

# Chapter Two

## URBANIZATION VIS-A-VIS SLUM NEIGHBOURHOOD

### 2.1 Slum and its Definition :

Bustee, meaning "Basati" (english synonym 'habitat') has become synonymous with "slum", which is an environment not only devoid of basic amenities but also looked down as a source of pollution - hygienic and social, and a shame to the urbanites. "Who live in there ? It is they without whom the city and its urban functions can hardly keep going and it is they to whom the civilized people have been ever 'sympathetic', as they are to their servants and maids" (Muni-Chakravorti, 1982).

The slum popularly defined as a "street alley, court etc. situated in a crowded district or town or city and inhabited by people of a low class or by the very poor, or as a number of these streets or courts forming a thickly populated neighbourhood or district of a squalid or wretched character" (The Oxford Universal Dictionary, 1955).

The 1968 edition of "The Citizen's Guide to Urban Renewal", Lindbloom and Panah (1958) noted that, "slums, decay and deterioration are not new to our urban environment; only their extent and growth have changed. Decades ago, slums may have made up ten percent of an urban area, but this urban area was within the central city's boundaries. Today slums may still comprise ten percent of an urban area but in many instances that ten percent now constitutes most of the central city".

A definition of the slum in the report on urban land policies of the United Nations is offered as follows : "slum consists of a hut, group of huts or buildings, or areas characterised by over-crowding,

deterioration, unsanitary conditions or absence of facilities or amenities which because of these conditions or any of them, endanger the health, safety or morals of its inhabitants or the community".

Because of the general characterization of the slum, the word has sometimes been avoided in recent years, at least in the United States, and other terms have been substituted such as "blighted", "deteriorated", "low-income" or "inner-core area" or "lower-class neighbourhood". A widely used term with strong emotional connotations is "ghetto", which originally referred to segregated urban Jewish areas and now refers to black slums.

## 2.2 Slums in Different Countries :

Slum exists everywhere in the world, in the same form or other. It is a virtually universal phenomenon of urbanization. Slum is significantly a growing sector of urban areas, mainly in developing countries, and they embody the most squalid, degrading and dangerous conditions of urban existence anywhere in the world. In such a sub-standard environment one-third of the urban population of the developing countries spend their lives. Increasingly they shape their lives, attitudes and behaviour of their inhabitants and influence - even dominate - the total environment of the cities in which they occur. They were found throughout the world under a variety of names : favelas in Brazil, barriadas in Peru, ranchos in Venezuela, grecekondur in Turkey, bidonvilles in French-speaking Africa.

Every urban society in the nineteenth century had its lower-class living in the slums, and in earlier times the low productivity of society and the great gap between the rich and the poor made this distinction seem natural and inevitable (Clinard, 1966). Jacob Riss emphasized that slums are taken for granted and assumed to be inevitable. Slum problem is basically a by-product of capitalism and reveals the indifference of society to the neglect and victimization of the underprivileged (Seminar Report, 1983).

In the United States the first real concern about the slum developed because of its effects upon the larger society, the slum areas being close to busy commercial districts and no better residential areas which were occasionally disturbed by rioting and brawling in the slum. Some people feared the slums as being sources of undesirable citizens, and others saw them as increasing threats to public health, particularly as the relation between slums and epidemics of typhoid, cholera, small pox and other diseases became recognised.

To Karl Marx who lived long enough amidst the poverty stricken working people, the slums, are the direct product of the capitalist system. One of the inherent features of the capitalist society is that it is built in layers, determined solely by the economic system. It is the essential function of the people in the top layers to exploit the people to the lower layers. In such a system people regard each other only as useful objects; each exploits the other and the end of it all is that the stronger treads the weaker under foot and that the powerful few, the capitalists seize everything for themselves while to the weak scarcely a base existence remains. Besides, Engels shows that in a capitalist city, the form of urban land use is determined by the owners of property. That is why, "Every great city has one or more slums, where the working class is crowded together. True property often dwells in hidden alleys close to the places of the rich; but in general, a separate territory has been assigned in it, where, removed from the sight of the happier classes, it may struggle along as it can. These slums are pretty equally arranged in all the great towns of England, the worst houses in the worst quarters to the towns; since many human beings here live crowded into a small space, the atmosphere may readily be imagined" (Samuel, 1983).

Sometimes the term "transitional settlements" is used to describe slums and shanty towns of this kind : not because their physical existence is temporary, for most of them are permanent; and not because their inhabitants

are in transit, for many spend their whole lives there, but because these are settlements in which a process of economic and social change is taking place. The residents, who often arrive poor, illiterate, hungry and in search of a better life, are undergoing changes in attitude and behaviour.

In the developing countries, where urbanization has its most dramatic impact, the rapid growth of urban population is not taking place as a simple increase in the size and number of cities as we know them. In many developing countries, the inhabitants of transitional settlements are rapidly becoming the majority of the population of urban areas. The United Nations Centre for Housing, Building and Planning recently assembled crude, but roughly comparable, figures for thirty-six cities in developing countries which support this contention. Of these cities, only six had transitional settlements which formed less than 25% of the total urban population. One of them had transitional populations having more of the urban population and in other five cities transitional populations constituted an actual majority. In Seoul, for example, 30% of the dwellings in 1966 were classified as shacks, mostly occupied by two or more families. In Manila, more than 1.1 million out of approximately 3 million inhabitants live in slums and squatter settlements, and the squatter population alone increased from 360,000 in 1962 to 767,000 in 1968. In Dares Salaam, in 1968, more than one-third of the population of 273,000 was living in slum and squatter conditions. In Guayaquil in the same year 360,000 out of an estimated total population of 730,000 were living in squatter settlements. In Ankara, it was estimated in 1970 that 60% of the population were squatters. In Morocco, an estimated 600,000 people - 4.5% of the national population - were living in slums or slum like conditions in 1965. In Ghana, it was estimated that in towns, having 5,000 to 50,000 inhabitants, 20% were living twenty or more to a house; and in three large towns of the figure was 35.6%. Today, in India, roughly one-fourth of the total urban population lives in slums, a total of some 30 million people. These figures mark only a point in time in a far from static situation while the total population in developing countries tends to grow at 2% to 3% annually and many city populations grow

at 6% or more annually; transitional settlements commonly grow up 12% and in some cases by more than 20% annually (Stockholm Conference, 1972).

The apparent sameness of all slum neighbourhoods, with their makeshift houses and lack of ordinary facilities, hides a wide range of defects and disguises the fact that these places are usually either improving or getting worse. The chief environmental problems vary according to whether the settlement is a central slum whose population has been swollen by migrants and are more rapid natural growth or a previously vacant site invaded and settled in some fashion outside the conventional framework of urban development. Conditions are also influenced by the length of time the settlement has been in existence, the circumstances under which it has grown, the physical characteristics of the site, the climate, the rate of economic growth of the city to which it is attached and the ability of the settlers to take part in its economic activity, their access to community services and facilities and the attitudes of all levels of public authority towards the existence of the settlement.

Squatter settlements and environmentally deprived slum areas do, of course, occur in the developed world, but they are not such critical problem there as they are in the modified conditions. Most developed nations have the necessary financial and technical resources to replace slums and squatter settlements by decent housing in appropriate locations.

### 2.3 The Slum as A Way of Life :

Slum areas are generally characterised as being overcrowded and congested, having bad and run-down housing and being deficient in all amenities. Although slums do vary considerably from one type to another, these general patterns of living conditions are almost universal and

although these general patterns of physical characteristics are almost typical of slums, it would be a serious mistake to view slums only in such terms. The slum actually is far more than this, it is a way of life. Sociologically, it represents a subculture with its own set of norms and values, which is reflected in poor sanitation and unhealthy practices; often a lack of interest in formal education, certain deviance, and characteristic attributes of apathy and social isolation. Slum residents have become isolated from the general power structure of the community and are looked upon as being inferior; in turn, they reflect, in their living and in their behaviour, their own suspicions toward the world that they regard as the "outside".

With this frame of reference, therefore, it is not surprising that slums in today's world constitute the most important and persistent problem of urban life : they are the chief sources of conventional crimes, of illness and death for disease, and of manifold other problems. Even in developing countries, the worst slum areas of the large cities are the sources of the most serious and difficult problems.

Slums may be of different types, shapes and forms. New York has its Harlem and its lower East side, and Chicago has its Black Belt and its uptown slum area of southern poor whites (Gitlin and Hollander, 1970). London has its well-known East End and Bombay has its multistoried Chawls. South-East Asian families in Bangkok crowd together in "pile villages", wooden shacks raised on stilts along the waterfronts. Tin shacks, bamboo huts or straw hovels crowd small lanes of Calcutta, Dacca and Lagos steaming with high humidity and striking for the open drains. The impoverished shanty-towns or squatter shacks of the slum dwellers cover the hillsides of Riode Janeiro, Lima, Hongkong and other Asiatic, African and South American Cities. Few slums, however, are more crowded than those of Hongkong and Singapore, where single-room houses from ten to forty families, each family with only "bed space" and no element of personal privacy. In areas around Canton, Shanghai and Hongkong hundreds of thousands of families live in "floating" slums.

Slums differ in physical setting, degree of overcrowding, permanence of the inhabitants, degree of organization among the residents, and types of problems, such as deviant behaviours (Seelay, 1959; Stokes, 1962). They may, particularly in developing countries, lack even the most basic amenities and be constructed of nothing more than scraps, or they may be substandard tenement housing.

Some slums are the gathering points for large number of rural or village migrants. Although they may exhibit considerable heterogeneity but they may also sometimes maintain degree of unity in their ethnic, religious or tribal backgrounds. Others are populated by long-term residents whose families often have lived under slum conditions for many generations.

Slums differ in the degree of organization among their residents. In some, few ties exist beyond the immediate families, and even family ties may be weak. In other more stable slums, quite close group and family relationships have developed. In a sense they constitute real slum communities, with sets of norms and values that differ sharply from those of the outside world.

Certain slum groups are products of unique sets of circumstances, as in the Negro slums of the United States and South Africa. There are difficulties of slum living have been compounded by the ever-present imprint of slavery and discrimination. In the United States, the pre-existing social values of the slums to which the Negroes moved were combined with the shattering effects of their slave backgrounds; in South Africa, the results have been exceptionally high rates of crime and delinquency, family instability, illegitimacy and violences.

Slums also differ in the specific problems they present. United States and European slums often are associated with delinquency, alcoholism and similar problems including drug addiction and illegitimacy in the United States. Although these problems are also present in much of Asia, Africa and Latin American, they do not constitute the major complications. There



the major obstacles are more physical in nature - the totally inadequate building structures, excessive overcrowding, lack of facilities, poor sanitation and high disease rates. Although these problems exist in the United States and Europe, they do not provoke the same major concern. At one time, however, they were markedly difficult (Clinard, 1966).

Slums can also be typed according to the attitude of the slum dweller toward social mobility and assimilation or acculturation in the social and economic life of the community, and, second, according to the measure of socio-economic handicaps and barriers to such movement. Each of these two variables provides two general classification : "slums of hope" and "slums of despair". The former are characterised by the attitudes of the residents, whether or not they expect to improve their situation and whether or not they have opportunities to advance out of the slums. Slums of hope have been generally the homes of the recent immigrants to the community, whereas those of despair have been populated by groups of longer residence.

#### 2.4 The Functions of the Slum :

Throughout history the slums have met various important needs and have served several useful functions for their residents and for certain exploitative groups within the city. The functions of the slum have been to provide a cheap labour supply, cheap housing for the poor, the fostering of group associations, a place for educating people in an urban way of life, and a certain amount of anonymity for slum residents.

##### 2.4.1 Cheap Labour Supply :

A large function of the slum is to serve as a labour market by furnishing a cheap labour supply and at the same time to supply the migrants' needs for jobs. The slum is a supplier of unskilled and semi-skilled labour. The slum replenishes the labour supply of the city

by attracting migrants. The work of thousands of slum dwellers doing the worst-paid jobs upon which important industries are dependent is valuable to city growth (Marris, 1962). In fact, slums have been useful to employers as places where employees could live at lower rentals and therefore on lower incomes. Slum-dwellers, being poorly paid and with fluctuating employment, are likely to be more affected by changes in the price structure of commodities than are residents of other parts of the city (Frankenhoff, 1967).

#### 2.4.2 Housing for the Poor and the Migrant :

The most common function of the slum has been to provide housing for the lowest-income groups in society. Slums have been heaven for penniless rural migrants who need a first living base in the city at the lowest possible prices. In areas undergoing industrialisation and urbanization, migrants to the cities in the past and today have found their first homes, at rents they can afford in the city slums. By living in the slum it is possible for such low-income families to save enough for other purposes, as in the case of Italian immigrants in the United States who desired to save enough money to enable their families to join them or to provide eventually a better life for themselves and their children (Pisani, 1957). Similarly, the Jewish immigrants in New York's lower East Side slum tried to save in order to send money to their families for their passages to this country (Rischin, 1962). Akin to these people are those who, by living in the slums, have managed to build up small businesses, or to save enough money by renting out rooms to be able to move to a more suitable neighbourhood (Seeley, 1959).

#### 2.4.3 Group Associations :

In many countries the slum serves as a place where group living and association on the basis of village, region, tribe or ethnic or racial group may develop. The appearance of a slum can easily be quite misleading to an outsider. What the middle-class observer often sees

as a neighbourhood of filthy, dilapidated and overcrowded dwellings is often but not always regarded quite differently by those who live there and understand the neighbourhood and its residents. A feeling of belonging in or to a slum is, in some cases, an important factor in the attitudes of slum dwellers toward their environment.

#### 2.4.4 Education for Urban Life :

Being both a part of entry and an area of transition for some people, the slum performs a function as a type of "school" to educate newcomers to the city; thus it is a real part of entry for the city. It gives some newly arrived persons a place to become oriented upon arrival, to find a first job, and to learn the ways of city life.

#### 2.4.5 Opportunity for Anonymity :

An important function of the slum is that it offers a place of residence to people who prefer to live anonymously. The urban slum has harboured both those on the way up and those on the way down, but this twofold character of the slum's social function has often been overlooked (Riemer, 1964). The slum accepts people who may be rejected elsewhere, and this function is important in preserving conformity in the remainder of the city. Some of the deviant behaviours found in the slum does not originate there, but in other neighbourhoods. After defeat in personal life, an individual may drift to the slum. Slum residents sometimes include migratory workers, chronic alcoholics, and workers in illegal enterprises. Only in the city, can the disfranchised and the deviant find genuinely important roles (Bogue, 1963; Bahr, 1967).

#### 2.5 Eliminating the Slum Neighbourhoods :

Slums have existed for centuries, they grow increasingly larger and new ones spawned. In this sense they can be said to be self-perpetuating, either replenishing themselves from within or being augmented

by new ones created through migration from without the city. In the past, specially, in the United States, it has generally taken about three generations for a substantial proportion of families to move from the slums to middle-class areas. In developing countries, similar movement has hardly occurred at all, or if it has occurred it has taken many generations. The problem is how to accomplish in one generation what has traditionally required several. In fact, slums have generally continued to resist efforts to change them and they have remained largely unaffected by the multitude of agencies and services offered, specially in the developing countries. Thus far efforts have been directed toward ameliorating slum problems rather than eliminating the slums.

In both affluent and poor countries a more equitable distribution of wealth is urgently needed, along with the elimination of poverty, and the realization of this objective in itself requires pronounced changes in the economic system and in social controls.

But one reason for this concern with eliminating slums is that a high incidence of deviant behaviour, violence, property crime, prostitution, drunkenness, drug abuse, mental disorder, suicide, illegitimacy - has been reported (Bhargava, 1988) to be associated with slum living. Yet one should not overexaggerate with slum as a producer of deviance, for in the middle and upper class suburban area there is also extensive white collar crime, increasing youth crime, particularly vandalism, drug abuse, drunkenness and alcoholism, and various types of mental disorder. In general, however, overt crime is more pronounced in slum areas. A recent government survey of crime in the United States concluded that the offence occurs in and the victims and the offenders are most frequently from, slum areas and this situation prevails in most countries of the world. Study after study in city after city in all regions of the country have traced the variations in the rates for the crimes. The results, with monotonous regularity, show that the offence, the victims, and the offenders are found most frequently in the poorest and most deteriorated and socially disorganised areas of cities (Report by the President's Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice, 1967).

2.6 Changing the Slum Way of Life :

Most slum-clearance programmes have not only failed to solve the problems of the slum way of life, but often they have made it even worse. Likewise, charity, philanthropy, settlement houses, and welfare centres, along with the "uplift" work of social workers, have, so far, neither prevented slums nor brought about much change. Many people believe that the slum can be changed simply by providing adequate wages, guaranteed minimum incomes, indiscriminatory employment policies, accessible and inexpensive credit plans, programmes to train or to retrain youths and adults, more effective training for certain occupations and trades, increased social security and public assistance payments, and better teachers and improved programme for pre-school as well as school-aged children. Slum dwellers need to reach some measures to unity among themselves, as well as some degree of militancy, if they are to be recognized as part of the power structure and their legitimate demands for services and opportunities met (Alinsky, 1946; Silberman, 1964).