Chapter Five
Towards Political Society: National and Transnational Citizenship

Introduction

It is not that only the Nepalis in Sarpur jhuggis have got the Voter ID cards issued by the Elections Commission of India. Some Nepalis living in rented rooms in the vicinity of Sarpur Industrial Area have also got them (as also Nepalis living elsewhere in Delhi or in other parts of India, like some Indians in Nepal for that matter have got the Nepali citizenship papers). They get them through the middlemen dalals. Some Nepali residents living in the rented rooms nearby Sarpur I interviewed said the local politicians requested them to get the Indian Voter ID cards and vote for them during the election time.

However, some structural, some agencied, and some contingent factors have been at play in the Sarpur Industrial Area, whereby almost all the adult members, Indians as well as Nepalis, living in the jhuggis especially before the mid-1990s, got the Indian Voter ID cards. In this chapter I describe this locally specific process. The Nepali jhaggi residents then became, documentarily speaking, dual citizens of India and Nepal. In this chapter, I discuss some of the promises of such dual citizenship, individually in India, in Nepal, and transnationally in the extended social field. I leave the discussion on the pitfalls and angst of such transnational lives and dual citizenship for the next chapter.

INTO THE INDIAN POLITICAL SOCIETY

V.P. Singh has been the most respected among the Indian prime ministers in the jhuggis in and around Sarpur Industrial Area. Babulal Munshi, a Rajasthani man who pioneered
one of the *jhuggis* in Sarpur Phase II said that there were two great leaders in India, one was Mahatma Gandhi, and the other was VP Singh. Some people even put V. P. Singh before Gandhi in the order of greatness. "It was after V.P. Singh that we started feeling like human beings," said one Nepali resident.

As we saw in Chapter Four, neither *jhuggis* nor *jhuggi* demolitions, nor even *jhuggi* "improvements" including the relocations are new phenomena in Delhi. In Sarpur Industrial Area in particular, along with other places in Delhi, it was given a fresh push after V. P. Singh came to power towards the end of 1989. Although his government did not survive for more than a year, it had impact on the future policy making on *jhuggis* in Delhi, including in Sarpur Industrial Area.

"V. P. Singh made the government officers conduct a door to door visit to all the *jhuggis* to collect data, and then he sent them door to door again to distribute the Delhi Administration Identity Card, Ration Card, and a Token of our *jhuggi* number," says Babulal Munshi.

For many *jhuggi*-dwellers in Sarpur Industrial Area, 1990 is the point of rupture in their narratives. "I have all the proofs from 1990," is a proud statement of authenticity, a statement made to claim the right to exist, right to claim further state documentary proofs, right to fringe welfare benefits, and the right to be relocated if the *jhuggi* is demolished.

These government issued identity documents are still preserved by most of the residents. They were also used as the basis by the Election Commission of India to issue Voter ID cards to the *jhuggi* residents since 1994.

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October, 1988, on the occasion of the birth anniversary of the legendary leader Jay Prakash Narayan. This party coordinated with other non-INC parties called the National Front, which formed a minority government in 1989, with support from outside by the communist parties and the right wing BJP. He was elected the prime minister for about a year, from 2 December 1989 to 10 November 1990. His government collapsed after BJP withdrew support following a row over the demolition of Babri Masjid. He was replaced by another veteran socialist leader, Chandrasekhar, this time with support from the INC. As a prime minister, V.P. Singh, is known for his secular, corruption-free, and liberal-progressive image. He was known for his pro-poor (rural and urban) policies not only during his prime ministership; he was actively involved on their cause till he died in November 2008.

2 See Shridharan (2002) for the fragmentation of the Indian party system.

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The Nepali *jhuggi* dwellers were not discriminated against by the V. P. Singh government while issuing the three government markers of identity and authenticity. It was on this basis that almost all the *jhuggi* dwelling Nepalis in the Sarpur Industrial Area also got the Indian Voter ID cards. Indian citizenship was thus delivered to them by the government without much effort on their part of going through the naturalization process (see Chapter Six for a discussion on the Indian and Nepali citizenship laws and getting naturalized citizenship); most did not even ask for it. Helping them were the local Indian politicians of different parties, but chiefly the Janta Dal at that time, which appears to have enjoyed massive support of the *jhuggi* dwellers in Sarpur.

The identity dynamics of *jhuggi* settlements (see Chapter Four), combined with the changing government policies on *jhuggis* and the changing electoral politics in Delhi produced some significant effects locally. In this section, I will discuss these dynamics.

**Jhuggi improvements**

As we saw in previous chapter, the government policy until the mid-1980s was to try to demolish the existing *jhuggis* in urban areas and to rehabilitate them in the government allocated land, usually outside or at the margins of the city.

Such schemes failed precisely because, rehabilitation was done outside the city, far away from work places. Moreover, migration to the cities from rural areas did not stop. The policy emphasis from the seventh five year plan of India beginning 1985/86 shifted from resettlement of *jhuggi* dwellers to improvement of Slum or JJ clusters on "as is where is basis".

In the case of Delhi, V. P. Singh took a major step to bring in the *jhuggi* dwellers within the fold of subsidized food supply. Immediately after becoming the prime minister, he ordered a comprehensive survey the by the Civil Supplies Department between January and March 1990. All the *jhuggi* clusters, except those located on road berms/foot paths, were identified by Delhi Administration.3

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On the basis of this survey, families residing in jhuggis were issued identity cards and metallic plates. The Food and Civil Supplies Department of the Delhi Government issued ration cards in two phases to the jhuggi households residing in the jhuggis. By the end of January 1990, 226,000 jhuggi families living in 694 clusters were enumerated and they were all issued the ration cards. However, the government acknowledged that an estimated 35,000 jhuggi families living in 235 more jhuggi clusters had not been covered by the enumerators.4

Towards a “three-pronged” jhuggi strategy

From 1990/91, a “three-pronged” jhuggi strategy has been adopted in Delhi. The main thrust of the policy has been to discourage fresh encroachments on public land, but the jhuggis that existed before a cut-off date notified by the government (first demarcated as 31 January 1990, and later extended to 30 November 1998 by a Delhi government cabinet decision of 10 May 20005) would not be removed without providing alternatives.6

If the public land owning agencies require the “encroached” land for “larger public interest,” they have to request the Slum & JJ Department for “clearance” of the land and contribute some funds for the resettlement cost. This is the “first prong” of the strategy.

If the public land owning agency provides no objection letter, the Slum and JJ Department can undertake “in situ upgradation” of the existing jhuggis. This is the “second prong.” This means that the existing squatter settlements would be improved, and not demolished or relocated. In the in-situ upgradation sites, the MCD assists in providing basic amenities including brick paths, street lights, public toilets and water supply, etc.

4 At the end of March 1994, the Slum and JJ Department of the MCD estimated 4,80,929 families living in 1080 JJ clusters. In 2002, the number was estimated to be around 600,000 families.

5 To be eligible for this criteria set in 2000, ration cards issued before 30 November 1998, as well as inclusion of the ration card holder’s name in the electoral roll of the respective area is also needed as a proof. This cut-off date was extended to 31 December 1998 by the Ministry of Urban Development and Poverty Alleviation in 2002 (Batra, 2005).

6 See Verma (2002), for the politics of slum improvement in India.
The third strategy is to provide basic civic amenities for the environmental improvements of the jhuggis. These include, Pay and Use Jansuvidha Complexes containing toilets and baths and also introduction of Mobile Toilet Vans in the clusters irrespective of status of the encroached land till their coverage under one of the two prongs mentioned above.

The V. P. Singh initiatives on jhuggi recognition and improvements were further institutionalized since 1992. The Slum & JJ Department was moved once again back to the MCD in 1992 where it has remained till now.

The central government also supported this approach of the Delhi government, and in fact, the Union Ministry of Urban Affairs and Employment tried to replicate it nationally; a Draft National Slum Policy has been in circulation since 2005.

The MPD-21 has also adopted the “three-pronged strategy” since its notification in February 2007 (Ministry of Urban Development/ GOI, 2007). It reiterates the evolving policy to, on the one hand, prevent further encroachment in public lands, and on the other hand, not to remove the past settlers with evidence prior to some government designated cut-off date.

**Local electoral politics since the 1990s**

The jhuggi-dwellers in Sarpur started becoming an electoral force since the early 1990s. As I mentioned above, the identity documents issued by the V.P. Singh government, led to another, and much stronger, identity proof – the Voter ID cards issued by the Election Commission. Apart from serving as an authentic identity proof, this also allowed the jhuggi dwellers to exercise their right as voters in the elections, which are more frequent since the early 1990s, with the passing of the 74th Constitutional Amendments in India, which brought politics more closely at the local level.

The electoral history of Delhi, like its administration is a bit complicated, as it the capital city of India (Siddiqui, Ranjan, and Kapuria, 2004). After India gained independence, the Delhi was a self-governing state with a 48 member legislative assembly, even though with limited legislative power. But it was made an Union Territory under the direct
administration of the President of India as per the recommendations of the State Reorganization Committee set up in 1953. The Delhi Legislative Assembly discontinued from 1956. Instead, the Municipal Corporation of Delhi was constituted after the passing of the Delhi Municipal Corporation Act (1957).

In 1966, another law called the Delhi Administration Act was passed. There was provision for a partly elected and party nominated Metropolitan Council, with limited power, the central government assuming most power (which is also the case today). The Metropolitan Council was dissolved in 1980, revived in 1983 and dissolved again in 1990.

As per the recommendations of a government appointed commission (called the Sarkaria Commission when it was set up in 1987, which later became the Balakrishnan Commission), the Government of the National Territory of Delhi (GNCTD) Act was passed in 1992 (Siddiqui, Ranjan, and Kapuria, 2004). Sandwiched between the central government above and the municipal body below (which is under the central government), the Delhi Legislative Assembly has limited power. However, after the passing of this Act, there have been regular elections every five years for the post of the legislators, in which the Sarpur jhuggi dwellers can and do vote, and that too in large proportion. The GNCTD has a Chief Minister and a Council of Ministers which is formed by the majority of 70-member Legislative Assembly of Delhi. During my fieldwork period, one such election was held in November 2008 (see Chapter Six). Before that, the elections were held in 2003 and 1998 and 1993.

The Constitution (74th Amendment) Act, 1992 introduced important changes in the composition, duration, reservation of seats and responsibilities of Municipalities and Municipal Corporations. The Delhi Municipal Corporation Act, 1957 was amended to harmonize it through the enactment of the Delhi Municipal Corporation (Amendment) Act, 1993 (Act No. 67 of 1993) on 1 October 1993. The Election Commission of National Capital Territory of Delhi was constituted and given the responsibilities to superintend, direct and control the conduct of elections of Corporation. The reservation of Wards for women, women belonging to Scheduled Castes is also important feature of amended
Delhi Municipal Corporation Act, 1957. The first elections to the reconstituted Municipal Corporation of Delhi were held in Delhi in 1997, the second one in 2002, and the third in 2007. My area of study in and around Sarpur Industrial Area, though closely located, fall under three separate wards, from which they elect MCD Councilors.

In these elections, the jhuggi population is a force to reckon with, in Delhi as a whole where they constitute 22 percent of the population and the voter turnout in the jhuggis is indeed very high during the elections. In all the camps I conducted interviews in, the key informants said 80 to 90 percent of those with voter ID cards vote in the elections. Electorally therefore the jhuggi are a force to reckon with in places like Sarpur Industrial Area.

For instance, in the last election to the MCD councilor, a man from the big jhuggi, Sanjay Colony, won over a middle class rival from the nearby Kisan Nagar. “He has become a millionaire after he won the MCD counselor, and has done nothing for the jhuggis. Nevertheless, it is a matter of pride for us that he is a man from the jhuggi, a son of a scrap-collector and from the low caste, but he defeated the man from Kisan Nagar,” said a resident. The main reason he won is because the jhuggi-dwellers supported him, and he also had some financiers to spend money in the election. This voting power is recognized by the jhuggi dwellers and their intermediaries (see section on demolition), as much as by the politicians. For instance, it is not uncommon to find even the chief minister of Delhi, Sheila Dixit visiting some slums, especially the bigger ones like the one on Rampuri, or Sanjay Colony or New Sanjay Colony.

There sure were people in the jhuggis who voted in elections prior to the 1990s, but it was mainly for the position of the Member of Parliament for the national assembly of India. “The MP is a man far away from us. We never get to meet them, and they don’t care about us” said a jhuggi resident who is active in politics in the jhuggis.

The MCD Councilor in particular is very near to the jhuggis, physically for sure, and sometimes socially too, like after the last election in 2007. The MLA for Delhi is a bit far away, but he is much nearer than the MP.
Perhaps due to this change in the governance system which has been more "local" than before, and the increasing softening attitude of the government towards the jhuggis (despite many problems as we shall see), there has also been more welfare programs aimed at the poorer sections of Delhi, some focusing particularly on the jhuggis. The central government as well as the GNCTD and the MCD have their own bureaucracies to execute these programs. But, the MCD councilor and the MLA play a significant role in the distribution of these welfare programs, even though these welfare programs are traded with block votes of the jhuggi dwellers.

Let us look at some of those areas in which the MLAs of GNCTD and Councilors of the MCD play a significant role in relation to the jhuggi residents.

**Municipal bodies**

Most of the municipal functions are performed by the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD). Out of the 1483 sq km territory of Delhi, MCD has jurisdictions over nearly 1400 sq km, the rest is divided between the New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC) and the Delhi Cantonment Board. The NDMC and the Delhi Cantonment Board are not of direct relevance in this study, but the Municipal Corporation of Delhi, or MCD is, in big ways. We therefore discuss its structure in more detail.

**Municipal Corporation of Delhi**

Approximately 97 percent of Delhi's population lives in the area under the jurisdiction of MCD. There are 272 wards in the MCD from which are elected one Councilor each every five years through adult franchise. One third of these Councilor positions are reserved for women on a rotational basis, within which one third are reserved for Schedule Castes.

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7 NDMC is responsible for the area where the Union Government offices, including the Presidential Palace, the central secretariats, the parliament, India Gate, official residence of state functionaries, etc. The Delhi Cantonment Board is associated with defense establishments. Unlike in MCD, there are no elections for the NDMC and the Delhi Cantonment Board. They are run by committees nominated by mainly the Union Government and the GNCTD.

8 I have based the presentation here based on the information provided at www.mcdonline.gov.in, and Sadiq, 2009
During my fieldwork period, the Sarpur Industrial Area Phase II seat was reserved for the scheduled caste.

But, the MCD also has another body called the Corporation. This includes, apart from the elected Councilors, other non-elected members with limited power. The Corporation elects a Mayor and Deputy Mayor every year from among the elected Councilors. The Corporation as a deliberative body has some legislative powers, limited to making rules and bye-rules, giving directions, approving senior appointments and budgets, etc.

The MCD is accountable to the Union Government, specifically the Union Ministry of Home Affairs. However, in recent years, the Union Government has delegated power to the GNTCD in relation to the MCD. However, any change in the structure and function of MCD can be made only by the Union Parliament and not by the Delhi Legislative Assembly.

The executive body of the MCD is headed by a Municipal Commissioner, who is an officer from the Indian Administrative Service (IAS) appointed by the central government. He is responsible for implementing the MCD Act. He can delegate authority to other MCD officers. There are also a number of Additional, Deputy, and Assistant Commissioners, as well as head of a number of specialized departments. Of direct concern to us here, for instance, are the Factory Licensing Department, Sanitation Department, Labor Department, Community Services Department, Slum Wing, Land and Estate Department, etc. There is also an Education Committee which looks into primary education in the MCD.

Each of the wards has an office with a Junior Engineer, Sanitary Inspector and the Registrar of Births and Deaths, who are not accountable to the ward Councillor. However, as the councillor is an elected politician, he/she has much more clout than the officers. The councilor also has a say over budget allocation within the constituency. The councilors are often in touch with the public, solving local problems, going on inspection tours, etc.
The functions of the MCD are divided into two categories: the obligatory and the discretionary. Some of the obligatory functions include: registration of births and deaths; construction and maintenance of drains, drainage works and public latrines; removal and disposal of latrines; reclamation of unhealthy localities; preventing dangerous diseases; establishment and maintenance of dispensaries and maternity and child welfare centers; maintenance and upgradation of hospitals; public vaccination and inoculation; construction of streets and bridges; establishment and maintenance of primary schools, etc.

**Jhuggi improvements in Sarpur**

In the camps I studied, the relation between the local politicians and the jhuggi-dwellers seemed to have started from around the mid-1980s. But it took a dramatic turn only after 1990. For instance, in the Jeevan Jyoti Rajeev Camp, when two Rajasthani and two Nepali started the jhuggi and other people gradually joined, it started getting the involvement of one Indian National Congress leader came to the camp and established contacts with the initial residents.

In 1988, the residents talked to one of the Indian National Congress local leaders and he got a water pump for near the camp. That was the first “development” in the camp.

Similarly, in the Sanjay Camp, it was in the mid-1980s that the first development took place. One of the local politicians got a lamp post for street light erected in the camp. But there was no electricity connection for a number of years.

In the New Sanjay Colony, that started in the mid-1970s and was demolished in 2009, the Pradhan told that he had to spend time to request the leaders for water connections in the early 1980s.

Before 1990, a water pump here and a street light there were the only “developments” in the camps I studied. However, the local leaders were already involved in other ways. They would at least talk to the policemen and officials not to demolish the huts.
But, after 1990, the arrival of the VP Singh government, the dynamics changed. As I stated earlier, the camps were enumerated, numbered, and ration cards and “Delhi Administration Card” were delivered to the jhuggi residents. The onset of the elections for the MLAs and MCD got the local politicians heavily involved in the jhuggis.

What have the netâś done for the camps? There are differences between the camps. For instance, the more powerful camp like Sanjay Colony has a school, a dispensary, a fair price ration shop. Some like the Nameless Camp has no government facility. Most of the others are in between.

The drain-lanes seem to be a perpetual election agenda in the camps, including the more “developed” ones like Sanjay Colony. “Shit used to flow in the drains here, and it used to sometime overflow into our huts,” said a woman referring to the drains in the camps before the 1990s. This was a common story in almost all the camps. Now, in most they are concretized, and in some they are covered and linked to the sewer line thus allowing those with resources to even build bathroom and toilet in the camps.

Babulal Munshi, one of the pioneers of the Janta Jeevan Rajeev Camp has been the assisting C B Rana in running the camp. They have been working in a team since the 1990s. He has five huts for himself as well as an open space in front of the huts, which in the camps is a luxury and a sign of status. “Whoever visits the camp, whether it is a netâă or the police or the government officer hold a meeting at my place because only I have the open space,” he said proudly.

He is an organized man. He has a special bag where he has kept safe the correspondence with the local leaders since the 1990s. One of the documents was an application he wrote on behalf of the camp residents to the MCD councilor requesting him to help improve the drainage system in the camp. The MCD councilor has written a note requesting the Junior Engineer of the MCD to solve the problem. In another letter, the MLA has written a letter himself admonishing the Junior Engineer, that “the work on the drainage has not been started. Do it immediately.”
Some camps such as the one in Rampuri have permanent common toilets, which are very dirty. The government has also been providing mobile toilets since the 1990s. These are vans with usually seven compartments each for men and women. How many vans each camp depends on the size of the camp as well as the negotiating capacity of the pradhān and the residents.

Before these toilets were arranged, the camp residents used open space as toilet. Some still do. Children are hard to control and they often still pee and defecate in the camps, which the parents then clean. Despite all the problems, the installation of the toilet is considered a major development by the camp dwellers. The politicians know this.

The next concern of the camp residents is water, for drinking and other uses such as cleaning, bathing, washing etc. The local politicians are crucial here, too. Babulal Munshi is again useful here. He said that when they established the camp in the early 1980s, there was no water supply in the camp. They had to go to Rampuri, about 10 minutes walk from the camp to get water. Then, as one of the local leaders of the Indian National Congress visited the camp, they requested him to arrange for water in the camp. He told them to dig the ground, and connect a pipe to the water supply pipe below. This they did in 1988. When people from the water supply department asked who had done that, Babulal Munshi said with a chuckle, that the residents replied, “The leader asked us to do so. If you have any problem, he has asked you to go and see him.” The officials went back. Soon afterwards, a hand pump was arranged.

After 1990, water supply system has changed. The MCD Counselor and the MLA have installed hand pumps in most of the camps. In other camps, there is piped water made available. The water comes for a few hours every day in some camps, while in others, it is a few hours every alternate days. Some camps do not have any water supply so they go to the nearby camps where there is. But the MLA can also sanction water tanks from the Delhi Jal Board to supply water for free to the residents.

The next issue is that of electricity. The Delhi Vidyut Board (DVB) is under the GNTCD since 1997, before which it was under the MCD.
Until the beginning of the 1990s, there used to be no electricity supply in the camps. For lighting, the residents used kerosene. It was especially difficult to tolerate the heat during summer time, report many residents I interviewed. Some became creative. Those (men) living in the demolished Nepali or Rai camp, for instance, sometimes used to go to the nearby MCD park at night and play tug-of-war till past mid night. But that was an exception. “It was hell, simply intolerable. But what to do? We had to tolerate it,” says a woman remembering those days without electricity in the camps (see also Rina’s account).

In the early 1990s, people started hooking wires into the nearby poles to get electricity. One Nepali who claims he was among the few Nepalis to start “development” in the camp by arranging electricity,

Around 1990/1991, we hooked wire [to the supply line poles] and got electricity on a temporary basis. We used fan, cooler, and TV. Before that we used kerosene for light. After VP Singh came to power, local leaders said use [electricity] freely. The poor man’s leader has come to power, they said.

The [pradhān] in our camp said we should not do it. Who is going to answer if the police comes? He said. When he went to Nepal, four or five of us got together and hooked wire and started using electricity. We agreed among ourselves that if the police administration came, we would not name the persons who did it. If they asked, who told us to do it, we would tell that the netās had said this in their speech. Some people were afraid. But they [police] would not kill us. [If we were detained] they would feed us with roti even there [inside the custody].

And the electricity was burning in all the other camps around here. But not in our camp.

Because the majority in our camp were Nepalis, it was a bit difficult. [After we started] others also joined in. That was OK. We started the path to development and others also followed us. [thikai chha. bikās ko bato hamle garoyu, uniharn le pani garna thāle.]

Sometimes the Electricity Board people would snatch away the wire, once every couple of weeks or so. After that we stopped buying expensive wire. We used cheap wire.

It is interesting to note certain things at play: subalternity and paralegality (Chatterjee, 2004) which however is interpreted as “development” by the residents; resistance to the state; as well as the consideration of insider/outsiderness by Nepalis.

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The DVB has been partly privatized since 2002. There are now separate companies dealing with power generation, transmission and distribution. Distribution is done by private companies – BSES and Tata. This has led to the installation of meters in the camps. Almost all the huts in the camp under study, except the Nameless Camp, has installed electricity meters. The monthly bill depends on the amount of power used. The most common use of electricity is for lighting. The next common appliances are ceiling fans for most months of the year and cooler during the very hot summer months from April till August. But most of the huts also have fridge and television. The monthly bill of each hut varies between 150 to 500 rupees per month.

The electricity meter is something that the neat seem to have no influence in since they were privatized. People do complain that they are over-billed and some have deferred paying. But still, most people prefer to keep the electric meters. That means they are paying for electricity now that they did not before. One reason is simply that with privatization, getting free electricity is more difficult, though some people do still find a way to do it. For instance, some people pay the local officials around 150 rupees for allowing them to use electricity without meters. The local official gets the cut he does not have to account for to the office higher up. The user gets electricity at a lower price.

One of the main reasons why most people prefer to keep the meter is that electricity bill is considered a proof of residence in Delhi. This proof is useful in getting other documents such as the ration card, voter ID card, or to open bank accounts. Or, where proof of residence is asked for, the electricity bill is simply enough.

The MLA can provide street lights. In most of the camps, there are big flood lights located on top of a tall pole, meant to cover the entire camp. In others, there are street lights along the streets. But most of them are out of repair for long time. Some camps simply do not have street lights whatsoever.

Drain-lanes, mobile toilets, water, street lights, etc are the collective problems of the camps that the MCD Counselor and the MLA can make a difference through the mobilization the official channels. There are also some other problems of the slum residents, collective as well as personal, they are expected to solve.
Social welfare schemes

The GNCTD operates a number of social welfare schemes to the bonafide residents of NCT that are of relevance to this study.⁹ Rs. 1,000 per month is provided as old age pension to 60 years or older people. Widows with 60,000 or less annual earnings are entitled to widow pension of Rs. 1,000 per month. These facilities are availed by the Sarpur Nepalis who are eligible (though their number is few: I could meet three people getting old age pension and two getting widow pension).

Since 2008, the cut off annual income of the household to qualify for most social security schemes has been increased from 40,000 to 60,000 rupees. For those below the poverty line, there are a number of schemes. A lump sum of Rs. 10,000 is provided to the family members in case of natural or accidental death of the main bread winner. BPL persons between 18 and 60 years, since 2008, are provided a free insurance (annually, a premium of Rs. 200, out of which Rs. 100 is contributed by central government, and another Rs. 100 by the GNTCD). The beneficiary is insured for Rs. 50,000 in case of accidental death, Rs. 20,000 in case of natural death, Rs. 50,000 in case of permanent disability. I found no one among the Nepalis either claiming or receiving these benefits.

A lump sum of Rs. 11,000 is deposited in a bank account in the name of every girl child born in a health institution (for those born at home, the amount is Rs. 10,000, to discourage non-institutional birth). Further, a sum of Rs. 5000 would be deposited each time when the girl gets admission in 1st, 6th and 9th Standards. Another sum of Rs. 5000 would be deposited when she passes out 10th Standard and on admission in 12th Standard. The amount so deposited would be redeemed at about 100,000 rupees on attaining the age of 18 years. All such girls, whose parental income is up to 100,000 rupees per annum, would be eligible to get the benefit under the scheme. This scheme called Ladli, started from 1 January 2008. This news has spread to all the jhuggis, though during my fieldwork period, I found only five girls enrolled into this program, though many more are eligible.

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⁹ I have based the secondary information in this section on the information provided by delhigovt.nic.in.
Financial assistance of Rs. 20,000 is provided to the poor widows to marry up to two daughters. Orphan girls can also avail of this benefit. I did not find anyone among the Sarpur Nepalis receive these benefits.

In the education sector, the GNCTD also provides 500 rupees per person per year as a subsidy for school uniforms to all boys and girls students of classes one to class 12 of Government and Government Aided Schools. For this scheme, there is no income ceiling of parents. Text books are also given free of cost to all students enrolled from class I to XII in Government/Aided Schools. It provides Text Books, Uniform and shoes through the MCD. Also, jerseys are provided to children studying in class one to class three. These primary education facilities are utilized by almost all the Nepali households in Sarpur (some send their children to semi-governmental schools and a few to private schools as well), though most children drop out before they complete high school (see Chapter Six).

There are special schemes for the BPL families. The Planning Commission estimated that there were 4.09 lakh BPL families in Delhi as on March 2001. Since 2001, the Delhi Government launched the targeted PDS system. Under this scheme, people below the poverty line (with family income below 24,200 rupees) are identified and given a distinct ration card, by the Department of Food and Civil Supplies, Govt. of Delhi. This department in 2008 had about 2500 PDS outlets formally called Fair Price Shops, but popularly called ration dukāan in Delhi. The BPL families are distributed 25 kg wheat and 10 kg rice at subsidized rates of Rs.4.65 per kg, Rs.6.15 per kg, respectively. Sugar and kerosene is also provided at subsidized rates. These prices are between half and one third of the market rates.

Almost all the Nepali families living in the Sarpur jhuggis had ration cards, mostly from the days of V. P. Singh. But during my fieldwork period, most of the Nepali or Indians did not have the ration cards with them. The government had not renewed the ration cards of the jhuggis I studied. The government officials and the MLA I talked to said they would be distributed soon. It was during the last phase of my fieldwork period in April that they were distributed to in Sanjay Colony. The other camp residents were waiting
their turn. It should be noted that though there is a provision for the assessment of the income of the families to issue BPL cards, the pradhāns and the local politicians (see below) ensure that every family in the jhuggi get these cards.

For the poorest of the poor, there is another scheme called the Antyodaya Anna Yojana. Under this scheme, families identified as poorest of poor are distributed 25 kg wheat and 10 kg rice at subsidized rates of Rs. per kg and Rs. 3 per kg respectively. Sugar is also provided 6 kg per card every month. I could not find anybody among the Sarpur Nepalis receiving these benefits.

The Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana was launched by Govt. of India on October 1, 2007, but was formally started in Delhi from 1 April 2008) in Delhi through Labor Department for providing health cover to the Below Poverty Line families in the unorganized sector. The total sum insured be Rs. 30,000 a family per annum on a floater basis. It covers hospitalization expenses. The beneficiary can avail cashless treatment in selected hospitals up to Rs. 30,000 per annum. During my fieldwork period I did not find any Nepali or Indian covered by these schemes in the jhuggis I studied.

Although there are bureaucratic departments of the GNCTD for implementing these programs, the MLA in the respective areas play a crucial role. In the context of the jhuggis, the MLA heads a committee called the Circle Advisory Committee, along with 7 of his nominated members, that decides who would get an APL or BPL card and who would be the beneficiary for Antodaya or Annapurna Yojana. The MLA is also responsible for sanctioning water works in their locality out of the special fund of Rs 50 lakh per year kept with the Delhi Jal Board in each MLA’s account.

‘Residence proof’ is required to avail a myriad of government and non-governmental schemes and services in Delhi. Many poor people, including the new jhuggi-dweller, their new relatives, etc do not have these residence proofs. To get them, one has to either get the documents attested by a gazetted government officer, who is usually very inaccessible to the poor, or by the MLA, who is much more accessible through the intermediaries. The MLA can attest that a person is a resident of a locality in his constituency. This is needed, usually for getting a ration card or a voter ID card if some other documents are lacking.
Therefore, the MLA is an important intermediary in the production and reproduction of
governmentality in Delhi. He/she is an important person in producing paralegal political
society in the city slums.

The issue of the ration card and the voter ID cards are personal and collective issues at the
same time. The issues of the ID cards sometimes gets very circular, as was mentioned
above. Most of the people who were already present in the jhuggi before 1990 benefited
from V.P. Singh government’s on the spot delivery of the cards, as mentioned towards the
beginning of this chapter. However, since then, new people have bought the jhuggis, or
rented in, and new people have been born, new relatives from other parts of India, or
Nepal, come to settle in the jhuggis. They desire the cards too.

To get the new cards, along with submitting other documents, either a gazette government
officer or others, or the MLA needs to sign verifying that the person is a resident of his
constituency. This has already been mentioned above. This perpetual need keeps the
MLA always on demand for one signature or phone call or the other.

It is on the basis of these documentary proofs that the residents can hope to get some of
the welfare benefits mentioned above. These documentary proofs as we shall see are very
important if the jhuggi is demolished, which is always a possibility.

It is indeed this permanent possibility of demolition that the politicians play into in getting
the support of the jhuggi dwellers. In the election times, they say they will use all their
power to prevent demolition of this camp. In the worst case scenario, if the camp is
demolished, they will make sure that everyone benefits from the relocation scheme of the
government (see section on demolition below).

**THE RISE OF THE PRADHÄNS**

This institution of the pradhän is not formally recognized by any law, but politicians
know they exist in the jhuggis of Delhi. Politicians trying to woo the jhuggi dwellers is
not new in Delhi. For instance, *The Hindu* of 8 August 2003, in a news report titled
"Parties go all out to woo slum dwellers” wrote,
Those living in the Capital's slum clusters, especially the "pradhāns", have never had it so good. First it was the Delhi BJP which organized a meeting of those living in slum clusters and now it was the turn of the Congress. Not to be left far behind is the new Third Front which is also contemplating holding such meetings beginning this month-end, culminating in a big rally that will be addressed by senior leaders of all like-minded non-Congress secular parties.

(http://www.thehindu.com/2003/08/09/stories/2003080907910400.htm)

As I pointed out in the last chapter, the *jhuggis* are identified places, and it is through the deployment of these identities, that residents, their intermediaries negotiate with the politicians. Electoral politics and politicians on the other hand reify and reinforce the identities, as they need block votes. *Pradhāns* emerge out of this nexus between cultural differences, and political needs of the residents and the local Indian politicians.

There were *pradhāns* even before the 1990s. Those who went to meet the local politicians to solve personal problems of the camp residents or for the collective problems of the camp gained prominence in the camp because of their proximity to mainly the politicians or even to the police and the local officials of MCD. These people also made the *jhuggis* legible for the police and politicians. Whenever there was some problem in the camp, the police and politicians contacted these people. The police would look the other way if the *pradhān* let other people build *jhuggis*. Some policemen would take some money through the *pradhān*. In Sanjay colony, for instance, a few hundred rupees had to be given to the *pradhān* to “buy” the space for the new hut in the early 1980s. Bishal Thapa’s father bought it like this.

One of the oldest surviving *pradhāns* I met was Lumadi Singh. He had been the *pradhān* of New Sanjay Camp since 1983, until it was demolished in 2009. He describes how he became the *pradhān*:

I came here in 1981. I started working in a company. My salary was 180 rupees per month. So, when people started settling by the side of this road I also started to settle here. The I started serving the people [public ko sewā karne lage]. People started calling me *pradhān*. [logo ne pradhān pradhān karne laga] The people said I was the *pradhān*. There was no election. I served the public, and the people made me the *pradhān* in 1983...I started serving the netā. And he started serving us.
Before 1990, pradhānship was of a limited value generally, except perhaps to the police. First, the pradhāns make the camps legible for the state. For instance, a pradhān recounts that the police recognized him as a pradhān with the condition that he be "responsible for whatever happens" in the camp. The camps can be dense and dark sites for the state. The people in the camps are themselves migrants from different regions, different cultures and belong to a different class from the state functionaries. They generally avoid the state and rely on non-state institutions for a host of things including dispute resolution. The camp residents have their friends and relatives who come as their guests. The policing function without some intermediaries is a tough task for the state. The pradhāns are one of the best means to deal with such a situation. When policemen need to verify the information of some suspect in the camp, they usually contact the pradhān.

Slums can be equally dense and dark places for the politicians without some intermediaries such as the pradhāns. Moreover, they need someone who can get them votes en block. As the camps are usually organized around identity, they need someone who can get them the support of that identity group as much as possible. After 1990, local politicians were in need of a more systematic pradhānship. The residents needed active pradhāns, too, to mediate with the local politicians, police and lower level state bureaucracy. And the pradhāns stood to gain from this "double demand".

Delhi is a less centralized place now compared to what it was before the advent of local governance system since the early 1990s. But democracy has not reached the neighborhood level for the jhuggi dwellers. The middle class Resident Welfare Association (RWAs) have been formally given a prominent role in the new governance system called the Bhagidari (cf. GNTCD, 2006). In the jhuggis, the case is entirely different. The lowest level elected representative is the MCD councilor. But the state needs some intermediaries at the grassroots for its welfare programs. The pradhāns serve this purpose too.

But how are the pradhān chosen? One of the pradhāns described an ideal-typical way a pradhān is made:
There is a pradhān in every colony. Every political party chooses one man from each jhuggi. For example there is Congress, there is BJP, there is BSP. Suppose you choose me. Then I take the responsibility and work loyally for you only. I get the votes for you. You win. Then you start working through me. You know there are problems of drainage, water, etc, here. You will listen only if I come to you. There are people who supported other parties in this colony. It is obvious that you would not listen when they come to you [aru party lai support gareka pani yo colony mā chhan chhana ta. Ti gayera bhandā ta tapalile sunne kurā hudaina nil] When I go, he will say, “Yes, pradhān ji, what’s up!” Then I say, “Things are like this, these are the problems, these are right, these are wrong.” They he says, “OK, it’ll be done.” Then he send government officers, solves the problem. Then, like that, I become his pradhān. Then the camp residents also start saying, “It’s OK. He’s the pradhān.”

But in practice there are some variations in the process of making pradhāns. Some pradhāns are chosen through some sort of election or camp meeting, others just will their way into power and impose their authority, some become pradhān surreptitiously and then gradually get recognition from the camp residents, while some are semi-pradhāns in the sense that they do not claim to be pradhāns, but other people call them so, or they claim to be the pradhāns but some residents or the local leaders do not consider to be so. Some pradhāns stay in power for more than 10 years, while others quit or are deposed.

But, after the 1990s, one thing is needed to get the pradhān the legitimacy. He or she has to either have the full support of either the MCD Counselor or the MLA. Or at least, they must not oppose him or her.

In this chapter, I describe some the fairly democratic process through which pradhāns are chosen. In the next chapter I discuss the distorted ways in which some pradhāns are chosen and work.

There is also some degree of choice of the camp residents in some cases. In the Rampuri Camp, the first pradhān, Jung Bahadur, was elected through a secret ballot among the Nepalis only. There were also Indian residents in the camp. He was the pradhān of only the Nepalis. He left for Nepal, was replaced by another Nepali pradhān, who was in turn replaced by Shyam Bahadur in 2007. He describes the way he became the pradhān,
You know, you are a pradhan because others make you so. You do not make yourself a pradhan. In my case, the elder Nepalis in the camp said, “He is very honest man, he has worked really hard after coming to Delhi...” So the elderly people [made me the pradhan].

The Janta Camp in Rampuri is a very large camp. Therefore, there are several pradhāns for different blocks. Shyam Bahadur is the pradhan of one of these blocks. In this block among the roughly 100 jhuggis, about 60 belong to the Nepalis and rest to Indians, mostly Biharis. Shyam Bahadur, unlike Jung Bahadur is recognized by the residents as well as the local Indian leader as the pradhāns of the Indians in this block too.

There is also some degree of local consent needed in other cases. Anu has been the pradhan in Janta Jeevan Camp X Block since 2002. Her husband recalls the way she became the pradhan. Some people from the camp had gone to a local leader to get some work done. The leader asked who the pradhan was in the camp. They said they did not have one. The earlier pardhan had left for Nepal. “The leader said you need to have a pradhan. So we came back. We called a meeting of all the camp residents in the evening. They all suggested my wife be the pradhan. She was hesitant. But she ultimately acquiesced.” Anu’s husband had started the camp in 1986, so she had the family legacy of legitimacy in the camp too. She was active in women’s wing of one of the Nepali migrant organizations. And she was also considered as more educated than most others in the camp. She had some free time, as she ran a dhābā with her husband.

C. B. Rana describes the way he was made pradhan. Rana was born in Gorakhpur to parents who were from Nepal. Rana says, he was a fearless man in his early twenties. He did not fear to fight a dozen persons. He said, he would go to the MCD office to resolve the personal problems of the camp residents, or the collective problems of the camp, such as with drainage. “I used to bang the tables of the MCD officials and shout at them if they did not do the work they were supposed to be doing,” he recalls.

But in the mid 1990s, he was gradually recognized by a local leader of the Janta Dal, and in his presence and with the consent of the cam residents, he was made the pradhan. There has been no election to the post. Rana was very active in the camp till about three years ago. But then things changed. One, he suffered from some illness, and then became...
depressive. He is on medication since then. The reason he says is that he did not have regular source of income, enough for the family. Although he is not active, and is not considered effective, he is still respected in the camp.

Not everybody is interested to be a pradhān. So, in some camps, there is in fact no competition, and even some people are unsure about who is a pradhān. In the Long-Street Camp, there is a man, whom some people recognize as the pradhān while others don’t. One resident explained the process of how Raju became the pradhān: “Everybody is busy here. But there are problems in the camp, especially related to the drains. Somebody needs to spend time visiting the councilor and the MCD office. Raju took the initiative. After several visits, the leader recognized him, and made him the contact point. People in the camp are satisfied. He is like a pradhān.”

Most of the pradhāns work positively for the benefits of the camp residents, without much benefit to themselves except social status. One of the positive self-evaluations of pradhāns is mostly, “I never took money from anyone to get their work done. I have served people.” The pradhāns use the connections they develop with Indian political leaders to help the camp residents.

Shyam Bahadur, the pradhān of the Rampuri camp has his photographs with the top leaders of Indian National Congress including the chief minister Shelia Dixit prominently displayed on his little ‘drawing room’. “I meet Sheila Dixit. She comes here to make speech. We take photographs together.”

He says that he meets the MLA roughly once every month. But the MCD Councilor in Shyam Bahadur’s ward has indeed allocated two hours daily between 10 am to noon, except on Sundays, to meet the slum pradhāns. The slums issues are discussed in these meetings, but the main purpose is to keep the contacts between them.

The counselor of Kisan Nagar Ward is from the slum itself, Sanjay Colony. So he is more accessible the pradhāns, but others complain that he rarely visits the other camps.
“I can meet the MLA and the Councilor anytime I want to. I also have good relation with other leaders from other parties,” says Khem Bahadur, showing his diary containing the phone numbers of the leaders.

The better the relation with especially the MCD councilor, the more the pradhāns are effective. They also need to have enough free time. There are different types of issues the pradhāns deal with. One is for the improvement of the camps. Most count the “naali-kharanjā” drainage improvement as the most important work for the camp. Some get street lights installed or repaired. Others get mobile toilet vans installed outside the camps as soon as possible. Some even get corrugated iron roof for all the residents. Getting water connection is another work. These have been discussed above.

When new social welfare schemes are announced, the pradhāns coordinate with the local politicians to get them done. For instance, they use their influence with the MCD Councillor or the MLA for eligible people to get old age pensions, widows or disabled pensions as quickly as possible (see above). Shyam Bahadur Pradhān when in conversation asked me whether I had a daughter. I said, I did. Then he asked me, “Have you registered her for the Ladli program? I can get it done anywhere in Delhi, not only in this camp.”

The pradhāns are useful in resolving minor police cases. In the camps, quarrels, physical fight, or even cases of theft may happen. Most of the disputes are resolved within the camp, mediated by family, friends, pradhāns themselves, the local politician, the migrant leaders, etc. But sometimes, the police also gets involved. In such cases, the pradhāns are called to the police station by the police or by the detainee as a guarantee for release. But it is mostly through the local netā that they approach the police. Rina explains the process,

If someone is arrested by the police, I used to telephone the netā. He would ask me to go to the police station. I would enter the station. Then the netā would again telephone the police station. “She is my pradhān. Listen to what she has to say. Release the person you have detained.” The police would ask, “Are you the pradhān?” I would say, yes I am. Then the police would call the netā and then they would ask me to take [the detained person] with me.
This is usually the case with other Indian pradhāns as well, but it has greater significance for the Nepalis, who are in a foreign country, as Rina says,

> Then, the other works...He used to do all my work. I did not have to go to his home. If the police arrested someone and I called him, he would immediately send his men here. That he did very well. That is all we wanted. We are in a foreign land [Hāami pardesh màa chhaun]. If he solves our problem, that is a great thing. I respected him. He also used to respect me a lot.

Rina gives some examples of the cases she resolved with the police,

> The old man had bought a jhuggi from the son of a Bihari man. The father came back said that he would not let the jhuggi be sold and captured the jhuggi. That started a physical fight. The police arrested both of them at 1:00 am at night. I solved that.

> Once, one insane woman left a new born child of hers, which a Bhangini found and brought home. She said she could not look after her, and asked me to take it. I give it to Raini. But the Bhangini reported it to the police. I solved it.

> Once, some children entered into a company and stole things. 10, 12, 15 year old five kids. They had been arrested and detained.

> Once, I had to go in the case of my own second son. One of his friends, a boy in the same class asked him to give a watch to a girl. The girl’s father took my son to the police station.

When a pradhān is really powerful, he does not even let the police enter the camp in minor disputes. Anu Rai point outs the service her husband rendered to the Nepali camp, until it was demolished in 1999, when he was the pradhān: “The police would not enter the camp until my husband permitted them.”

Some pradhāns develop so close a relation with the netā that they are very responsive to the pradhāns. Rina claims that, “I did not have to go to him. When I phoned him, he would come in his vehicle immediately.”

As pradhānsip is associated with social status, some provide assistance to the camp dwellers through their own private means or by mobilizing the local resources. Rina says,

> I helped people after I became the pradhān. Some people would fall sick. I used to give them money for treatment. I used to give the money from my husband’s earning. We used to collect the
rice we gathered during bhaileo and give it to people who didn’t have enough to eat. I distributed such rice among three families. The drain was bad. I called the netā to the camp and told him about it, and he made it.”

She evaluates her pradhānship very positively, “There was only one person in the camp who was unhappy with me. Everyone else was happy. I never ate any money from anyone. I got ration cards and identity cards for free.”

As I mentioned earlier, the Nepali labor migrants were not discriminated against by the V.P. Singh administration during the distribution of ID cards in 1990. On that basis, they also got the Voter ID cards and other proofs. However, not everyone had made the ID cards at that time. Moreover, new people from Nepal join, or family members grow up, and they need the ID cards. To mediate between the officials and needy residents is a constant need. It is the pradhāns who do it. Shyam Bahadur says, “What happened once, around November 2009, is that they would not make the [Voter] ID cards of the Nepalis...It was stopped for two to three months. We talked to the MLA, we talked to the Councilor, and the problem was resolved.”

Sometimes, the camps residents get into a conflict even with the powerful company owners in the vicinity. At that time, they mobilize the support of the Indian netā. Part of the land of a camp where Nepalis along with Indians belongs to an adjacent company, which made an iron gate at the entrance to the camp. But the inhabitants mobilized the support of a local politician, who allegedly advised the owner that he could do perfectly well without the little piece of extra land beside his building rather than face his wrath.

We were not allowed to use that gate. It was closed. The netā got that gate opened. You know, he had padlocked it. We were closed inside. There was no outlet. We had to use the other, very circuitous, path. “Is this your father’s property? Why have you kept it closed? You bastard, I will throw away the entire gate,” threatened the netā and then only the [company people] opened the gate. That was the kind of trouble that the company created.

The politician broke the gate. The gate stands, but it has never been closed since. To be exact, physically, the gate is half closed and half open.
Sociologically, it appears to be exactly the same. An informal truce was reached that the inhabitants would not build any *jhuggi* in the land but use it only as an open space, and the company would not enclose it. Inside the half-open and half-closed gate, before you enter the camp proper, there is an open piece of land about 10 meters long and three meters wide. This is used by the children as a little playing field. Groups of girls and women from the camp often utilize it for informal chat, sun-bathing in winter, to dry clothes. The half-closed gate makes it appear like a semi-closed prison, confining women within it. At the same time, it is also a semi-open public sphere.

However much it is mediated through the *pradhāns*, and however little substantive citizenship it ensures (see next chapter), the camp residents know that they wield some power over the local politicians, because they wield the Voter ID card. The local residents develop an organic relation with the MCD councilor and the MLA. The bureaucrats are far away and can afford not to care about the sentiments of the camp residents. But it is a different case with the MCD counselor and the MLA. It is them to whom the camp residents look for support in times of crisis. It is they who are there to take the blame and to respond to the pressure.

**Demolitions and discourses of citizenship**

As I stopped for tea at a *dhābā*, in the morning of 5 February 2009, the *dhābā* owner told me casually, "Some *jhuggis* have been demolished in Phase I. You might be interested to go there." I sure was. On the way, I meet two Nepali migrant activists. I ask them, if they want to come along. They do. Three of us walk to the site. It is about five minutes walk from the *dhābā*. It is the end of the road from Sarpur Gol Chakkar towards Pushpa Vihar.

Hundreds of *jhuggis* were razed to the ground early that morning. There are hundreds of people, men, women, old, young and children, scavenging through the rubble. They are trying to separate the non-damaged bricks and wood. There are middlemen who have come to buy such stuff. They have lined up their trucks nearby.

We ask the people if we can meet the *pradhān*. That is not possible because he had been taken away to the nearby police office and detained there. Some people suggest we might
want to meet a woman leader and they take us to her. She is busy scavenging the rubble. I introduce myself as a researcher. She looks up and shouts at us, “Get lost! I am tired of talking to people like you. People like you wasted my time all this morning. Nothing is going to come out of talking to people like you.” I apologize and take leave of her.

A group of men are however interested to talk to us. They ask us if we are from the media. I explain that we are not, and I am just a researcher. I tried to explain the difference. I ask for permission to record the interviews. They consent. I am not sure whether I could make myself clear. They say I am the first outsider they are talking to. One of them explains what happened.

First they served notice on 27-28 August, 2008. After that there was election for Delhi Bidhan Sabha. So they stopped it. After the election, new cabinet was formed, they passed a proposal again [to build the road]. They again served a notice saying that we should vacate the jhuggi by 28 January.

What we mean to say is, OK, we’ll vacate. But those of us who have stated for 30 30 35 35 years here.. We have ID proofs made. We have the Delhi Admin Card issued by the respected past prime minister shri VP Singh, then we have the ration cards, and we have the ID proof as well. So we are saying, demolish [the jhuggis], it does not matter. But give land for rehabilitation to those who have stayed here for 30-35 years.

They list out the names of the leaders whom the delegates of the jhuggi met during the past several months: “Jaipal Reddy, Ajay Makhan, Sheila Dixit, Ramesh Bidhudi, Raj Kumar Chauhan, Ram Bir Singh Bidhudi, Chaudhri Prem Singh, Sajjan Kumar” These include the who’s who of Delhi political class including Sheila dixit the three time chief minister. The others include the ministers, MPs and MLAs, the present and the past ones.

Then I go nearby a group of women as they talk. They ask me who I am. I explain. They had migrated from UP. I ask if I can record the interviews. They consent. I do not get much opportunity to ask questions as there is a spontaneous outpouring of emotions.

Like with the men, the women also mention the names of some leaders, and the discourse of vote. Although is interspersed with discourse of morality, religion and the supernatural,
the discourse of citizenship rights, voting power of the jhuggi-dwellers, the normative citizenship rights figure in prominently in the discourse. I present some of these below:

- Have you ever seen the big leaders die after they completed their age? Some were killed by gun bullets. Some died in accidents. Some were killed by bombs. The big ones die bad deaths. Why? They make the poor suffer. Now, all the displaced jhuggiwale will be a nightmare [to the chief minister of Delhi].
- During the election time, she came to the jhuggi. She even ate roti here. There are 15,000 new jhuggi we have made ready. When you have to go from here, you will get those.
- Let everything go to hell. Mother fuc.rs. They are dogs.
- Those who have done injustice... There is no answer to how the stench of the jhuggi wale will get them.
- The big uniformed people, the big netā, they have their honor. Don’t the jhuggi wale have honor? They have more honor. They eat the roti they earn through hard work. Sheila Dixit ... did not become [the netā] through honesty. Just watch, you demolish the jhuggi with bull dozers. For the netā, the earth is going to turn upside down. Just see what will be [their] condition. Dekh le na kya haal hoga. [The jhuggi-dwellers] demolished their jhuggis by themselves before they demolished them. It is because [the jhuggi dwellers] have honesty/virtue.
- There was one leader. He’s gone. We shall shout slogans for them. One for Mahatma Gandhi, one for V.P Singh. These two leaders got us settled here. And these motherfuc.rs chasing us away.
- We are not going to cast our vote! We shall sit with black flags! We shall vote for the poor! We shall vote other people! We shall vote the independents! We shall become our own leaders!

Interestingly, one of the Sarpur based chapter of an organization, Delhi Shramik Sangathan field a case for the relocation of those with ID proofs, and surprisingly, the court verdict was positive this time. It was surprising because in the recent past, the Indian judiciary had much harsh words to say to the jhuggi dwellers (see next chapter).
On 11 February 2010, the Delhi High Court rebuked the MCD and the Government of Delhi:

This court would like to emphasize that in the context of the Master Plan for Delhi – 2021, jhuggi dwellers are not to be treated as secondary citizens. They are entitled to no less than an access to basic survival needs as any other citizen... It must be remembered that the Master Plan for Delhi clearly identifies relocation of slum dwellers as one of the priorities for the government.

The court ruling said that “The decision of the respondents holding that the petitioners are on the ‘right of way’ and are therefore not entitled to relocation is hereby declared illegal and unconstitutional.” The court not only directed the MCD and the Delhi government to properly relocate the petitioners within two months but also asked the Delhi Legal Service Authority to hold periodic camps in the jhuggis as well as the relocation sites in the city to make them aware in the local languages of the jhuggi dwellers, about their rights and this judgment.

THE SOCIAL ADVANTAGES OF JHUGGIS

Semi-permanence and local economy

The camps as well as the roadside dhābās and vending carts, as I have mentioned, can be demolished anytime, about which I discuss in more detail in the next chapter. However, the residents hope that even if it is demolished, they would get relocated. There are educated guesses which camps and which dhābās will be demolished and when. Based upon such understandings, individual hut and dhābā development plans are made. “This is in a MCD side lane, so it won’t be demolished,” is the confident answer many give. ‘Even if it is demolished, we will get a relocation plot somewhere.” This is the hope even if they know, or have themselves experienced that it is not always possible.

Even without this sense of semi-permanence, the camps had economic advantages, which I will discuss first, but the sense of semi-permanence does have certain distinct implications.

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10 Sudama Singh & Others vs. Govt of Delhi & Anr WP(C) 8904/2009
That a jhuggi saves the cost of the rent was highlighted before. And until recently, even electricity was used for free. Water is also used for free. These are not possible in the rented rooms. By bringing the wives, and raising the families, the jhuggi residents save the costs of living in two places, which was also mentioned before. Living together makes the women able to do part time jobs, as supplementary income. Or as the men get fired, they are forced to send the women to work. But, it is also possible to bring in the wife and be together with the family even in the cheap rented rooms.

What is additional in the camps is that the jhuggi by itself is a kind of property and investment. According to the formal law, every camp legally is an encroachment on either the public or private land and may be demolished in the future. No jhuggi owner holds a land title deed paper. However, the jhuggis are bought, sold and rented informally. The price of a hut depends on the labor and capital spent on constructing it, as well as the expected longevity of the camp, that is whether it is likely to be demolished soon or not. Even if there is demolition, certain things such as wooden beams, or bricks, household furniture and equipments can be saved, sold or transferred elsewhere.

Those in the camps like Rampuri and Sanjay Colony feel more confident that the jhuggis would not be demolished any time soon. They therefore make two or even three storied huts. A two storied hut in Rampuri can be sold in around 150,00 rupees. In Sanjay Colony, it would cost up to 300,000 rupees. The price of an average one storied jhuggi ranges from 7,000 to 50,000 in other camps. Jhuggi are also rented out. One room or a one-roomed jhuggi can be rented out between 500 to 1,500 rupees.

Camp living allows people to be part of a network. There is more trust, as the camp resident is a stable, more predictable person, worthy of credit, and part of the “society”. There is usually one retail shop owned by one of the camp residents from one’s own community, from where you can buy foodstuff for credit. Although it benefits the shop owner the most, it is also beneficial to the other jhuggi dwellers.

Over the years, the rise in the number of Nepali community has made possible ethnic the rise of “ethnic economy” in the sense that such economy largely depends on the ethnic support or network of (e.g., the Mahindra Champion vehicles), market of (e.g., the Nepali
cassette shop, the ration shops), the identity or niche of (e.g., momo and chowmin vendors), or the labor of (dhābās with child labor) Nepalis. I will discuss their features in detail in Chapter Six. Here it is just noted.

Indeed, even the private companies nowadays are starting to recognize the ownership of jhuggis in their assessment of loans. In the Long-Street Camp, there are about a dozen families who own the Mahindra Champion Tempos. Each Tempo costs around 175,000 rupees. The local branch of the Mahindra company needs an application with residence proof, with Voter ID card considered the most authentic proof. “They come to verify and assess the worth of the jhuggi,” says Kamal. This is the camp where most of the Nepalis have specialized in the transport sector. One man even owns jeeps and buses that run from Delhi to Kathmandu.

The political connections developed through activeness in jhuggi is also used for getting things done. Bishal Thapa wanted to get the local dealership of the Mother Dairy. The other dealers in the neighborhood obstructed it, fearing more competition. “Then with a local Congress netā, I along with my wife, went to see the Chief Minister of Delhi, Sheila Dixit,” he said. “After hearing our story, she got one of her secretaries to make a phone call immediately, and then we got the dealership,” he says proudly.

To allow or not allow the roadside dhābās, vending wheel carts, etc. needs the approval of the MCD (see Advani, 1998). If they go through the normal process, it is very difficult to get the approval (cf. Bhowmik, n.d.). So the pradhāns use their influence with the MCD Counselor to start new ones, and not to let the MCD demolish the already existing ones. Indeed, some the pradhāns own the bigger dhābās running for nearly two decades because of their good contacts with the local politicians.

A new enterprise in which some of the Nepali labor migrant families have made a dent is in the business of small goods transport. They buy Mahindra Champion “tempos” in installment from the local dealer. The total cost comes around 275,000 Indian rupees. A buyer pays around 80,000 rupees in the beginning and then the rest in monthly installments for the next two to three years. The Nepalis in Sarpur Phase I and II own around 40 such tempos, some families owning up to five of them. Most of these tempos
are drive by the adult males of the family but some employ drivers as well, mostly other Nepalis. These tempos are used to carry light goods of the companies around Delhi. The more contacts you have with the companies the better the business. On an average, one tempo, driven by the owner makes around 15,000 rupees profit per month. If you employ a driver, the profit is around 10,000 rupees per month.

**Physical security and resistance**

The camp life offers security to women as well as men (and insecurities as well, which we shall discuss later). Take the case of Rina (Chapter Four). Her husband worked for a company. His slightly drunk employer came one day when she was alone, and made very sexually suggestive comments. Within a very short time, Rina moved to the Remnant Camp. There has since been no harassment. She in fact became the camp *pradhān*. Another woman, who has faced harassments on the streets as a “Kiinchhi” (see Chapter Six) says she has never experienced harassment inside the camp. “Everyone calls me *didi* or *bahini* here,” she says.

The crammed and confusing spacing of the camp is also comes to be handy in grotesque ways. A *jhuggi* resident says, “There are every type of people in the *jhuggi*. Some are learned and wise. Others are goons. The streets are narrow and confusing. An outsider does not dare enter a *jhuggi*. You are safe inside the *jhuggi*.” One roadside *dhābā* owner says that ‘The police and MCD officials often come to my *dhābā* asking for money. But they rarely come inside the camp to harass us.”

The camp residents use the space to fight the goons. Sanat recounts how. There was a bully living in a rented house with his family. He used to harass the residents of the Camps. Sanat is a small man, less than five feet tall. The bully was a big man. Moreover, he had other goons as his friends. Sanat planned with one other friend to teach this bully a lesson.

This bully was drinking inside a *jhuggi*. Two of us waited for him in the narrow lane, our faces covered with handkerchief. It was pitch dark. As he came out drunk, we pushed a wooden rod in front of him. He tripped and fell down. We had a jute sack with us. As soon as he fell down, we covered him with the sack. We beat him with sticks and kicked him for about 10 minutes. He cried.
Asked for mercy. Then we disappeared. He ran away. The next day, I went to visit his house, pretending I had some work with him. He was lying on his bed. There were bruises on his face. I asked what happened. He said, he had a bike accident last night. It was funny.

Sanat claims, this bully never came back to the camp.

In the camp demolished in 1994, there was another event. It is about another bully boy. This boy had come from Nepal alone when he was a kid. He worked in one of the dhābās run by a Nepali. In his adolescence, he developed contacts with other goons in town. He went with them for theft at night. He bullied people in the camp. He was caught red handed by the police when he broke into one of the companies at night. He was jailed for several months. He came out a hardened bully from the jail, and beat up people in the camp.

One day, he broke into one of the huts, and started drinking the liquor of the owner when he was away for work. When he came back from work, the owner complained, that what the boy did was improper. He had not only broken into the house, but had messed around as well. The boy and his gang severely beat up the owner. He cried for help, and dozens of people rushed in. The gang threatened the people that they would kill them all, and go to jail. This time, the people beat them up severely. The boys had knives, so the people in the camp fought back with knives, sticks, etc. As more people came back from work, they started beating up the boys. At night, the camp residents called the police. The main boy died. The camp residents unanimously told the police that the gang members had fought with each other. So the three living gang members were sent to the prison.

They stayed in the prison for about three years and were released. They did not come back to the camp. Most of the camp was demolished anyway by the time they were released.

It is not only with other civilians that the camp offers the possibility of resistance. The space of the camp is also sometimes used to resist the police, especially in the bigger camps like in Rampuri. The police can and does have its own agents in the camps. The pradhāns are the main institutions which the police can use to get information, make the camps legible and ensure surveillance. They also have their own informers. The police
can and does enter the camp when they really want to. But on a day to day basis, they do not enter into the camp, especially at night. They do not enter into the camp for petty offences. "If it is only a few policemen, and especially if they come at night, they will be easily trapped in the gallis of the jhuggi, and be beaten up without them recognizing anyone who beat them up," said a resident of Rampuri camp.

This highly limited access of outsiders to the camp is also used to get electricity and water for free inside the camp. Water pipes run beneath the camps for supplying water to the industries. The residents dig down, connect their own pipe to get water. "The Delhi Jal Board officials don’t want to mess up with the jhuggi wallas. They do not enter into the camps without the permission of the camp dwellers," explained one man with some chuckle.

**Jhuggis as egalitarian spaces**

A Brahmin man, Bishnu Pandey, says he is not concerned about caste. He has been inside the huts of his Dalit neighbors. Has he eaten together with them? Not even once in the last 25 years he says. The reason? "There has been no necessity to do so," he claims.

In the Janta Jeevan Rajeev Camp, there are 12 huts of the hill Dalits of Nepal. Shankar Sharma said, that since his childhood days, some people from the other castes, Brahmin, Chhetri, and janajati in the neighboring camps call that part of the camp as Damai Tol, the cluster of the Damai, which is now considered a pejorative term in Nepal to refer to the untouchable castes of traditional tailors.

During my fieldwork period there was at least one dispute between two Nepali families in which one family shouted at the other calling one woman a "witch" and members of the other family called the other family as being untouchables. The Nepali migrant leaders and the pradhān had to mediate the dispute.

The Brahmins, Chhetris, Thakuris Magars, Tharus and other people from the hill janajati background of Nepal use their surname. They are also generally very interested to know my caste. But I met several people who do not use their surname, not only during
introduction, but also in their ID cards. Upon probe, most of them turn out to be the hill Dalits of Nepal.

However, the camp residents say these are remnants of “old”, “superstitious” and “conservative” practices back from Nepal. I observed people from the Brahmin, Chhetri upper castes eating together with the Dalits. An active leader of a camp is a Dalit. He says, compared to his childhood days, discrimination against Dalits has decreased in Nepal as well. One personal example he gives is that as a child he had to wash his tea cup in public tea-places. The last time he went home, he didn’t have to do it. But in the camp here, “There is absolutely no discrimination [against Dalits] here.” We are sitting together with a Brahmin during the conversation, and he joins in and says that he and Sanju’s family have had long term relations. They visits each others’ hut, share food, invite each other during family/religious rituals. He reaffirms what Sanju said, “There is no untouchability here.”

This was also the view of a tailor from the hill Dalit community of Nepal. He says, “It is not like in Nepal here. There is absolutely no untouchability here. People do not even ask your caste. People do refer to their caste sometime – Thakuri, Darji. But there is no untouchability. It is an urban area. Not a village.”

His 18 year old daughter, who just dropped out from studies in class 8, was listening to our conversation. She says in a curious tone, “I heard caste discrimination happens in Nepal, right?”

In fact, Rina Nepali, one the two woman pradhāns among the Nepalis, is from a Dalit caste. Shyam Bahadur is a Dalit but is the pradhān of the camp which has many non-Dalits residents. Sanju is a Dalit but is considered by all the Nepalis in the Janta Jeevan Rajeev Camp as their leader.

The camp in a way squeezes and flattens the hill high castes. Moreover, due to long years of Nepali left political activism, there have been conscious efforts to eliminate caste discrimination in the camps.
The distinction between the hill high caste Hindus and the janajatis is virtually non-existent in terms of commensality. There are also some cases of inter-caste marriages. For instance, Rina’s son, a Dalit, took away the wife of a hill high caste neighbor during my fieldwork period, and the two of them went to Nepal. They had not escaped because of caste reasons. They came back during my fieldwork period. There was no discrimination in the camps based on caste.

That there is no hierarchy does not mean that there is no feeling of difference. People generally intermarry within their own caste or cultural groups. There is also a janajati consciousness, and curiosity about one’s caste during introduction and reference to the caste in a sociologically significant ways during conversations.

TRANSNATIONAL IDENTITIES AND CITIZENSHIP

Family, gender and place making

It is a Sunday morning at around 10 in the morning. I drop by at the jhuggi of Bimal in Sarpur Phase I. Being a Sunday, the whole camp is much more eventful than other days. Men are bathing on the narrow lanes. Women are washing clothes, filling up water pots. Children are having a hard time running from one part of the lane towards the other end. As I enter Bimal’s jhuggi, the floor is wet. They have just cleaned it. Bimal’s wife and his mother are making special phāpar ko roti, bread made from a special flour from Nepal. “You know, it is pure, from the pahād. You do not get it here,” Bimal’s mother explains to me. Others in the family join in to support her point.

Bimal’s mother’s mother has come from Arghakhanchi to visit the family. She is sitting on the bed and holding the two year old child of Bimal. Bimal is getting ready to visit one of the relatives in another part of Delhi. His father comes half naked into the room, as he has just finished bathing on the drain-lane outside the jhuggi. Bimal’s three year old son is playing outside the house. Bimal’s younger brother, who drives one of the two tempos the family owns also enters the room, and takes a seat.

The women offer phāparko roti to me first, as I am a guest, and then to other male members. They take it last. Among the women, Kamal’s mother’s mother is given the food first. Bimal’s wife first cleans the dishes, and then eats last.

Sunday being the day when you can meet people, I go next to Sher Bahadur’s hut. Three male members of the family are eating māsu-bhāt, meat and rice, the prestigiously tasty Nepali dish. His wife is serving. His daughter-in-laws are in the kitchen. I did not want to be the guest here as well.
So I excuse myself for the time being, and come back after about an hour. Sher Bahadur is playing cards with three other men. There are three more men as spectators. His son is sitting on the bed, watching television. Everyone is a Nepali. The women serve tea, look after the baby.

Families move in quickly once the jhuggi is made or bought. That is one of the prime motive behind making the jhuggi. The family members may move from the nearby rented rooms, or be brought from Nepal. A jhuggi usually unites the husband, wife and young children. Most of the children are born in the present camp. One of the parents may join in to spend the retired life. A jhuggi also makes possible the short term visits by the guests.

The family structure has implications for the reproduction of identity and culture. A man living alone, or sharing the rooms with other labor migrants, is an incomplete man. He has to go back home to make himself complete. He can do so only occasionally. Family is the prime unit through which the social self is made, affirmed and reaffirmed in important ways.

Having at least the husband, wife and children together is necessary for most, proper, rites of passage in the life cycle. It is true, that due to modernization, ideological orientations, limitations imposed by one's class position, limited space allowed by a jhuggi and the camp, and the rhythms of days imposed by the market, the content of the rites, rituals and festivals do not remain the same as back home, or in history. Some of the traditional rites, rituals and festivals are forgotten altogether such as strict separation of women during menstruation, which the jhuggi space simply does not allow. New ones such as birth-day celebration of children are observed. However, even if symbolically some of these are observed.

For instance, except in case of elopement, a marriage ritual is observed, even if it is performed by the “party” or “sangathan”. The name giving ceremony is observed, even if it entails inviting the local leaders instead of the Brahmin priests. Death rites are necessarily performed, even if only symbolically. The festivals of Teej and Dashain and Tihar are observed. Performing these rites, rituals and festivals require family members to be together. The jhuggi makes this possible.
However, the fact that these rites, rituals and festivals are performed within the family does not mean that the larger community is not involved. Far from it. What one does within the family is often done in the presence of witnesses. Witnesses are indeed called. These rites, rituals and festivals are a way of affirming, and reaffirming the family's collective identity as well as the identity of the individual members of the family, as members of the wider community.

One's worth as an authentic member of the community is also affirmed and reaffirmed not only through the special events, but also through the day to day, mundane practices. A man is normal and complete when his wife makes the food, washes dishes and clothes, sweeps the house, looks after the children, takes care of the sick, so that he can go out to work, or participate in the men's public sphere even if it means hanging out, playing cards, debating politics, drinking, etc. Moreover, the women make special dishes, the traditional ones, if not always, then on special occasions.

A jhuggi makes gendered identity possible. It recreates this. It is precisely for recreating this that families are made and brought together. Seeing gendered, organically functional families around you, doing roughly what you do with your family, affirms the sense of community much more deeply than other social rituals.

Having young women around, the normal ones living in their families or with close relatives also offers the possibilities for the young men to fall in love, get into affairs, arrange marriages, which is much more difficult with girls of other communities. It is exactly the same for the young girls.

When you are pregnant, there are people to offer you advice on the food to eat. When a child is born, there are expert midwives who are willing to help you free of cost. There are community members who bring in jwano ko jhol, or ghee and jāand (varieties of nourishing soups and drinks given to women after child birth) for the lactating mother. When a husband is an alcoholic and beats you up, there are people who criticize him. The camp life is so connected and close, you can literally hear the person in the adjoining hut sip tea or snore. When a woman is beaten, it is not missed by the community members. Mediation is tried, even if it does not always solve the problem. There are also other men.
who are willing to help you live separately, and in some instances, some even willing to marry you. Camp life allows children to be left with neighbors when you go to work or go shopping. There are no day care centers around.

There are people who come to attend the name giving ceremony of the child or a marriage party, or the death anniversary rituals of ancestors, the shraddha ritual. The compactness of the camp allows you to kill a he-goat the Nepali way during the Dashain festival. It allows your friends to chat with when you are out of job, which happens frequently with women. Or it allows unemployed or under-employed men to find similarly placed and disposed men to play cards, drink or chat.

For the new comers, the camp is a community away from community. There you can speak your own language, as well as slowly learn and perfect your Hindi.

When you live in a camp, you can be confident, people will be there to inform relatives and cremate you when you are dead. Camps are very lively places during the Teej, Dashain and Tihar.

Nepalis staying in the Sarpur jhuggis for long, and especially those in the second and third generations, slowly learn to stay, speak, develop tastes as “locals” of Sarpur. Family and community if the jhuggis just make this transition easier.

**Nepali migrant organizations and virtual citizenship**

**Volleyball match at Salora Park**

After talking to him for about one and a half hours, I walk back to Salora Park. It is about 4:30 pm. The volleyball match is in full swing.

The volleyball match was organized by the Maoists on the occasion of the Republican Day of India, January 26. A total of 18 teams from different parts of Delhi had participated. All the teams were under the sports committee of the organization. On January 26, they had used three volleyball courts in Gurgaon for the match, and started the event early. But they could not finish the final match before dark. Therefore, it was being held today, a Sunday. The market determines much of the social activities among the migrants; almost everybody is busy except on Sundays. The finalists are teams from Noida and Tarkand.

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There are about 200 people surrounding the volleyball court. There is enthusiastic cheer-up, whistling, commentary, desperate advice and admonitions to the player by their supporters. The audience is as much in the game as the players, some even more. Nearby the court are three tables and about a dozen chairs. The trophies are lined up. On the wall is hung a banner announcing that the match is organized by the sports committee of the Delhi State Committee of the All India Nepali People's Unity Forum. This is the sister organization of the Unified Communist Party of Nepal(Maoist), though they are registered as a social organization in India.

The audience is entirely Nepali. Except three among the 200, everybody is a male, including the dozen or so children playing around. The three are affiliated to the organization. I have seen several volleyball matches also organized by other Nepali migrant organizations. The gender composition is remarkably similar to this one, except that there would not be even three women. Like this time, I have also never seen any Madhesi people from Nepal in any of the volleyball matches organized here. Or for that matter, except in precious few migrant organization or events organized by them, are there any Madhesis. There is an unwritten understanding that Prabashi Nepali in India is synonymous with Pahadi Nepali.

There is one man definitely not interested in the match per se. He is a petty trader from Jumla in the high mountainous region of western Nepal. He is squatting in the park, about 50 meters away from the court and the crowd. He has spread several pieces of shilajeet in front of him on the ground. As I chat with him, two curious Nepalis come to ask him about these little black pieces. "It comes straight from the juice of the rocks in very high mountains of Jumla. You just take a pinch, put it in a glass of water, stir and drink. It cures any kind of body ache and impotency." One of the two Nepali wants to buy 40 rupees worth of the stuff. The other bargains for him, "Do not weigh it. Just give a large chunk. You can cheat the dhoti Indians as much as you like, but give it for cheap to our own Nepali." The old man smiles and complies.

He says that he was going around the Nepali settlements in Sarpur since the morning, but nobody bought his shilajeet. He heard there would be a volleyball match in this park and had waited. He says, there are about 200 people from the Sinja region of Jumla stationed under a bridge in Barakhamba road, which is nearby the Nepal Embassy office, one hour drive away from Sarpur. They come every year for about two months during the winter when it is very cold in Jumla. Are there also women in the team? "Oh, no! How can they come?"

Also not interested in the match per se are the two Nepalis busy selling momos and chowmin noodles 50 meters away from the volleyball court. Although the mid-hills of Nepal never had a tradition of eating momos and chowmin noodles until the very recent past, these are considered to be ethnic Nepali food in Delhi, perhaps less so than the Tibetans, but certainly more than rest of the Indians.
In the audience, there are also pradhāns from two other camps. I can also see people from other jhuggi clusters apart from those nearby to the park. Lokesh is there. With him, there is also the chairperson of an organization of the Nepalis from the Far Western Development region. This organization claims that is it a purely cultural organization, not affiliated to any political party in Nepal. Two of them leave early, despite repeated requests by the organizers for them to stay back.

At the end of the match, the trophies for the man of the match, the runner up team and the winning team are presented. But before that, there about 10 officials lined up in the chairs to make speeches. Immediately after the match ends, three quarters of the crowd disperses. Among the rest, the players and their friends are busy talking to each other, and not listening to the speeches. Moreover, there are half-a-dozen Nepali children just behind the stage, chasing each other, shouting in Hindi. This visibly irritates one of the migrant leaders. He calls for order several times, chases away the children, both unsuccessfully.

The crowd however is much more attentive, when the cultural team is called to sing a song. The singing team consists of four men and two of the three women present among the audience. The team members salute with half raised clenched fists to the audience, the team leader makes a speech before the song, explaining how the artists play an important role in revolution, as much as and alongside the sportsmen. The song is about the unfinished revolution in Nepal, to completely destroy the remnants of feudalism, and how the prabashi Nepal is like in the past need to contribute in the future, too.

The team leader asks the audience to clap and some people to come forward and dance. The first, and for some time, the only one who volunteers is a slightly drunk man from the nearby camp. He was in the Nepal police, and ran away during the civil war with the Maoists. The pradhān of his camp had said to me that his wife is very sojho and mihineti, sincere and hardworking, who works in the factory during the day. But he does not work and loafs around drunk all day. Anyway, here he is fully involved in the dance, making dramatic, revolutionary gestures, inviting other people to join, to which two respond. He is a source of embarrassment to some of the leaders lined up on the chair, but the audience is enjoying, some even teasing him.

The speeches are made. As the small audience is further getting thinner, jittery and as it is already about to get dark, the speeches are short. Among those addressing the meeting are the chairman of the Delhi state committee, the sport committee coordinator, the Sarpur area chairman of the organization, an advisor to the all-India central committee of the organization, who is a clerk in a public school nearby Sarpur, but referred to as the “professor” due to his white hair, and the rumor that he had groomed up some top Maoist leaders of Nepal. It is also announced that another man was interested to share his thoughts. He, the announcer says, used to be in the all-India central committee of the organization.
before he left for Nepal and now is in Delhi for some reason, header about the match, and come here, and since he is here, wanted to share his thoughts.

The theme of the speakers are similar. One speaker says that the volleyball match is important, but things should not stop in volleyball match only. “It is a preparation for a fight against remnants of feudalism in Nepal, against Indian expansionism, against imperialism,” he says. Another says that being internationalist, they are not against the working class of India or the workers, but only against Indian expansionism, and calls for the immediate abrogation of the 1950 Indo-Nepal treaty to avoid Sikkimization of Nepal. Another leader says, the revolution in Nepal is on, that prabāshi Nepalis should not rest until a people’s government is fully established in Nepal, so that all the Nepali volleyball players in India can go back to play volleyball in Nepal.

One of the three women present in the park is a leader, sitting on chair, but is not called upon to make speech. The trophies are distributed. Some of the awardees have to be called repeatedly as they are busy chatting outside the main crowd. Some of the players return the revolutionary salute as they receive the trophy, some don’t.

After the ceremony is over, most of the organizers themselves are in a hurry to leave, like the rest of the crowd. Some gather in the little dhābā outside the park, which is owned by a Nepali family, and have tea.

Sarpur has been one of the bastions of Nepali migrant organizations, affiliated to the political parties back home although they are registered as social organizations as per the provisions of the Society Registration Act of India. The migrant organizations work on a different plane from that of the pradhāns, although there is some overlap and sometimes conflict between them. If the pradhāns link the camp residents to the local Indian politicians, and through them, to the low level Indian bureaucracy at the local level, the Nepali migrant organizations link the Nepalis to the wider Nepali community in India, some Indian organizations, but especially to Nepal. They work on a direct transnational plane, culturally, socially and politically.

In this section I argue that the Nepali migrant organizations, by trying to link the Nepalis back home also make prabāsh, the foreign land livable and meaningful. They make transition to foreign living smoother for the first generation migrants, but lose the grip over imagination of the later generations.
It is to be noted that the anti-Rana movement was spearheaded by the transnational Nepalis (see chapter Two). But after the fall of the Ranas in 1951, the centre of gravity of Nepali oppositional politics moved to Nepal. This moved back to India after the establishment of the absolute monarchical panchayat system by king Mahendra in 1960. The political parties were banned in Nepal, and the centrist Nepali congress and communist party leaders and cadres were repressed. They fled to India in large number. The Indian government tolerated Nepali oppositional politics in exile. They started organizing Nepali labor migrant organizations in India.

The leftists established the migrant organization, Prabashi Nepali Sangh, Bharat in 1966. This is now affiliated to the Nepal Communist Party (UML). Among the existing Nepali migrant organizations in India affiliated to political parties in Nepal this is the oldest. It used to be one of the largest among the Nepali organizations till the 1990s. It still claims to be, but the Maoists say they are far ahead of UML in India, like in Nepal. In Sarpur, Prabashi Nepali Sangh is active committee.

B.P. Koirala, the president of Nepali Congress (see Chapter Three), who had fled to exile in the late 1960s, after eight years of imprisonment from 1960, established Nepali Jan Sampark Samiti, Bharat in 1976 in Bombay. There were also a number of similar Nepali organizations registered in India which, apart from working as socio-cultural organizations, also leaned towards Nepali Congress. Over a dozen of them were merged to Nepali Jan Sampark Samiti, Bharat after the reinstatement of democracy in Nepal in 1990. This organization is active in several states of India, and also in Delhi, but does not have its chapter in Sarpur.

There are four main Nepali migrant organizations in India affiliated to the communist parties in Nepal. All the four have their local chapters called Nagar Samiti in Sarpur. Prabashi Nepali Sangh, has had its active presence in Sarpur since the mid-1980. The first left Nepali migrant organization to be set up after the Panchayat regime was Akhil Bharat Nepali Ekta Samaj (All India Nepali Unity Society). It was established in 1979 in Benaras. This was affiliated to the Nepali communist groups that were pro-China or Maoists in their ideological leanings.
But there was soon a split in the leadership of the mother party in Nepal. This was reflected in the migrant organization in India. In 1985, one of the factions convened a "national convention" in Delhi which the other faction did not recognize and instead conducted its own in national convention in Calcutta in 1986. They both retained the same name Akhil Bharat Nepali Ekta Samaj, but one side was called the Delhi Group, and the other the Calcutta Group (the mother party of which was to later become the present day Maoists, which started the armed struggle in Nepal in 1996).

The Indian government banned the Nepali migrant organization affiliated to the Maoist, Akhil Bharat Nepali Ekta Samaj (Calcutta Group) in July 2002. The Indian government had declared the Nepali Maoists as terrorists by then. But they did not arrest the leadership or cadres of this organization, although some claim they were reportedly kept surveillance. They simply started operating under a different name called the Nepali Jana Adhikar Surakshya Samiti, Bharat from the same month their older organization was banned. This is the name under which they operated till February 2009, when they changed it to Akhil Bharat Nepali Ekta Manch (All India Nepali Unity Forum). This was done after the Maoists in Nepal merged with another fringe party and changed their name from Nepali Communist Party (Maoist) to Unified Nepali Communist Party (Maoist). This organization also has its committees all over India, except in some north-east Indian states, according to its leaders. In Sarpur, they have an active committee.

One of the leaders of the Akhil Bharat Nepali Ekta Samaj (Delhi Group) said, since they had the same name, there was greater risk to the Delhi Group, which has not been involved in armed insurgency and instead has remained an arch opponent of the Maoists throughout, as being confused with the Maoists. So they added Mul Prabaha (the Mainstream) to their official name in their fifth all-India national convention held in Hyderabad in 2002. So the name became, Mul Prabaha Akhil Bharat Nepali Ekta Samaj since then. One central committee leader says, "we were the mainstream anyway, so we changed the name this way."
The mother party of the “Mainstream” in Nepalis one of the fringe parties in Nepal, now much smaller than the Maoists or other parties. But in India, it is perhaps one of the most disciplined, committed and networked organization. Indeed, they have a much stronger base in India than in Nepal. The central committee members claim that they have their chapters in all the states of India except one, Arunachal, even where they claim to have “contacts.”

There have been mergers and splints in the pro-China communist parties in Nepal, too numerous to detail here. Of direct interest to us, because of the differences in the leadership of the mother party of Mul Prabah, local factionalism in their organization started appearing in 2006. This was when almost all the committee members of the local chapter in Sarpur formed their own new committee, which was to become the present day Nepali Ekta Samaj Bharat. Mul Prabha in the meanwhile reconstituted its committee in Sarpur. It is not as active as the other committees in Sarpur, but it is there.

Nepali Ekta Samaj, Bharat is affiliated to an extremely small party in Nepal called Nepali Communist Party (Unified), but in Sarpur, Nepali Ekta Samaj is perhaps the most active and effective among all the four Nepali migrant organizations. Sarpur has a large number of migrants from the Magar ethnic group. The NCP (United) is led by a Magar leader. The majority of the politically active Magars in Sarpur support the new organization Nepali Ekta Samaj, Bharat. This fact is recognized by leaders of all the organizations.

Legally, the Nepali migrant organization in India have no relation with their mother parties in Nepal. They are registered as social organizations as per the provisions of the Society Registration Act of India. They are in many ways social organizations which I will describe below. How then are they linked to the Nepali parties institutionally?

All the organizations have their constitution and their organizational structures, membership criteria, membership fee may differ. Here I present a simplified organizational arrangement which is an “average” picture.

A Nepali migrant can become a member of the organization with a nominal fee, ranging from Rs. 1 to Rs. 10 per month. When a sufficient number of people in an area become members, some official already existing committee members form a local level
committee. The local committee is called by different names as per the provisions of the constitution of the organization. When several local committees are formed, then they get the status of what is called the Nagar Samiti. Various Nagar Samitis are accountable to the committee above it, usually called the Rajya Samiti, or the Delhi state level committee. This is accountable to either a regional committee above it or directly to the all Indian level central committee. The all India level central committee is accountable to the foreign department of the mother party in Nepal, which in turn is accountable to the central committee of the party.

It is to be noted that the demarcation of the migrant organizations are not isomorphic with the administrative divisions of India. For instance, the Delhi State committee might include parts of UP and Haryana states. The Sarpur Nagar Committee of the organization extends beyond Sarpur to include several other neighboring localities, which is different for different organizations. These demarcations are reorganized by the organizations from time to time according to the social geography of the Nepali migrants as well as the strength of the respective organizations.

The weightage given to the Nepali migrant organization by the mother party in Nepal varies. The weightage means the proportion of voting delegates the central committee of the migrant organizations can send in the party elections or meetings. For instance, the Nepali Congress gives the Nepali Jan Sampark Samiti the weightage as one of the 205 electoral constituencies. But the UML gives the its sister migrant organization the same weightage as one of the 14 zonal committees in Nepal. The UCPN (Maoist) gives its sister organization the same weightage as the one of its 13 state committees in Nepal.

The migrant organizations have their own sister organizations in India as well. For instance, some of them have Nepali migrant student organizations, and youth or women’s or ethnic organization, that are autonomous but coordinated by their sisterly organization in Nepal and by the main migrant organization in India. The state committees or the Nagar Committees in turn can form sports and cultural sub-committees. But there is no uniformity across the migrant organizations about these sisterly committees and sub-
committees. For instance, the Mul Prabah had different sisterly committees but all were merged into the mother body by the all-India national convention in 2009.

It was the sports committee under the Delhi State Committee of the Maoist affiliated Akhil Bharat Nepali Ekta Manch that organized the volleyball tournament in described above, and the cultural sub-committee which performed the song.

The interaction between the senior leaders of the Nepali migrant organizations and the mother party in Nepalis very dense. There are continuous organizational meetings, conventions, programs at the local, state, regional or national levels in India where not only the migrant leaders from other parts come, but usually also the central leaders of the mother parties who come as "chief guest", or "special guests" to "address" or "inaugurate" the functions.

But a place like Sarpur is a privileged site for all the left migrant organizations. One, it is located in Delhi, the capital of India where Nepali party leaders like to come often for political consultations, health checkups, or "organizational-work." It is an industrial area where the Nepali labor migrants have been present in large numbers since the early 1980s, the time around which Nepali migrant organizations were established and expanding.

The local migrant leaders of all the four organizations named the central committee members of their mother parties who have been to Sarpur for präśikchhyan, ideological lectures, or for informal visits, or in the case of the Maoists, to stay underground during the armed movement in Nepal.

All the major Nepali migrant organizations have their publications, special issues, periodic magazines, including monthly papers or weekly papers. The Maoists once had even their daily paper. Not everyone in Sarpur subscribes to them, but the main migrant leaders do. Apart from those published in Delhi, the material published in Nepal by the mother parties are also distributed to the local leaders.

Of course, Nepal being close to Delhi, the constant to and fro movement of the migrants, or their family members, friends, party members, between Nepal and India means that
information on Nepalis easily available those interested to know. Moreover, there is a transnational television channel, which calls itself Nepal 1, but owned by an Indian and based in Delhi with a branch office in Kathmandu, which is accessible to the migrants living in the rented rooms as well as the jhuggis. Apart from broadcasting Nepali and regional cultural shows, this has an hourly news bulletin and other political programs which keeps those interested up to date with Nepali politics.

Due to such linkages, one can find many Nepali labor migrants in Sarpur Industrial Area who are highly politically informed and involved. There is great competition among the four migrant organizations to expand or retain their influence among the Nepali migrants. This makes some of the local migrant leaders as well as lay migrants very sharp debaters not only about Nepali politics but also the Indian and global issues.

Sometimes it was unavoidable for me to maintain my “neutrality” as a researcher and confine myself to the safe and privileged (and easier) position of an interviewer. I was pestered or even cornered many times with questions such as these: “What party do you a member of/vote for/support?”; “what do you think of the budget speech in the Nepali parliament yesterday?”; “which federal model and state restructuring agenda proposed by the parties do you like?”; “what do you think about the 1950 treaty between India and Nepal?”; “what do you think will be the impact of the global financial crisis for Nepal?”, or, “what do you think of the possibility of revolution in South Asia?”.

I will discuss in the next chapter that there are limitations and even disadvantages for the labor migrants due to their entanglements in transnational politics, and that not everyone likes to be involved in politics. But it is due to these migrant organization that transnational citizenship, at least at the discursive level, is possible for the Nepali labor migrants in Nepal. For some of those fully involved in the politics, there have been greater opportunities back in Nepal.

Local leaders of all the four migrant organizations list out the people, if not from Sarpur, but definitely from other parts of Delhi, or India who started their political career as migrant activists in India but have become the “who’s who” of Nepali politics back home. From among the residents of Sarpur jhuggi itself, one has become a Member of
Parliament, the other the party In-Charge of one of the districts in Nepal. There are just too many to list from other parts of India. Some famous examples include: one of the two top most Maoist leaders, Dr. Baburam Bhattarai, who became the finance minister of Nepal, and who started his political career as a Nepali migrant students leaders in India; he was also a frequent visitor to Sarpur during his days as a Ph.D. student at JNU in the 1980s, the Sarpur migrants recall proudly. Another migrant student leader in India, Shankar Pokhrel has become minister for information and communication representing UML.

But what are the local advantages for the members and leaders of the Nepali migrant organizations? When I asked the question, “how /why you got involved in Nepali migrant organizations?”, and “how has it been useful to you personally?”, there were some interesting responses.

One man said, “I am a communist by blood. My father was a committed communist since the 1960s. We in the family have been very careful in our marriages. We marry only with communist families. I had to come to India for work. The migrant organization has provided a forum for me to get involved in communist politics all my life.” He completed his high school from Banaras, came to Delhi and found a job as a clerk in a high school, nearby Sarpur. He has been involved in Nepali migrant organization since the last 27 years, and is now an Advisor to the central committee of one of the bigger Nepali migrant organizations. He has a reputation among the Nepali migrant activists in Sarpur as the top intellectual and some even call him “the professor.” His white hair, dress up and senior age perhaps contributes to the image. There are very few Nepalis in and around the Sarpur Industrial Area who have passed high-school, so relatively, he is a “highly educated” man.

For many Nepali migrants of such middle background, the Nepali migrant organizations may be the only institutions which provide an egalitarian space in hierarchical and impersonal city that treats the poor, migrants, low level workers as non-persons, or even pathological particles. With sufficient hard work, longevity of association, good relations with leaders higher up, one can move up the hierarchy, and exercise power over other
members of the organization. The leaders are provided special chairs in the ceremonies, they are publicly praised, they are marked and announced with special titles such as the Advisor to the Central Committee, the President of the Delhi State Committee, the In-Charge of Sports Committee, a Noted Intellectual, and so on. As we shall see in next chapter, they can use the power of the organization and become the virtual transnational state over the transnational Nepalis. And as we saw already, for those in the leadership position, the connections developed with the leadership in Nepal can be used to get jobs for relatives, and some can hope to become the local, district, regional or even national leaders themselves.

The migrant organizations indeed resist (even if not always successful) the Nepali pradhāns if they become oppressive as we noted in the case study of Anu Rai. Indeed, the migrant organizations also provide a base for some leaders to be recognized by the local Indian leaders as the representatives of the Nepali migrants and potential block vote mobilizers. Bishal Thapa, the most politically connected man in Sarpur jhuggis admits this was the case with him. Indeed, the migrant leaders influence the making of the pradhāns in some cases.

But what about the benefits for the lay members who are not interested to be “whole-timer” politicians? Certain responses recur. One is, “I could not speak before people. After joining the sangathan, I have become confident.” They get plenty of space to express themselves, they participate in prāsikchhyan, they go out convincing people to join the organization, they are drawn into debates with rival organizations and hone up their debating skill.

The second one is, “the sangathan makes you disciplined.” The migrant organizations have a formal and informal codes of conduct to discourage its members from gambling, and (excessive) drinking. In practice, people do violate them, but some organizations can be strict about them. The organizations keep the members busy during the weekends. It is during these weekends that the organizations organize inter-party meetings, or public programs such as the volleyball match described above. “The organizations kept me busy
so I did not have time to drink and play cards even if I wanted to," explained one man who said his life had been indisciplined once he left the sangathan.

The sangathan helps the members in crisis, when one is sick and needs attendants at hospital, or needs blood, money as donation or loan and so on. The sangathan members are also safer from other community members as they have the backing of an organization should they be bullied, threatened, attacked. The sangathan becomes a source of social and physical security, which is important in the context of the absence of the state in the lives of migrants which I pointed out in Chapter Four.

Like with the leaders, the sangathan also provides to the members a sense of belonging and power, and connects them to the home community culturally and politically. It makes one at least a virtual citizen of Nepal.

What about the benefits the organizations offer to the wider community of Nepali migrants? As I pointed out, there is a great deal of competition among the organizations to establish their image as the most genuine representatives of Nepali migrants and committed fighters for their cause. For this, they take up causes from very personal to highly political.

The organization leaders are always ready to mediate inter-personal disputes among the Nepali migrants. Mostly they are approached, but they are also proactive. The local leader of the Nepali Ekta Samaj, Bharat says that there is rarely a week when he does not have to mediate such disputes. “People call me even during mid-night,” he says. “Sometimes, I have to close my shop for the whole day to resolve such disputes. But when you in the sangathan, you should not say no. You are here to serve the people,” he says.

What are the types of disputes they mediate? “You know, Nepali men love to drink. And that creates fights,” say another migrant leader. When men drink, they may get into fight with each other. But drinking also creates fights within the family. The wife is unhappy with a drunkard husband and picks up a quarrel, or the husband beats wife and children after drinking.
There is a lot of informal lendings and borrowings among the Nepali migrants. Formal credit is not accessible to them. Some borrowers refuse to acknowledge that they borrowed at all, others say they will pay back but later, others run away and the family members who have stayed back refuse to take any responsibility, while some refuse outright to pay back. Going to the police is not considered an option for an overwhelming majority. The police demands a cut from both sides. The migrant organizations are approached, with a formal request, like that written to the police.

Most of such disputes and dispute resolution techniques are not new. What is more recent is the disputes related to transnational migration beyond India. One manpower agent estimated that there are around 500 Nepali agents like him in Delhi. He cited different reasons for this. One, there are larger manpower agents in India from whom the Nepalis can get sub-contracts. Two, flight from Delhi is cheaper than from Kathmandu. Three, the political instability, insecurity and demands for donations from political groups in Nepal has forced people like him to leave the country. Four, one can fly out from Delhi without registering with the government, which is not the case with those doing so from Kathmandu. Five, manpower agents have got into formal and informal trouble in Nepal such as trafficking, or swindling money, or for cases of fake visas, etc, and they have run away to Delhi. Six, there is a large Nepali population is Delhi that desires to go for foreign labor employment. And seven, it is sometimes easier to be outside the gaze of law and police in Delhi than in Nepal.

The migrant organizations in Delhi, particularly the one affiliated to the Maoists, but also Mul Prabah to some extent, report to be receiving an increasing number of complaints related to problems of such transnational migration. They trace the agents, kidnap them if necessary, torture them sometimes; and make them pay back the money. One Maoist migrant leader in Rampuri near Sarpur said, that they not only make the fraud manpower agents pay back the money to the victim, but also sometimes “confiscate” computers and office equipments from the agent “which is useful for our office,” he says proudly. The migrant organizations sometimes take a portion of money from the agent as well as the victim. The agent is forced to agree. The victim willingly agrees. It is better to get something than to lose everything. Going to the police might cost more.
I asked a manpower agent who was kidnapped twice by one of the migrant organizations, and kept in captivity, and beaten up, once for a day and another time for a week, why he had not complained to the police.

We do not complain to the police, because, we are Nepalis and we need to resolve our problems internally. But you know, we have made some mistakes. This business is such that you have to sometimes do illegal things. It is not good to be on the record of the police. Moreover, the police demands money, a lot of money to resolve things.

The other reason he gave for not going to the police is that the migrant organization has its network in Nepal. “They might do something to my family member. My father got to know about my kidnap. He was worried. But after release I telephoned him and asked him not to worry. I lied to him and said, they had treated me very well.”

It is such vulnerability of the “criminals” that the migrant organizations exploit to “deliver justice” to the victims.

Bypassing the police is also common in other cases. One migrant leader in Sarpur said, “the Indian police does not move an inch without money. The poor people do not want to go to the police as far as possible. The police does not care about justice to the poor people. Even the Indians. It is even more true for the Nepalis.”

In serious cases, when the police has to be involved, such as in serious injuries during fights, or more so in case of murder. But most of the Nepali migrants prefer to go through the migrant organizations (or pradhāns, or local Indian politicians, or all of them together) when they have to. For instance, around the end of March 2010, the younger brother of a Nepali migrant in Tarkand nearby Sarpur strangled and nearly killed his wife when she refused to have sex with him when the brother was away. This man called the Maoist affiliated organization leaders. They went there, beat him up seriously (and the son of the landlord also joined in the beating) and then delivered him to the police.

The local leader of the Nepali Ekta Samaj told the way they operated to free trafficked or “kidnapped” Nepali girls. One involved a 14-year old Nepali girl in Sarpur. She fell in love with a Muslim boy and he took her to his home some 600 kilometers away from Delhi. The parents of the girl complained to the organization. “She was just 14, and
therefore, she could not be informed choice. It was a kidnap case. She could be abused and sold,” he said when I asked him whether it was a normal case of elopement. The boy’s father was a migrant worker and lived in Sarpur. “We took him under control and got details of his home address.” Then they went to the police and asked for help to return the girl. But, he said, “The police said, that is a dangerous area. That is a Muslim area where everyone has weapon. We can’t help you in this case. Then we decided to do something by ourselves. We hired a jeep. Eight people from our organization drove all night long. We found the house, told them that the police is also coming, so they better handover the girl. We tricked them. It was dangerous, but we did it.”

Another case involved two girls from Nepal who were trafficked by a Nepali man. The parents complained to the mother party of the Nepali Ekta Samaj in Nepal and said they had information that the man had taken them to some place around Sarpur. The mother party informed the Nepali Ekta Samaj. “We investigated through our channel, and found out that the man has rented a room nearby Sarpur. We surrounded the house at night, informed the owner of the house who cooperated with us. We captured the man. The girls said he had been repeatedly raping them. He acknowledged. We did not hand him over to the Indian police. We took him to Nepal and handed him over to the Nepal police. We handed over the girls to the parents.”

The migrant organizations are this like an alternative state in different ways in terms of delivering justice, in the context of the inaccessible formal justice system for the Nepali migrants.

The migrant organizations also play crucial social-cultural roles for the Nepali migrants. The migrant organizations use Sundays generally but necessarily the Indian national holidays of October 2 (Gandhi’s birth anniversary), August 15 (Independence Day), and January 26 (Republican Day) to organize sports competition, mainly volleyball, which is much more popular in the Nepal hills than in India where cricket is way too much popular. The volleyball match above was played by the supporters of the Maoists. The spectators in the above match were not only Maoist supporters. But other organizations organize such tournaments which are open to non-members as well.
The other popular events organized by the Nepali migrant organizations are the cultural programs. They bring famous artists from Nepal to perform in some halls nearby Sarpur or other places in Delhi.

Deepawali, the festival of light, is celebrated with much fanfare in India. In Nepal, this festival is called Tihar, which is differently celebrated than in India. One difference is that the Nepalis go around houses in group with songs and dance to play deusi or bhailo. The families where it is performed gives money, rice and sweets to the group.

The festival of Teej which takes place around September is a major women’s festival in Nepal, but not so in India. This is the day when the women, especially the wives, fast for the long life of the husband.

In Sarpur, these festivals are celebrated with much enthusiasm. The left parties formally criticize religion, and especially the traditional festival of Teej as being a patriarchal festival. However, they try to “use” it, giving it a revolutionary flavor. The women are encouraged to sing revolutionary, anti-patriarchal songs. Whatever the modifications, the migrant organizations are very active in all the three festivals. The deusi bhailo program in particular is used by these organizations to perform Nepali songs and dances, though giving them revolutionary flavor.

In such programs, the migrant organizations and the general Nepali migrants mutually “use” each other. The migrant organizations use programs such as deusi bhailo and cultural programs to raise funds. These and other public events gather many people. The organization leaders get a large audience where they can make speeches, provide space to the organizers to project themselves as leaders. They use these events to convey larger political messages. In the volleyball match above, they said this game is not merely about volleyball match. It is also an event to think about and oppose imperialism, Indian expansionism. It is about preparing for a revolution in Nepal, through the most authentic organization that is the mother party of the organization.

These events, performances and practices are also the production and reproduction sites of Nepaliness. In and through such events, the Nepalis, and mostly only Nepalis, are brought together. The migrant organizations can do this much more effectively than the
pradhāns. The pradhāns as we saw play a crucial role for the Nepali migrants, especially related to individual camps, dealing with local leaders, and through them with the local police and lower level state bureaucracy. But they are narrowly confined within the camps. The migrant organizations have a broader reach and outlook. They connect and bring together the Nepalis from different camps and rented rooms around Sarpur and beyond. As we saw in the volleyball match, there were Nepali migrants from not only neighboring areas, but also people from the media, from other organizations and other areas of Delhi.

Their networks all over India and even Nepal (and also in dozens of countries beyond India where there are active chapters of migrant organizations affiliated to political parties) makes them effective channels.

The migrant organizations also have relations with the Indian organizations, particularly some trade unions, and through them Indian human rights organizations or political parties. This was the case when the Nepali camp was demolished in 1994. They have also developed links with the lower level Indian bureaucracy and police. These connections are used to resolve minor cases.

When Nepalis were stereotyped and denied the right to fair criminal justice process, the migrant organizations oppose them. When Nepalis are attacked in the north-east, they oppose that. They write petitions to the Indian Home Ministry, the External Affairs Ministry, and also pressure the Nepali Embassy to make official moves with the Indian government. They organize press conferences, seminars and demonstrations. As mentioned before, they can get some of their demands raised in the Nepali parliament through their mother parties.

The pradhāns' role is mostly integrating the Nepali society to the Indian polity. The Nepali migrant organizations on the other hand, aggressively promote Nepali nationalism.

**JHUGGIS AS GLOBAL NODES**

In a broad sense, there are few places and cultures untouched by globalization. Religion and modernity have always been transnational or translocal phenomena. In the age of
mass media, print as well as electronic, the global signs, symbols and discourses touch most of the nooks and corners of the globe. Almost all the huts in the jhuggi have television sets with cable connections. So it is not uncommon to find people talking about the attacks on Indian students in Australia or the American attack in Iraq.

Sarpur Industrial Area has many factories that most camp residents call ‘espot’ [localized form for ‘export’] or ‘garment’ factory. That is where most of the Nepali men, but especially the women, work. One of the Nepalis who has been working in such an espot garment factory took me for a tour inside the factory one Sunday, when the owner was not there but the factory was half open with people doing the extra time work. In one room which was locked he said, “there was a big screen installed eight months ago. The owners’ son is in London. He appears on screen. And also some foreign clients appear on it. The father and the manager show them the clothes and designs from here. It is amazing. It is as if they are all in one room,” he explains to me. In the tour, he explains to me that most of the clothes come from China. Some come from Korea and Sri Lanka. The order comes from mostly London, but also from other European countries. Of course, some the labor comes from Nepal as well. This is globalization.

In a more concrete way that directly touches the lives and imaginations of the labor migrants in the jhuggis of Sarpur is the labor migration to the Gulf Countries or East Asia. I have found many families in the jhuggis of Sarpur who have either one of their family members or relatives gone to one of the Gulf countries or to East Asia, especially to Malaysia.

One of the rickshaw drivers says he had brought about a dozen men from his village to Delhi over these years, but none except him is in Delhi. Most have gone back to Nepal, and some, including his younger brother, have gone to Malaysia as laborers. He himself hopes to get a visa one day to go to Malaysia. He says, he also sometimes plans to go back to Nepal for good, and wait for going to Malaysia there. He hopes his younger brother will send him a visa one day soon.
Sanat works on and off between a security guard. His brother is in Qatar. Sanat has thought about going to the one of the Gulf countries but he now thinks he is too entangled with his nuclear family to be able to do that.

Bishnu Pandey, the *dhābā* owner who eventually went back to Nepal during my fieldwork period, is very proud of his elder son. Bishnu’s son in law had gone to Qatar. He then sent visa to Bishnu’s son, who had come to help him in the *dhābā* after he appeared for the high school exam, SLC. Bishnu’s son-in-law sent a visa and his son flew to Qatar. “He sends home 40,000 Nepali rupees every month,” says Bishnu.

Bishnu sold the *Dhābā* in April to a Nepali, who had worked as a cook for some Bollywood stars in Mumbai including Manisha Koirala. It was through their help that he got a visa to go to one of the Gulf countries. But he had to come back to Nepal as his father died. He is planning to go back again if he gets a good job. In the meantime, he will try his business luck with the *dhābā*.

Bishnu Saru managed to get a visa for one of his brothers to one of the Gulf countries. His brother developed a good relation with his employers. He sends visa through Bishnu. Bishnu counted 22 men from the Palpali Camp who went to the Gulf region in the last three years. His brother had sent 45 visas. The rest had gone from Nepal. Bishnu introduced to me a boy who had just come from Nepal and said that he was waiting for his flight to the Gulf region.

Sanju has started sending people abroad professionally. He says he has sent around 20 Nepalis for foreign labor employment. One of his relatives in the gulf region organizes visas. He sends people from Nepal, mostly his relatives, to the gulf region. “I have friends in Nepal, who have computer. I send them e-mail. He is one of the extremely few persons I met in the jhuggis of Sarpur who uses the internet.

He explains the difference between working in India and going abroad, “There is no guarantee of job here. If you get a job, there is no guarantee of getting accommodation. There is no job security. In *bidesh*, the company provides you accommodation.” He adds the advantage of going to *bidesh*, “The dream to go to *bidesh* is also fulfilled. You can
also earn money [*Bidesh jane sapna pani purā hunchha. Paisā pani kamauna sakchha.*] There is three years guarantee.” He give a concrete example, One of my cousin brothers used to work in a hotel here. He said, Brother, I want to go to *Bidesh.* I asked, where do you want to go? He said Oman. He sends home 20,000 rupees every month. Here, he used to earn 4,000 rupees per month. He then goes on to present a general picture: “When a Nepali come here, his maximum starting salary will be 4,000 rupees per month. 1200/1000 rupees he has to spend on room rent. Rice 22 rupees per kilo. Flour is 17 rupees per kilo. Cooking oil is 60/70 rupees per liter. What will he eat? What will he save? What will he send home? [*Ke khanchha, ke bachuchha, ghar ke pathāuchha?*]”

It is not only economic factors that are at work, but also some sociological ones, according to Sanju.

My own uncle’s two sons are in Qatar. Before they left, they used to work in hotels here for 1500, 2000, 2500 rupees per month. Today, see, they have built a house [in Nepal] with 6-7 lakhs. That too within two years. They worked here for seven years. They could not do anything. Could they do what they have done now had they been in Hindustan? Not at all. Because, the liquor shops are open here. Everything is open here. “What the fu..k if i don’t go for duty? The maximum they’ll do is fire me. They might shout at me. I can always find another job. They won’t kill me. They won’t cut me down.” If they take the job as a job seriously, they could also do something in Hindustan. But they get freedom in Hindustan. You stay where you want to. You eat what you want. You spit where you want to. You go where you want to. It is not like this in *Bidesh.*

Because there is freedom here [*yaha ta ājōdi chha.*] One can do whatever one wants to. He can gamble. He can go to prostitutes. [*Juwa khelna sakchha, randi baji garna sakchha.*] This is banned in bidesh. People cannot do such things even if they want to. Some people do that. But a thinking man will think: Look, I have come here after spending so much money...

People from the janajati background, the traditional Gurkhas, are more familiar with people going to UK, Hong Kong, Singapore for security services. Khem Bahadur as we might recall is seriously planning to send his son to London through one of his relatives who went there as a British Gurkha.
Conclusion

Since the 1990s, due to a range of factors, from the changing slum policies to the introduction of the local electoral politics, jhuggis have become more “livable” places, compared to the period before these developments. The jhuggis have opened up spaces for the Nepali migrants to become national citizens of both Nepal and India. And there are intermediary institutions, notably the pradhâns, Nepali migrant organizations, that have an interest in serving the jhuggi dwellers even if that happens in a limited way. It then appears that the Nepali jhuggi-dwellers can have the best of both worlds. Even the transnational labor markets beyond the subcontinent in the Gulf region or Malaysia, and imaginations about them, are accessible for the Nepali jhuggi-dwellers. But are there flip sides of the national and transnational lives, too? This is what I discuss in the next chapter.