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Slum clearance in Madras City - General description of the slum problems and comparative study of the ways of life of those who are in the city and in the slums and those ex-slum dwellers who have been rehabilitated to pucca tenements.



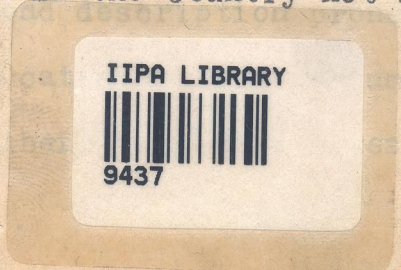
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I had gone to Madras for <sup>a</sup> study of the Slum Clearance and environmental improvement of the existing slums in Madras.

One of the well-known Statesmen described slums as a Blot <sup>on</sup> of any civilized society. It is very hard to imagine the impact of such living conditions on human-beings. It cannot be denied that our country after Independence has been moving forward working towards self-sufficiency in the fields of food and clothing. We may with pardonable pride feel relieved though not completely happy, that we have been able to make every substantial progress towards self-sufficiency in the matter of food and clothing. In spite of these remarkable achievements we still feel troubled by our age-old social problems which we have not been able to solve. Though we find that certain sections of the community in the Nation are very happily placed economically and socially, still yet another section in the same area is waging a war with poverty unable to find even adequate means of satisfying the dire necessity of food for the children even.

Perhaps, the rapid rate of industrialisation and urbanisation besides the failure of the monsoons and drought conditions existing in the agricultural villages of our country have generated new problems and intensified some of the old ones. The slum-problem is one among them. There is hardly a city or town in the country not affected by this problem.

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Cities like Bombay, Calcutta, Delhi and Madras have along with its credit of successful industrialisation and urbanisation have also the problem of a sizable portion of the urban population living in depressing conditions of poverty, misery, juvenile delinquency, crime and prostitution.

It is, no doubt, very disheartening to see these slum dwellers living in utter despair in the most unhygienic surroundings opposite the ditches on the road-side like worms and insects even struggling for space in grave-yard and burial-ground bringing up their children, the future citizens of India in the most callous atmosphere with depressed mental anguish. It may even be said that the men in the slums may not even mind these conditions to some extent because they feel they can lead a lazy perverted lives indulging in all subversive activities and at times earning easy money for their own pleasures, fun and frolic. But it is the women-folk who really struggle to run the family, to maintain the house-hold, bring up the children and even starve for days and nights together and are very eager and anxious to change over to acceptable conditions in society where they could also have a hope in which their off-springs can be brought up as admissible citizens open to education, social recognition and with the hope to improve their economic conditions where they can live without want, if not amass wealth.

In order to appreciate adequately the change that has to be brought about in the lives of <sup>a</sup> large number of slum-dwellers it is necessary to have an idea of the living conditions that exist in slums. Almost all the slums are made up of thatched huts, insanitary beyond description prone to leakage in rains and susceptible of catching fire in summer. This is how the slum dwellers live their tormented lives from birth to death. In

any democratic society where such a large segment of society lives in the most abject surroundings and at the mercy of all the elements, the Government cannot afford to neglect them.

Slums are a result of vast but unplanned growth of urban areas. With the rapid pace of industrial development, the demand for skilled and unskilled labour is so great that there is a continuous migration from rural to urban areas. Added to this, there is an army of job-seekers, who, because of the rural unemployment move towards urban areas hoping to get jobs in some industry or other. Those who succeed in getting employment have to stay in the city and those who do not succeed immediately have also to continue to stay in city in search of employment. Therefore, the slums have become permanent features in the city with these persons who are employed both in the organised sector as well as in the un-organised sector as unskilled labour. While society <sup>derives</sup> ~~drives~~ full benefit of economic development that go side by side with urban growth we must admit that enough investment had not been made so far in this country for providing decent living accommodation with minimum conditions of environment and sanitation in the urban areas to these migrants.

If you look at it merely from the economic point of view, investment in slum clearance and housing the slum dwellers in buildings newly erected may not be a remunerative investment. But it has to be looked at from the point of view of our social responsibility to a class of people, whose services are indispensable for the society's upkeep and also economic development. The responsibility is not only that of the Government, but also of the various sectors.....

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Both the Central and State Governments are aware of <sup>the</sup> ~~this~~ slum problem and the necessity for pursuing programmes of slum clearance and slum improvements with vigour as an essential part of the minimum needs programme.

While slum clearance is recognised to be the ultimate objective, slum improvement is considered as an immediate alternative to alleviate human sufferings. The Government has also realised that steps should be taken to provide to the maximum extent for rehabilitation of the urban poor in healthy and planned colonies making the best possible use of limited resources. While slum clearance is the ultimate objective, there were some main difficulties in pursuing the slum clearance programme because of

- i) high costs and constraints of resources and
- ii) a low rent paying capacity of the slum dwellers considering even the subsidised rent as too high.

While environmental improvement of the existing slums will to some extent solve the problems of the slum dwellers yet it cannot bring about more than marginal satisfaction. That is why Tamil Nadu Govt. had decided in Sept, 70 to tackle the slum problem on a massive scale on the basis of <sup>a</sup> ~~the~~ schedule laying emphasis on clearance rather than on slum improvements. It was the aim of the Govt. of Tamil Nadu to clear all the slums in the city

within target period of 7 years. To tackle this gigantic problem, a high power statutory board was formed in 1970 and named as "Tamil Nadu Slum Clearance Board". An Act called Tamil Nadu Slum Areas (Act) "Improvement and Clearance" was passed to give wide powers to the Slum Clearance Board in the task of clearing slums and for bringing the growth of new slums. This is the first slum clearance Board to be formed in India. The Board had a non-official as

construction of tenements for the slum dwellers.

In addition, <sup>(6)</sup> the construction of tenements for which the Tamil Nadu Government has gone ahead <sup>a</sup> ~~alongway~~, their policy is also to provide other environmental and domestic facilities, like health, educational facilities, nutrition programme, women welfare, etc. etc. These kind of facilities are extended to see that the residents have all the necessary amenities for a comfortable life and also a healthy life free from hunger and disease, etc. For this purpose, several social service organisations, voluntary health organisations, etc. are rendering their necessary help.

Having given a general account of the slum clearance programme of the Tamil Nadu Government, the specific aspect which I wanted to study was whether the people living in the tenements are happy with the accommodation provided to them as also other facilities provided to them. While giving a pucca constructed accommodation to a slum dweller is almost a boon to him, This by itself will not bring about full satisfaction unless other infra-structural facilities and other amenities are also provided to him. This is the first aspect. The second aspect was that I wanted to make a comparative study of those who still continue to live in the slums and those who have been rehabilitated to built-in tenements in the last three years. By this comparative study,

I wanted to find out whether the change from slum environment to tenements has brought in a change in the life style, behaviour and attitude of the families living there. The area selected by me for the study of the tenement, was Kurunanidhi Nagar Colony where there are about 400 tenements. I took 50 households for my survey. I chose this colony because the tenements living there have been rehabilitated from various slums in various areas and so it is a composite colony. For the study of the slums, I again took 50 house-holds for this survey in Shivalinga Colony. In this colony very good environmental improvements have been made in the sense that each hut has a bath room and a latrine separately. The roads and lanes around the area are also fairly good and the street lighting arrangements are also satisfactory.

The main idea of choosing of Shivalinga Colony was that except that the people are in <sup>huts</sup> huts and without <sup>home</sup> electricity <sup>they are</sup> having almost all the environmental facilities.

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The method adopted by me for getting the necessary data and opinions was the interview method with the help of a questionnaire. In addition ~~a~~ group discussion <sup>was</sup> ~~was~~ <sup>was</sup> also held with some representatives of both the slum dwellers as well as those living in the tenements. The representatives included a male head of the family, a female member of the family ~~and~~ an old aged man, a school-going boy and also a local leader. A copy of the questionnaire prepared and used by me is at Annexure I. The same questionnaire was adopted both for the living tenements as well as the slum dwellers. Except for one or two minor questions, <sup>which</sup> may be applicable only to those living in the tenements, Others are applicable to both. Through the questionnaire, the facts like the family size, the educational qualifications, economic status, details of migration etc. were collected. In addition to that, the opinions regarding the satisfaction of housing conditions neighbourhood, educational facilities, leisure and recreation, health, nutrition, family life and social and community outlook were obtained. Before we analyse and compare the attitudes of the slum dwellers and those living in the tenements, I proceeded with my survey with two hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1: Those living in the tenements will be happier only if environmental amenities and facilities as also recreation are provided to them and not merely if they are given a good house to live in.

Hypothesis 2: Those living in the tenements have a more progressive way of life with changed attitudes because of better environment. There is better family

and community life in the tenements than existing in the slums.

Table I below gives the comparative size of the family of those living in the tenements and slums.

TABLE I.

(Size of the family in percentage.)

	Tenements.	Slums.
Single member.	2.8	0.8
2 to 3 members.	31.6	27.4
4 to 6 members.	47.2	49.1
7 to 9 members.	12.5	14.7
10 and above.	5.9	8.0

It can be seen that in both the cases, the maximum percentage of house-holds is 4 to 6. The average size of the family in the case of tenements was 4.75 and in the case of slums it is 5.9. It was found that most of the slum families <sup>are</sup> ~~or~~ joint families <sup>and</sup> due to want of accommodation the in-laws live with them. In the general survey conducted for all the slums in the city of Madras, it was found that the size of the slum family had increased from 4.21 in 1961 to 4.50 in 1971. It appears that this is mainly due to the fact that only 0.54% of the slum dwellers in the age group of 25 to 59 have under gone family planning treatment.

Table II below gives the comparative position of educational qualifications of the slum ~~and~~ dwellers and tenement dwellers.