everyday for food, this is unthinkable. Thus people who live in poverty find themselves gradually excluded from these institutions and their services. And state
agencies and mechanisms become increasingly irrelevant. Often they move beyond irrelevancy into intrusion and damage in the poor person’s life. And the person who lives in poverty becomes fugitive and criminal in the state’s imagination. And the person is forced to fit into this imagination to survive. They resort to wisdoms, capacities and solutions - drug addiction, theft, extortion - that contradict their ethics. This conflict is exaggerated by their continuous daily criminalisation. For Muniamma, the fact that she did not know the intricacies of how school system works, resulted in her dropping her daughter from school.

Case Study-12: Muniamma

When the new academic year started, Muniamma took Thenmozhi to the Government school in her neighbourhood for admission to second standard as she was well past six years of age. But the school authorities needed a proof of her having completed the first standard, which Muniamma did not collect from the previous school. In fact, Thenmozhi withdrew from the school on her own and Muniamma too took her away without paying attention to the nitty-gritty of collecting proof documents etc.

Her repeated plea that Thenmozhi could read and write much better than an average first year student in Tamil did not impress the authorities of the school. They needed a transfer certificate (TC) from the previous school or at least a birth certificate for the proof of age from the hospital where she was born.

Muniamma set off to her native village Thirukkovilur the very next day, to collect either of these certificates. But to her utter dismay, the school refused to give a TC as Thenmozhi dropped out quite early from school. The second option of collecting the proof of age also threatened to become unyielding as Thenmozhi was born in her house and not in the hospital.

Some one in the village suggested that she could get a certificate issued by the Village Administration Officer (VAO) ofThirukkovilur village, as if Thenmozhi was born in the village, while in point of fact she was born in the slum of Madurai. She approached the VAO only to be told bluntly that if she wished to get a false certificate she had to part with a sum of 1000 rupees. It was very big money for Muniamma.

Witnessing all her hopes of putting Thenmozhi disappearing in thin air, Muniamma slumped as she returned to her parents’ home and sobbed inconsolably.
Modem state institutions remain heavily removed from the mental and geographical horizons of the people (as evident from the story of Muniamma above). These institutions and the whole surfeit of practices they have unleashed have been grafted on to the traditional social structures while simultaneously de-legitimising their entrenched practices. Thus traditional behavioural patterns and styles of relationship-building persist in the interstices of these institutions creating corrupt practices. These are not merely those of ‘greasing palms’ but is a complex phenomenon of patronage, money interests, gift giving, treating discharge of official duty as demonstration of benevolence and munificence. Once corrupt practices entrench themselves in these institutions, the hidden costs to avail the services of these institutions spiral. Worse still, are the visible costs to be paid to the lawyer and to the whole lot of paraphernalia. Thus, these institutions become distanced from the reach of the poor.

The officials of the state are usually representatives of the powerful social strata and therefore hold the community discriminatory activities in the performance of their duties. Government officials more often than not use their positions to make personal profit or to promote those who are within their networks - caste, community. Thus the individual has to pay money to access virtually any service of the state. People who live in poverty are most vulnerable to this form of exploitation especially given that the state already tends to treat them as fugitives from justice.

Almost all forms of engagement with the state has some element of corruption in it. Each subsequent interaction - be it accessing services, seeking grievance redressal or enumeration processes - impoverishes the person and delegitimises the state’s role in her existence. The key element in this form of corruption is documentation. Since people who live in poverty are also likely to be illiterate, the necessity of documentation places the power squarely within bureaucratic reach. And more often than not, they use this power to make some money. The payment to state officials starts from the time of registry of citizenship, and continues into disaster and poverty relief and rehabilitation.
5.13. Development Projects and Displacement

The modern state has placed an undue emphasis on economic growth and rational scientific ways of achieving this growth. Part of this approach is industrialisation and the growth of the economy as a means of national development, emphasis on large projects that supposedly provide large interventions instead of planning in small, incremental, time and need based steps. Many of these projects are based on western scientific knowledge and expertise rather than local wisdom. They are rarely sensitive to the needs of the people who are likely to be most affected by these projects and often defeat the very purpose they were intended to serve. They tend to see people as homogenised and equal while planning these projects, when no such equality occurs.

Over a period of time, large state-led development projects have displaced people from their environment and the livelihood relations that these people had with their environment. The displaced people are usually not compensated by equivalent land, and the cash compensation that might be provided is often inadequate to initiate another livelihood, even if the people had the skills to do so. The forced displacement of people from the places of their birth to what the State defines as development zones, industrial belts, and new-economic zones etc., causes enormous amount of hardships to the poor. In these contexts, they find their traditional context-specific skills and capacities unwanted and obsolete. For the modern State, both the places are equalisable and identical. Similarly when it builds massive infrastructure like dams, roads, industries, airports ostensibly for the welfare of its citizens, they have more often than not produced negative consequences for the people who live in these areas.
Table 5.6: Dams and the displacement of tribal people

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Project*</th>
<th>State</th>
<th>Population facing displacement</th>
<th>Tribal people as percentage of displaced</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Karjan</td>
<td>Gujarat</td>
<td>11,600</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sardar Sarovar</td>
<td>Gujarat</td>
<td>200,000</td>
<td>57.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maheshwar</td>
<td>M.P.</td>
<td>20,000</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bodhgah</td>
<td>M.P.</td>
<td>12,700</td>
<td>73.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Icha</td>
<td>Bihar</td>
<td>30,800</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chandil</td>
<td>Bihar</td>
<td>37,600</td>
<td>87.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Koel Karo</td>
<td>Bihar</td>
<td>66,000</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mahi Bajaj Sagar</td>
<td>Rajasthan</td>
<td>38,400</td>
<td>76.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polavaram</td>
<td>A.P.</td>
<td>150,000</td>
<td>52.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maithon &amp; Panchet</td>
<td>Bihar</td>
<td>93,874</td>
<td>56.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper Indravati</td>
<td>Orissa</td>
<td>18,500</td>
<td>89.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pong</td>
<td>H.P.</td>
<td>80,000</td>
<td>56.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inchampalli</td>
<td>A.P. – Maharashtra</td>
<td>38,100</td>
<td>76.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tultuli</td>
<td>Maharashtra</td>
<td>13,600</td>
<td>51.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daman Ganga</td>
<td>Gujarat</td>
<td>8,700</td>
<td>48.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhakra</td>
<td>H.P.</td>
<td>36,000</td>
<td>34.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masan Reservoir</td>
<td>Bihar</td>
<td>3,700</td>
<td>31.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ukai Reservoir</td>
<td>Gujarat</td>
<td>52,000</td>
<td>18.92</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Satyajit Singh, Taming the Waters, OUP, 1997, and Government figures.
Compensation for acquiring the land or for the negotiating the consequences of these large projects is often not paid. Land for state development programmes is usually taken coercively with the owner having no knowledge. The compensation provided is in cash and is rarely land of similar quality. When these compensations are provided, they are usually filtered through the bureaucratic systems that people who live in poverty find difficult to negotiate and therefore remain excluded, \( \textit{as in the case of Vijay in the story 'Choices on the Street'} \)

State development programmes that ignore the needs of the disempowered and prioritise the needs of those with resources damage people’s lives. Reshma’s family lost their house when it was demolished as part of a ‘beautification’ drive for the development of the city. Besides her house, the thick shops and godowns in her area were demolished. The lone night shelter was to be closed down to remove the ‘unwanted’ elements and a ban was to be imposed on cycle-rickshaws and hand carts. The aim was to hit at the livelihoods of the very poor in the informal sector and ensure that they are driven out. The question as to where they would go remains.

Disasters, illnesses (both human and animal) and pests play a great part in impoverishing people. Thus floods and drought all create significant crises in the lives of the people. These disasters often push reasonably secure households into poor and exhausted ones. They also mark events within the life of the chronically hungry person that are completely out of their control, and usually accompanied by loss - life and resources.


The state delivery mechanisms of the modern state have been ridden with the inequities of the historical institutions that are present in the society. Thus the service delivery more often than not does not reach the intended beneficiary. Access to the service is mediated by corrupt practices. In essence, services are not available or are available at a price that is tacitly understood by both the people and the state. This price often further pushes the person into further poverty.
People who continue to exist in impoverished and disempowered arenas are seen as those the plan has not reached and that an improvement in delivery mechanisms is adequate without reflection on the larger plan itself. The onus of being poor is squarely placed on the individual, for in an apparently equal society, poverty then becomes a phenomenon of individual failure to work hard with intelligence. Such people are characterised as passive victims without agency or initiative. This is often in direct contradiction with the experiences and perceptions of the people themselves. Acknowledgement of these experiences challenges the premise of rationalistic, western scientific, central planning. These dissenting voices, experiences and perceptions are then erased or contoured to fit the plan to allow it to continue. Even when the service delivery reaches the beneficiary, the quality of the service is inadequate. Thus schooling and health services, when accessible are of low quality with no real effort to educate or heal the people accessing them.

Health: The State with an increasing market orientation has quietly and tacitly permitted private health care systems to take over the spaces evacuated by traditional health care facilities and later by public health care. And there are increasing hidden and visible costs multiplied by swelling privatised health care.

While the poor are becoming increasingly prone to serious illness due to poor nutrition, polluting and hazardous shelters and spaces and continuous labour, the state health care is abysmal. State health posts are rarely able to handle complex illnesses. The health care systems are understaffed, inefficient and corrupt in all the five countries but more particularly so in Nepal. The personnel for health care are not usually present, the health care offered is within government working days and the health posts are inadequately stocked. People are forced to travel longer distances for better health posts for health care with no assurance of service. Often this is beyond their means. The health care offered in these public health posts are rarely free with assorted costs for different services and medicines provided.

Because for all these the breakdown of body rhythms, because of illness or diseases, is deeply dreaded by the poor, for the cumulative economic loss it causes. To cut costs, they take recourse to consulting quacks, purchasing medicines across the
counters of drugstores, where the seller double up as poor people’s physician or by being addicted to drugs, liquor, pan chewing etc., to mitigate their pain and fatigue. Only when all these coping strategies fail, do they resort to private medical services that are “better”. These private health care is prohibitively expensive.

Case Study-13: Thoppant and His Illness

Thoppant is a person in begging in Madurai. He had to come to Madurai for begging after a serious injury that weakened him totally.

It all happened when he was 32 year old. Those days, he was working as masonry worker with the building contractor. On the fateful day when Thoppant went for his work, it was still drizzling. The contractor had sent away other labourer as the work could not be resumed under the overcast conditions. However, he had retained Thoppant to do the task of removing the gathered water and silt from the pit, so as to enable the work to resume the next day. The day before that, they had dug a trench for laying the foundation for the new house. After digging the pit they had also planted the iron rods along the bottom of the pit.

When Thoppant made a quick inspection he found that the previous night’s torrential rain had submerged the iron rods in the pit, apart from silting the dugout with mud. His employer commanded him to jump into the pit and remove the silt and the earth after pouring the water out of it. For a moment Thoppant wondered whether to refuse to do so. But thinking about the wage he would get at the end of the day he descended into the bit barefooted and started to scoop the water using a bucket. By afternoon he had managed to bring the knee-high water level in the deep furrow down to ankle-height.

The building contractor was overseeing Thoppant’s work holding an umbrella only for protecting him from the rain. Now he commanded Thoppant to scrape the earth out of the pit. Thoppant commenced his earth-removing work with the same swiftness. In his intense concentration in the work, he failed to notice the cut made by a sharp blade-like iron rod on the sole of his right foot. It was very soft sinking of the rod into his sole without causing any pain immediately. That the feet were covered with muddy water only added to its non-detectability. But soon the whole of the pit began to look bloodshot, though spreading slowly due to thick mud deposited in the pit.

When Thoppant took note of the crimson colour of the mud, he paused for a while to verify its cause. But the overseeing contractor egged Thoppant to go on, yelling that it was the red soil that gave its colour. The contractor was afraid that if Thoppant came out of the pit the work would remain incomplete, upsetting his crude business calculations.
Few minutes past that, Thoppan began to feel a slight irritation on his right foot and plucked it out from the earth and mud. It was only then that he could see a long cut across his sole from where it was heavily bleeding. He climbed out of the pit against the repeated dismissal of the contractor who kept saying that his injury was minor. He felt a bit drowsy, and tied his foot with a piece of cloth torn from his own loincloth. Waving to the contractor signaling that he won’t be available for the rest of the day, Thoppan hurriedly walked to his wife’s brother’s house in the nearby village despite the weakness he felt due to excessive bleeding. There they took him to a village medicine man who gave a herbal treatment to the wound along with a dressing done around it keeping herbal leaves close to sole.

In the next few days the pain persisted in the wounded sole with blood continuing to ooze out. The next time when Thoppan went to his own village’s folk doctor, the wound had gathered lot of pus. After removing the pus the folk medicine man crushed some more herbal leaf juice on the wound. Yet the pain and bleeding never ceased. In those days the modern health care facilities were not available in the vicinity of the village like today. The villagers had to go to the district headquarters or to Rajapalayam, a halfway house between a city and town. Both these places were a goodly 20 Kms away from Thoppan’s village. A quick travel to these places was possible only for those who owned the bullock cart. For others, it was by walking all the way to these urban centers that they reached them- but only in those extremely rare occasions in their lives.

Thoppan himself had never been to these two towns in his life. Being a Dalit, he could not afford to travel in a bullock cart, leave alone own it. Nor were there any necessities to go there, since these poorest villagers went to the native medicine men when struck with illness. The folk medicine was very effective in most of the cases. But unfortunately for Thoppan it did not work. He continued to bleed, as the wound remained unhealed. He had only his wife to attend to his needs. She was very concerned too. It was never in their agenda to go to the town hospital. Firstly, they did not have the money; secondly Thoppan could scarcely walk his way to the hospital. But the fact that he continued to stay away from work had already dried up whatever little money they had. They decided to ask the contractor for help. He too bluntly refused to offer any assistance. In the next few weeks, Thoppan’s wife joined the group of women agriculture labourers to win some bread for the family, even as Thoppan was resting at home.
Though the bleeding stopped in the next few months and the wound too slowly healed, Thoppan was never the same person again. He lost his agility and his robust body shipshape only externally. He could not bear the heat not even for few minutes and a few minutes walk tired him thoroughly. Since then Thoppan stays indoor mostly. Very rarely he exits the home during the daytime. The little bit of outing he does would be only in the evening. He could not take up any work then onwards. His wife’s wage earned out of the agriculture work helps the family to carry on. During the off-season months when agricultural work is not available, she arranges matchsticks for the match industry. Thoppan would help her a bit, before being overcome by exhaustion. The few rupees earned out of this help them to have one or two meals a day.

During the recovery period Thoppan needed to eat nutritious food. But the poor couple could ill afford to eat three meals a day, to speak nothing of nutritious food. The numerous running to the village medicine man only helped in reducing the temperature of the body, but only temporarily.

Thoppan could not bear to see his health weakening. He says that he could feel his strength draining out with that blood that at oozed out ceaselessly in the early days of his injury. It was difficult for him to lead life as an inactive soul, quite unnerving indeed for a person who never knew tiredness. He had thought of suicides several times. It was his wife who gave him the courage to hope for a day of recovery when he will be wholesome again. “I don’t know why I carried on. There was this desire in me to regain my health and return to work. I wanted to earn and treat my wife to good food and nice dresses. I know how much she has sacrificed, including those bland meals that I get to eat nowadays. Seeing all these, my desire to return to those good old days of well-being only got strengthened, but the day never came ” he mourns. So with his body getting weakened further he decided to come to Madurai, initially for doing some menial work but later it turned out that only begging was available as option.

The exorbitant fees they pay render them either assetless, if at all they have assets, or bonded to moneylenders or through the use of state loans or credit groups given for productive purposes for health care payment. Without any state support or subsidy, chronic illnesses leave the resources of the entire family exhausted. This often is accompanied by no improvement of health (as in the case of Thoppan above). Lack of access to reproductive health care also takes its toll. Without attention to reproductive health and safe choice of contraceptives, women’s health steadily deteriorates. This adds to both maternal and child mortality as well as chronic illness.
Chapter 5: Forms And Contexts Of Marginalisation: From Family To State

Table-5.7; Social Spending in Comparative Perspective

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social outcome indicators</th>
<th>Nicaragua</th>
<th>India</th>
<th>Tanzania</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Infant mortality rate (per 1,000 live births)²</td>
<td>30.0</td>
<td>56.0</td>
<td>76.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Births attended by skilled health personnel (I)¹¹</td>
<td>67.0</td>
<td>47.0</td>
<td>43.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population with sustainable access to improved sanitation (%)⁴</td>
<td>48.0</td>
<td>28.0</td>
<td>33.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net primary school enrolment (%)⁴</td>
<td>89.8</td>
<td>88.7</td>
<td>97.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:¹ UNDP Human Development Index 2005 or latest year available, ²WHO/WHQ Statistical Information System 2006 or latest year available, ³World Bank 2006, ⁴World Bank 2006.

Education: Public education, if ever available to the marginalized, are poor in quality. Though apparently subsidised, there is an implicit cost involved - uniforms, books, fees, etc even in the non-formal services that is provided. This cost is often out of the means of the very poor (as in the story of 'The Child Who Would Join the Police'). Often information about state schemes to promote free education and provide subsidies do not reach the people who need it the most (Just a Bowl of Rice for Iftar and Many Aspects of the Poor) Many of these subsidies only refund already made expenses - something that the people who live in impoverishment cannot afford to do in the first place.

The Decreasing Public Sector Spending on education does not mean more spending by Private sector in Education.

Figure- 5.6

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Access to education and other services is mediated by distance. When they are present in the neighborhood, they are usually of low quality and the classrooms are crowded making it impossible for the children to learn. Further, these educational institutions are understaffed or have staff who are inadequate. The physical structures are poor. And violent methods of disciplining is common. Children coming from extremely poor families face humiliation within the schools (see above for a detailed discussion on violence in school for low caste children). Vinodh in a graphic description recounts how he was completely neglected by the teachers and could not learn even the most rudimentary skills. He was forced to run errands for them, and they beat him regularly. They smoked before the children and made no efforts to discipline the bullies in class. The latter formed gangs, smoked and drank in the school and sexually harassed girls in the school, making it unsafe for the children to attend school. Finally he dropped out when the teachers humiliated and abused him because he was unable to pay the requisite fees and other dues.

Case Study-14: Vinodh’s schoolless world

Vinodh remembers his school experiences with distaste so visible on his face. He says in elaborate details, “The bullies often stole the books. When I leave the bag for going home to have lunch my books will be stolen. So far 30 times they have stolen my book. But the teachers would beat me. The government schoolteachers are very bad. They smoke in front of students. Even my classmates drink “Brandy” in the evening. My school becomes a place for selling and drinking arrack in the evening. Near the school some five persons had hanged themselves to death. There will also be exorcists driving ghosts out of women. That scared me so much that I did not like to going to school.”

Thus Vinodh preferred to stay away from school, as he increasingly discovered that it was not a place for his kind of people. “Many of my classmates were bad boys. They often formed gangs and beat us the frontbenchers. They also took to smoking secretly and teasing the girl students in the class,” he recalls. “Many girls stopped coming to the school because these boys touched them wrongly. They were so aggressive and too many in number that going to school always brought these nuisances in my mind. The teachers never controlled them. And it was their style all the way,” Vinodh continues. Yet he persisted with going to school, simply because he did not have anything worthwhile to do in the event of not going to school. Ironically over a period of time, his falling out of the orbit of formal education transpired in performed silences. Eventually he became a dropout.
People with resources send their children to private schools and bypass reforming the public education system. These families also support their children’s education, unlike those in poor families where parents tend to be illiterate. Those children from these schools who complete their education are unable to compete in a liberal environment for work. All these factors set the ground for children to drop out of schools.

5.15. The State and the Urban Homeless

Homelessness is a very long ‘living experience’ for many of the homeless people, whom we met for our research. A major part of the sample population is being homeless for more than ten years. Homeless people of Madurai select different places to have their night sleep. Among those, pavements or roadsides are the major choice and then comes the bus stands. The place under the ledge of shops and railway platforms are also in their hit list to fix the night sleep.

Only a small portion of the sample population is having their blood relatives staying with them. Again these are the people who lead a kind of nomadic life by living in groups. There is another small portion of sample population who have adopted relatives to live with, especially cohabitating partners.

Living by alms is the main occupation for a majority of the sample population (nearly two-third). It is considered to be the main occupation on the basis of both time spend with and the income earned out of. Still, some of them are engaged in different occupations, such as, commercial sex work, rickshaw pulling, cycle repairing, perform begging, etc., Also there are very few who do not earn by any means, rather, depend upon their co-habitating partner to support for their livelihood.

A major part of the sample population are widowed persons, especially women and another significant portion are not staying with their spouses, despite the fact that they are married. Many of the homeless people among the sample population do not possess either a ration card or a voter identify card. The instability and the lose of identity due to the homeless life are viewed as the worst parts of homelessness and thus the greatest felt need of the homeless people is to have a stable life, if possible under a permanent shelter, so as to regain/restore their identity.
5.15.1. Causes For Homelessness

A detailed analysis of the case studies about the sample population of homeless people in Madurai reveals the following family related factors as the major causes for homelessness in Madurai.

1. Husband or wife dies in a situation where the couples have no children and the relatives deny to help the lonely husband or wife.

2. Husband or wife dies in a situation where the couples have no children and the relatives besides denying to help the lonely husband or wife, take away all the belongings of the widow or widower as there is no one to protect them.

3. Husband or wife dies in a situation where the couples do have children who are not ready to take care of their age old father/mother.

4. Husband or wife dies in a situation where the couples do have children who take care of their lonely parent for a short time and their disinterest in taking care compels the age old father/mother to walk out of the house. Most of the time this walking-out ceremony happens due to the direct/indirect persuasions from the part of son in law/daughter in law.

5. Parents of a child die at his/her earlier age in a situation where the relatives ill-treat him/her or deny to take care/provide a livelihood. Also the relatives manage to take away the assets as the young boy/girl is so vulnerable. This leads them to find out their own livelihood by working in different places and also by living on the streets. This, at most of the times, leads them to be acquainted with an uncontrolled life which makes them to continue their homeless life.

6. A person becomes unemployed in a situation where his/her family hesitates to take care and also ill-treat the unemployed. This disinterest from the part of family, i.e., son, daughter, in laws and sometimes even wife, in taking care of the unemployed arises due to the cease in the economic contribution from the unemployed person.
7. When the sample population of homeless people was asked to reveal the causes for their homelessness, more than half of them (51.22%) have answered with different family related problems, such as, abandonment by family, absence of family, family abuse, etc.

8. Also the public opinion of Madurai emphasizes more on the failures from the part of family as the major reason for homelessness.

There are also other related factors which cause homelessness in Madurai.

i. Addiction - When a person gets addicted to the use of intoxicants s/he never wants to be controlled by his/her family and thus comes out of the house to live a life in the way s/he wishes.

ii. Illness - When a person suffers from incurable illness, the lack of economic sources compels him/her to sell out all the belongings to get treated and then finally to become homeless.

iii. Children marriage - When the parents are in a position to get their children married, especially female children, they never even hesitate to pledge or sell their house. As a consequence when the husband/wife dies, the other lack support even from the part of their children and finally becomes homeless.

iv. Irresponsible children - When the single parents have irresponsible children, especially sons, who grows out of parents control and disturbs the peacefulness of the parents, the later sometimes take the decision to leave the house to regain the peacefulness.

v. Poverty and irresponsible husbands lead some women to become homeless and then also to be prostitutes.

vi. Unemployment - When it happens due to the lose in the physical capital that s/he owned so far. Accidents and old age are the important reasons for the lose of physical capital.

vii. For nearly 10% of the sample population of homeless people in Madurai, homelessness is their way of life as they are all perform-beggars who live in groups and lead a kind of nomadic life.
viii. A few more factors which caused homelessness in Madurai are as follows:

- Wife’s extra marital relationship
- Wish to become a ‘Sannyasi’ (Saint)
- Failure in 10 exams
- Encroachment of living place
- Love affairs includes illegitimate love
- Frustrations due to love failures
- Restlessness due to various pressures.

These few factors are seen with rare cases but still they are significant.

> When the sample population of homeless people was asked for the causes for their homelessness, they told, besides family related factors, extreme poverty as another major reason for becoming homeless. (Nearly 25.6%).

> Public opinion of Madurai also revealed some important factors for the homelessness, such as, lack of government initiatives, inefficient implementation of laws and policies, lack of education, etc.

### Table-5.8: REASON FOR HOMELESSNESS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>No. of Persons</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Extreme poverty</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>25.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substance abuse</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abandonment by family</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>17.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Absence of family</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>26.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family abuse</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stigmatizing illness</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encroachment by Government / Other community members</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Problem / Disability</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life style</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>82</strong></td>
<td><strong>99.9</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Primary Data*
5.15.2. Shelter;

Shelter policies tend to be very few to start with. Where they exist, they tend to be populist programmes with little attention given to the needs of the people who are to live in them. Veerammal (Suffering’s Successful Friends - India) from Madurai, lives in one such colony. Her colony was constructed when the fire in 1970’s gutted a large scavenger’s colony. Since this section represented a large voter bank, the colony was constructed in a haphazard manner before the elections. The colony has poor sanitation and drainage facilities with irregular water supply. After the elections the needs of the people who live in this colony has been ignored. The result is a stinking ghetto in the middle of the city where the ‘rejects’ of the city live in. In rural areas, there is little access to these policies. When there is access to these programmes, they tend to be riddled with corrupt practices. The redistribution of resources - especially those related to land are usually fraught with fraudulent practices. Resources allocated to the community are captured by the traditional elites who then bar entry to the rest of the community. Shelter programmes within urban informal settlements are fraught with insecurity, arbitrariness and anxiety. The government shelter where Vijay sleeps was suddenly closed down forcing hundreds of boys and men like him on to the street.

### Table: 5.9

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.No</th>
<th>Homeless Population</th>
<th>India</th>
<th>Delhi</th>
<th>% in National level</th>
<th>Bihar</th>
<th>% in National level</th>
<th>Tamilnadu</th>
<th>% in National level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>7,78,599</td>
<td>23,903 (96%)</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
<td>12,730 (30%)</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
<td>57,128 (66%)</td>
<td>7.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>11,64,877</td>
<td>1,063 (4%)</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
<td>29,768 (70%)</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
<td>29,344 (34%)</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>19,43,476</td>
<td>24,966 (100%)</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
<td>42,498 (100%)</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
<td>86,472 (100%)</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Census 2001
In urban areas, people who are impoverished tend to live in make-shift shelters without rights to the land on which their house is constructed. Their housing thus receiving no state support, especially if they are deemed illegal. Subburaj of Madurai has been unable to have permanent housing because he does not have a resident certificate - ration card. And his make-shift house is more likely to be demolished as part of ‘cleaning’ or beautifying the city. This means that the individual is under constant threat of being displaced and is unable to create permanent shelter even over an extended period of time.

5.15.3. Social Security;

Support for the elderly is rarely present. Often they work till they die. Pension schemes present usually give a minimal of money when they do reach the poor. With the changing nature of the family and the value given to the elderly within, they become particularly vulnerable. State social security is virtually non-existent and where it exists inadequate.

5.16. The Strengthening Penal State

The stories of the poor are testimony to the failure of the nation-state to create safety and security for its citizens. Loic Wacquant, has been forcefully arguing about the arrival and establishment of a repressive and penal state(Loic Waquant, 1999). The repressive nature of the state manifests itself in two ways. One is through increased feelings of threat and insecurity leading to acceptance of violence and militarisation as an inevitable part of security. The second is the criminalisation of life strategies of the poor for survival.
### Table -5.10: Prison Statistics as on 30 Jun 2002

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.N.</th>
<th>States</th>
<th>Jails capacity</th>
<th>Convicts+ UTs</th>
<th>% overcrowding/Idle capacity(-)</th>
<th>% UTs</th>
<th>% Women</th>
<th>No. of prisoners per lakh population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Andhra Pradesh</td>
<td>10794</td>
<td>13008</td>
<td>20.51</td>
<td>67.07</td>
<td>5.52</td>
<td>17.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Arunanchal (No Jail)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Assam</td>
<td>6193</td>
<td>6914</td>
<td>11.64</td>
<td>64.15</td>
<td>2.83</td>
<td>25.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Bihar</td>
<td>21759</td>
<td>37813</td>
<td>73.78</td>
<td>86.27</td>
<td>2.52</td>
<td>45.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Chhatisgarh</td>
<td>4438</td>
<td>9327</td>
<td>110.16</td>
<td>52.42</td>
<td>4.49</td>
<td>44.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Goa</td>
<td>294</td>
<td>410</td>
<td>39.46</td>
<td>60.49</td>
<td>2.93</td>
<td>30.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Gujarat</td>
<td>5418</td>
<td>10848</td>
<td>100.22</td>
<td>73.70</td>
<td>2.83</td>
<td>21.44</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Haryana</td>
<td>5567</td>
<td>11131</td>
<td>99.95</td>
<td>68.60</td>
<td>4.12</td>
<td>52.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Himachal Pradesh</td>
<td>868</td>
<td>876</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>54.45</td>
<td>3.20</td>
<td>14.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Jammu &amp; Kashmir</td>
<td>3100</td>
<td>1285</td>
<td>-58.55</td>
<td>91.67</td>
<td>3.89</td>
<td>12.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Jharkhand</td>
<td>5788</td>
<td>15330</td>
<td>164.86</td>
<td>83.26</td>
<td>2.89</td>
<td>56.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Karnataka</td>
<td>9191</td>
<td>10236</td>
<td>11.37</td>
<td>79.34</td>
<td>3.32</td>
<td>19.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Kerala</td>
<td>5904</td>
<td>5349</td>
<td>-9.40</td>
<td>68.52</td>
<td>5.38</td>
<td>16.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Madhya Pradesh</td>
<td>16239</td>
<td>26936</td>
<td>65.87</td>
<td>56.94</td>
<td>2.51</td>
<td>44.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Maharashtra</td>
<td>19004</td>
<td>22162</td>
<td>16.62</td>
<td>69.65</td>
<td>3.83</td>
<td>22.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Manipur</td>
<td>1170</td>
<td>397</td>
<td>-66.07</td>
<td>92.19</td>
<td>4.53</td>
<td>16.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Meghalaya</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>487</td>
<td>-2.60</td>
<td>94.66</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>21.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Mizoram</td>
<td>1012</td>
<td>1021</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>79.14</td>
<td>10.19</td>
<td>114.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Nagaland</td>
<td>1160</td>
<td>612</td>
<td>-47.24</td>
<td>89.87</td>
<td>1.31</td>
<td>30.77</td>
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<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Orissa</td>
<td>7542</td>
<td>11598</td>
<td>53.78</td>
<td>75.03</td>
<td>2.49</td>
<td>31.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Punjab</td>
<td>10854</td>
<td>12696</td>
<td>16.97</td>
<td>68.24</td>
<td>5.35</td>
<td>52.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Rajasthan</td>
<td>15707</td>
<td>12146</td>
<td>-22.67</td>
<td>63.84</td>
<td>2.96</td>
<td>21.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Sikkim</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>72.00</td>
<td>51.16</td>
<td>0.58</td>
<td>31.85</td>
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<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Tamil Nadu</td>
<td>19240</td>
<td>8539</td>
<td>-55.62</td>
<td>36.16</td>
<td>6.59</td>
<td>13.75</td>
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<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Tripura</td>
<td>744</td>
<td>1003</td>
<td>34.81</td>
<td>57.93</td>
<td>2.19</td>
<td>31.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Uttar Pradesh</td>
<td>32380</td>
<td>54995</td>
<td>69.84</td>
<td>87.37</td>
<td>2.34</td>
<td>33.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Uttarakhand</td>
<td>2433</td>
<td>2453</td>
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<td>79.13</td>
<td>3.30</td>
<td>28.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>West Bengal</td>
<td>19666</td>
<td>14576</td>
<td>-25.88</td>
<td>79.42</td>
<td>4.85</td>
<td>18.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total States</td>
<td>227065</td>
<td>292320</td>
<td>28.74</td>
<td>73.94</td>
<td>3.37</td>
<td>28.93</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Union Territories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.N.</th>
<th>States</th>
<th>Jails capacity</th>
<th>Convicts+ UTs</th>
<th>% overcrowding/Idle capacity(-)</th>
<th>% UTs</th>
<th>% Women</th>
<th>No. of prisoners per lakh population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>Andaman &amp; Nicobar</td>
<td>229</td>
<td>237</td>
<td>3.49</td>
<td>24.05</td>
<td>2.11</td>
<td>66.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Chandigarh</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>427</td>
<td>-57.30</td>
<td>74.24</td>
<td>4.45</td>
<td>47.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>Dadar &amp; Nagar Haveli</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>-22.50</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>6.45</td>
<td>14.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>Baman &amp; Diu</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>-57.50</td>
<td>68.63</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>32.28</td>
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<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>Delhi</td>
<td>3637</td>
<td>11544</td>
<td>217.40</td>
<td>78.52</td>
<td>4.52</td>
<td>83.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>Lakshadweep</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-100.00</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>Pondicherry</td>
<td>305</td>
<td>283</td>
<td>-7.21</td>
<td>55.48</td>
<td>2.47</td>
<td>29.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5347</td>
<td>12573</td>
<td>135.14</td>
<td>76.84</td>
<td>4.41</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All India</td>
<td>232412</td>
<td>304893</td>
<td>31.19</td>
<td>74.06</td>
<td>3.42</td>
<td>29.69</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: NHRC 2003, p. 58 & 87)
Wacquant, write, “After the emergence of the violent autocratic nature of the state, there has been increasing militarisation for protection of boundaries. This impulse of the state to resort to armed methods for security has been fed by increasing economic insecurity and alienation. And in return feeds the daily insecurities of its citizens that are direct consequences of their need to negotiate a daily world that is changing rapidly. Global armament industries that use the discourse of nationhood for raising insecurities create a market for weaponry and push people into believing that violent and coercive methods are essential for survival” (Wacquant, 1999, p.347).

Underpinning this are struggles by those who have power within the global context to consolidate their continuous inflow of natural resources - oil and now water, and to control global supplies of these resources in the present and the future. National and global media support this impulse by glorifying it. They continuously propagate global images that are often indifferent to its content and their values and often support an atavistic celebration of violence. With the privatisation of public media, more and more of this accountability has been threatened.

Along with this global militarisation, increasing insecurity about internal boundaries condones violence within nation-state boundaries, between communities and within households. Often this violence is tacitly supported by discriminatory judicial codes, especially against women and is instrumented through internal peace-keeping forces and police. All these processes have spurred the nation-state to militarise itself and demarcate territories within and without. These boundaries are often protected through violent and coercive measures. Many of these - both internal and external act to keep people from accessing and using traditional and common resources, compel them to travel long distances over insecure zones and criminalise them by considering them complicit with warring factions. All these finally impoverish people.

Along with this escalated conflict within internal boundaries is the unprecedented and alarming focus and circulation of global capital within the hands of a new community of elite that span the globe. This community does not lie within
traditional (geographical and legal) boundaries of nation-states, and do not come under their purview. Many of the members of this community have been historically privileged and are able to open and leverage resources from across their world into their personal accounts.

Those who have resources have steadily withdrawn from interacting with the nation-state daily and have insulated themselves with an army of professional and physical bodyguards who are very expensive. Their daily public interaction around housing, education, transport, etc. is minimal. They live in rich colonies and residences that are heavily guarded with no unmediated contact with the outside. The interaction between them and the poor is through carefully monitored entry for labour that is often exploitative and mediated. Transgression of these boundaries often results in severe punishment. These sections of the populations use private schools and health care, private transport systems and create private spaces of recreation. This withdrawal from engagement with the public on a daily basis has resulted in two consequences. One is the strengthening of polarisation and insecurity. The other is the loss of articulation of a civic consciousness from those who have had privileged access to knowledge and spaces of reflection. Instead these bubbles form nodes of a global network that circulates capital independent of and unaccountable to the nation-state. This withdrawal of those who are powerful and have resources into private, insulated spaces is actively supported by a market state. These people often are the maximum consumers of a global economy and therefore are seen as favourable to the well-being of the nation (Bauman 1998).

In addition to providing security for these consumers, the nation-state has withdrawn its protective role vis-a-vis workers. There is an increasing commercial permeability between its boundaries for creation of global labour pools that compete with other labour pools to provide cheap labour. In the process of defining its boundaries, the market state welcomes capital and allows its citizens to become labourers in a global market. As part of this it forces them to move to new locales for work at lowered rates without protection. Simultaneously state processes (particularly the police) threaten people who live in poverty by infringing on their rights regularly, while providing them with alienating and unjust grievance redressal mechanisms.
5.18. **Criminalisation** of People living in Poverty

In its transition from welfare to a market state, there are also changes in its imagination of the poor who labour. The penal state is increasingly criminalizing livelihood strategies that the poor resort to, for survival and often out of sheer helplessness. In its form as the welfare state, these states had claimed a stake in production-oriented economy. Within this economy, the well-being and wealth of the nation-state was crucially linked to the well being of the available working bodies in the nation. Thus the state had to engage with the poor directly as it depended on them for their labour, not always in its organised environments and industries. It made attempts to engage with the poor through sociological solutions and welfarist interventions. These attempts aimed to make the non-working and non-workable poor into a worker and rejoin the economy. Many of these attempts were based on solutions and strategies evolved from state bureaucratic understandings and from social welfare and social work departments. They were implemented through the administrative machinery; and by trained social workers and professionals. A whole host of social welfare departments, research centres and implementing agencies were created.

With the transformation into a market state, the state now perceives its citizens as consumers rather than workers. With this imagination of citizens as consumers as criteria for law-abidance, the state renders many of its citizens - often the very poor - invisible. Thus it simultaneously accords rights to those citizens within who are able to consume from the market that is increasingly global, while erasing those who are not able to do so from its ethical and judicial landscape.

Corollary to this strengthening of internal boundaries of the rich, the poor are erased out of the imagination of the state. Since the very poor do not posses the ability and economic wherewithal to consume products within the market, their realities become irrelevant. With this disappearance there is also a simultaneous erosion of their presence as citizens in the daily functioning of the state. Thus, there is a general neglect towards its welfare functions while a simultaneous establishment of justice and laws along lines favourable to private capital and often destructive to individual labour. Thus people who are deprived are not acknowledges as citizens, subjected to eligibility criteria that exclude them from most state benefits or coding discriminatory values that allow some to be treated as inferior than others.
States reclaim public streets for law-abiding citizens by criminalizing beggars, windscreen cleaners at traffic junctions, squatters at the roadsides, and homeless people sleeping on the pavements as law breakers and imprison them. The life histories of people point to many instances, when they have been criminalized and imprisoned because of what they had to do to survive. This relentless cleansing of the poor from the physical landscape was evident in all the countries. Recently the Delhi High court pronounced a judgement asking the law enforcing authorities to forcefully remove and severely punish the beggars who, it held, by their extortive manner of begging in traffic signals cause enormous amount of hardship and nuisance to those who drive cars.

The relationship between poorest people and the State was one of extreme mutual acrimony and distrust, an unending undeclared cold war. State authorities are distrustful of the many marginalised sections of cities as parasitical, lazy, unhygienic, illegal and largely criminal. Marginalised people return the compliment by regarding the government as implacably uncaring, hostile, corrupt and neglectful. In one instance, a Joint commissioner of Police (Traffic) in Madurai said: ‘The city is plagued by the presence of beggars.’ For example, homeless people are indeed widely perceived in official circles to be beggars if they are not criminals, ignoring the fact confirmed by this study that the large majority of them work hard at low wages. They also tend to be the softest, most powerless targets of the police. A police official in Madurai maintained that petty crime in the city is to a vast extent attributable to homeless people, and since they are a mobile population it is very difficult to catch them. ‘Even in serious cases, often it is the moving and invisible homeless population that commits such crimes and due to their anonymity it is difficult to track them’. When the researcher spoke to police officers of the perennial fear of police harassment of homeless people, the response was, ‘The ones who have fear in their hearts are those ones who have a criminal nature’. When we enquired about the plight of street children, the approach was entirely negative. ‘These are the children who later become pickpockets, petty criminals and gradually take to hard core crimes’.

Marginalised people, such as beggars, sexworkers and homeless men, women and children sampled for the study reported that they were beaten by the police at night, and driven away from their homes under plastic sheets or the open sky. If there is one thing that women, children, old and disabled people of the streets of Madurai
are most frightened of, it is of a van named ironically “Can I help You! - the police van that carries the benign sign of being helpful. The van carries raiding squads that round up people who live by begging and incarcerate them in beggars’ jails for up to three years. They have to be alert and nimble on their feet to escape these periodic raids. These are regular occurrences at railway stations as well. Homeless people in Madurai report that such raids evict them just 4 or 5 times a year, usually when the Chief Minister or other senior people are due to pass by the streets where the homeless have lived for generations. At such times, as Ranjit, a beggar in Madurai says, ‘the police can pick you up even when you are looking for a place to relieve yourself at night’. In all cities, ironically the worst periods for homeless people being evicted are Republic Day and Independence Day, because the pavements have to be swept clean, as ‘dignitaries’ will pass the streets, and they should not be offended by the unseemly presence of the city’s unclean mass of homeless people.

But what is remarkable is that homeless people neither actively resist nor do they move away: they just silently wait out these periodic calamities, just in the way that they resiliency handle the cycle of nature’s heat, rain, cold, floods and droughts. Within days of their eviction, they quietly return to where they lived in the past, and set themselves to the tasks of rebuilding their homeless lives one more time, until their next inevitable eviction, a bit like grass that bends low in a storm and then stands upright again when it passes.

To take a few more examples of anti-poor laws and procedures in India, preventive detention and vagrancy laws enable state authorities to routinely pick up people off the streets, and incarcerate them, merely because they are very poor. Laws against begging define begging so widely as to include potentially all very poor people on the streets, and summary trials provide for harsh penal retribution for the ‘crime’ of begging.

There are many legal barriers to the livelihoods of the poor, which criminalises the livelihoods of small producers. In most countries of the South, under the influence of international lending and aid agencies, there has been a major sustained and systematic operation to dismantle the regulatory regime that is seen to
shackle capital investment, growth and enterpreneurship. But typically in most of these countries, there has been little or no effort to dismantle controls that shackle the small rural producer or artisan. Let us take a few examples from India, where during the last decade, large industry has been rapidly exempted from regulations but de-regulation has made almost no impact at the district and village level. One can set up an industry worth billions of dollars in a country like India without any license today, but a farmer can neither set up a brick kiln unit, nor a rice shelling plant, nor a cold storage, and not even cut a tree standing on his own private field, without bribing several officials. A simple operation of converting prosipis into coal that can give employment to thousands of people requires four different permissions. Tribal people can collect hill brooms, but cannot bind these into a broom, nor can they store it nor sell the collected item in the open market. Thus poor people are prevented from both doing value addition through processing and storage, and the right to get the best price for their produce (Saxena 1996).

Another set of examples relates to the systematic criminalisation in most countries of the most vulnerable categories of people like homeless people, street children, sex workers, mentally ill persons, and so on. Laws tend to treat the victims of societal and state neglect and abuse as being not only responsible for their situation, but criminally responsible.

The compulsory acquisition of land for public purposes and for public sector or private sector companies displaces people, forcing them to give up their homes, assets, means of livelihood and vocation and to reside elsewhere and start their life all over again. It has been an important reason for pauperisation of affected families, frequently leading them to a state of shelterless, loss of livelihood and assetless destitution. The presumption that displacement is an inevitable consequence of all development efforts needs to be reassessed in the light of the enormous cost of human suffering of such projects.

By quoting extensively from the Gujarat Legal Aid Committee notes (Baxi 1988), which points out that formal ‘equality before law’ is unlikely to yield justice in situations of vast social and economic inequality: “Equality of justice requires first, a
fair and just substantive law and secondly, an even-handed administration of that law. Ehrlich suggests that de jure equality may actually accentuate de facto inequality. He argues that ‘the more the rich and the poor are dealt according to the same legal proposition, the more the advantage of the rich is increased’. This kind of discrimination is far more dangerous because it is not so apparent and easy to detect except when its consequences are analysed in the light of sociological data. Inequality in such cases stems from a failure of the law to take into account the differential capacity of the rich and the poor to avail of the benefits which the law provides.” (Menon in Baxi 1988:351).

There are laws that criminalise the marginalised include laws against vagrancy (such as the preventive Sections 109 and 151 in the Criminal Procedure Code), begging (such as the Bombay prevention of Begging Act, 1959 and Tamil Nadu Prevention of Begging Act, 1945) and juvenile justice (The Juvenile Justice act, 2006), which provide for arrest, incarceration and custodialisation for sleeping or loitering on the streets, for merely having ‘no ostensible means of livelihood’ or even for simply being a child ‘in care of need and protection).

The laws often impact on the poorest as evidenced by narration of the beggars, homeless and sexworkers. In Madurai, for instance, 15% respondents said they were arrested for living on the streets, 14% for begging, and 5.5% for other crimes. This is likely to be a significant underestimate, because of the stigma of arrest, both for crimes and for begging that homeless people themselves carry. In the discussion with homeless youth, the researcher has found that although initially very few admit to arrest, we discover with time that in fact almost all street youth had spent many years in brutalised detention centres, and many had run away from these loveless facilities. The livelihoods of many homeless people like street vending and rickshaw pulling are also subject to continuous harassment and extortion by police and municipal authorities. But is still the threat of using these intensely anti-poor legal provisions more than their actual deployment, which holds the homeless populations in cities the throes of habitual fear and submission to public authority.
Case Study-15: Jemila

Jemila grew so distraught with the life lived in drug peddling, that she decided to quit this ganja selling activity and took up selling vegetables. She had advised her husband also to mend his ways, for he too was involved in this activity for many years and they had visited the prison many times before for one of the above two reasons. But the trouble from the police began once they stopped paying their mamools. When expressed their desire to lead dignified life, the police constables would demonstrate their irritation at the sudden change of heart in Jamila and her husband. Jemila says, “They would say, ‘Why the hell you should change your mind? Indeed it was as paying an occupation to you as it was to us’.” Jemila says, “They went about persuading us to go back to the old ways. When we were very determined to stay the way we were and did not pay them the mamool for many months, they grew angry and implicated my husband and me in the Ganja peddling case once again and sent us to prison. This time on charges of possessing more ganja than what we had otherwise done ever before. There are many in us who have ultimately discovered that choosing the dignified and clean life is unrewarding and fraught with more hazards than the life in crime. Thus we return to the same old criminal path.” The scenario is such that one prefers to commit the crime and get arrested for it, to get arrested for leading a clean life. “These policemen,” another undertrial said with anger, “ask you to steal and demand their mamool. If you do not have the ill-gotten money, how will you give them? And if you don’t, they will throw you in jail. What does one do? Keep away from crime and land in jail? Or, do all the wrongs, give the dogs their share and be a free man outside?”

The picture that emerges in the relationship with the State is of great official hostility to some of the most dispossessed residents of cities, homeless men and women, boys and girls. They survive without resistance their periodic onslaughts, as they feel profoundly powerless and have nowhere else to go. The State feels absolved of any responsibilities except against the urban poor. There is an unstated de facto hierarchy of citizenship. The legitimate citizens of the city who are deemed to deserve both protection and services from the State are those who live in homes and settled orderly colonies. Those who are too impoverished to afford these, are lesser citizens,
with a downward hierarchy of legitimacy, from residents of authorised slums, to those that are unauthorised, to those finally who are at the bottom of the heap, the wretched mass of the cities’ homeless. To them, the State owes nothing, except to drive them away from the city to which they are seen to have no rights whatsoever.

Underpinning this change in the state imagination of the poor is the death of compassion within the ethical universe of those who are powerful. This death of compassion reflects itself in increasing negligence and lack of care about the well-being of people other than those immediate to them. And finally in the erasure of the presence of the poor from the moral landscape of those who are powerful. This death of human compassion is one of the moral imperatives that private capital has used to bloat. Thus the poor are forced into increasing body dependent existences that deny dignity and humanity, while simultaneously losing control over their security and rights as citizens.

5.19. Development sector

The second modern actor that the nation-state is increasingly focussing on transferring its responsibilities to is the development sector. While this has been over a period of time an acknowledgement of the need for participation by the nation-state, it has also meant that the meaning of participation has been shifted from a value to a method. Further, development organisations rarely have the capacity to replicate state infrastructure in its scale. Often their creative solutions remain a band aid without the state’s commitment to change institutionally.

The role of international NGOs and funding organisations has changed the nature of the development sector. The sheer magnitude of this funding is one reason. The other is the changing nature of work from voluntary to professional. Many of the international donor agencies require and support the presence of the members of development projects within state programmes for prolonged periods of time. While in many instances this presence has mediated the pace of change and created spaces for people who have been continuously deprived, in many more they have remained tokenistic. Further unlike the democratic state this sector is not held accountable to the

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2 For details see Barbara Harris-White and S. Subramanian edited IlIfare in India: Essays on India’s Social Sector in Honour of S. Guhan (1999), Sage New Delhi.
population it seeks to serve. Since their funding is from external sources their accountability to the people that they are supposed to provide service/support for is negligible. Internally this sector is rift with the same forms of relating that the larger world is subject to. Thus members of this sector have to negotiate their traditional hierarchical values as well as those related to modern, rationalist ones. Many of their interventions are programmatic rather than process-based and the focus is often on achieving targets. Thus they are subject to the same malady that state-driven programmes are - they exclude the very poor and those at the margins.

5.20. Conclusion

The nation-state in its welfare form was the most important actor that could stand between ferocious private interests and the more vulnerable of its citizens. It is in this assertion of power that the nation-state is asked to direct its attention to urgently in all the stories. This will restore some of meaning originally attributed to governance and the visions that guided the forming of these state.

This restoration will delegate capital economic functions to its secondary status. This scrutiny must include the justice codes of these nation-states and the extent to which they protect their citizens equally. The role of the state to redress grievances of its citizens and to set aright injustice has to be reclaimed back. This scrutiny must also look towards the abysmal public services that the state provides to most of its citizens with a view of strengthening rather than dismantling or subcontracting them.

Modern state agencies with their intrinsic belief in western science and rationality and hostility to traditional wisdom have always found it difficult to converse with people who have been marginalised and live in poverty. This engagement has been made more difficult by the eligibility criteria imposed by the state to qualify to be a citizen and avail all the subsequent rights. The resource costs of accessing both social security services and grievance redressal are prohibitive especially if administrative corruption has to be accounted for. There is urgent need for the nation-state to restore this dialogue and resolve the conflicts and dissent within.
Immediate distress alleviation wherever possible by the state is essential. Many of the processes that have impoverished people date over many years and transforming this process is likely to be long and complex. It is essential to alleviate the effects of the brunt of these changes as much as possible in the meantime. While some of this effort is present in the current world, the supply in no way matches the demand.

In the process of absolution of its welfare functions, the nation-state has been looking in two different directions for actors. One is the local governance structures. While this focus coincides with the desire for more participation in decision-making and self-determination that various movements advocate, the values informing this focus are very different. Thus these transfer functions are mostly tokenistic with no serious resource support for participation. In the face of this, local self-determination remains merely a screen behind which the nation-state absolves its welfare functions. Further many of the local governance structures are often based on traditional sources of authority. The codes of these structures usually marginalise women, minorities and other groups who have been historically deprived of power from the process of decision-making. It is essential to revitalise and converse with these forms of local governance that make the state more accountable to people.

If some among the poor are talking nostalgically about the past or communication life or village environs, it is an indication of the overall failure of the State to create alternative structures, that are more humane and liberating than that of the traditional structures it replaced. If poor are spending vengefully more money on marriages, funerals and other collective rituals, celebrations ceremonies and festivals, than perhaps on health, or justice or education, it only speaks voluminously of their desire to build collectivities based on trust and mutual dependence. This is their time-honoured way of insuring themselves against external aggression, sometimes from the State itself. The poor resort to doing what they have always been doing - strengthening social assets, like collectivities that come to their rescue at the times of crises.

The whole repertoire of skills and capacities with which to deal with the state, and a series of disciplining to which they have to subject themselves, so as to appear respectable and sensible to get the State services, have repelled most people.
They are forced to take recourse within earlier forms of collectivities like caste, ethnic groups. These curiously by comparison, begin to appear more humane and responsive to their needs.

Finally, people in the stories view the nation-state with an optimism not reserved even for some of the traditional institutions that have grown with them for generations. They demand the state to become more responsible and participatory as part of this optimism.

However the tendencies that have begun to render poor people poorer by forcing them to depend on merely their body resources have acquired renewed virulence with the arrival of globalisation. The poor people are being further pushed into surviving by transacting their bodies themselves in the form of sexwork and organ trade. Though these practices had existed before globalisation, their pace and ferocity have heightened in the recent years. The next chapter looks at those processes that lead to body-dependent existence of the poor and the concomitant savagery committed upon their body and soul.