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# **Cities, Rural Migrants & the Urban Poor-II**

## **Migration & the Urban Question in Mumbai**

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**Cities, Rural Migrants and the Urban Poor - II**  
**Migration and the Urban Question in Mumbai**

**Manish K. Jha & Pushpendra,**  
**Mouleshri Vyas,**  
**Ritambhara Hebbar & Mahuya Bandyopadhyay,**  
**Simpreet Singh**

**2015**



## **Content**

1. Homeless Migrants in Mumbai: Life and Labour in Urban Space	1
2. Labouring Dangerously: Death and Old Age in the Informal Economy in Mumbai City	15
3. Migrant, Vigilants and Violence: A Study of Security Guards in Mumbai	28
4. The Emergence of the Migrant as a Problem Figure in Contemporary Mumbai: Chronicles of Violence and Issues of Justice	49



# Homeless Migrants in Mumbai: Life and Labour in Urban Space

Manish K. Jha and Pushendra \*

## Introduction

Labour migration from rural to urban areas is a persistent feature of developing countries like India. Mumbai like many big and thriving cities has been attracting a large number of migrants from all over the country. A substantial chunk of the migrants belonging to working poor classes are unable to enter into the legal housing property relations in the city. They are forced to live either on the public spaces such as pavements, by the roadside, etc., or at workplaces, or in slums in shelters of all kinds which do not qualify to be called a home. They conform to the definition developed by the United Nations for the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless in 1987, considering a homeless person is not only someone who lives on the street or in a shelter, but can equally be someone whose shelter or housing fails to meet the basic criteria considered essential for health and human and social development. These criteria include security of tenure, protection against bad weather and personal security, as well as access to sanitary facilities and potable water, education, work, and health services (Speak and Tipple 2006). The condition of homeless is created when people migrating to cities may be in such precarious financial condition that they cannot afford to buy or rent in a house even in a poor locality, or due to the experience of single and multiple evictions without resettlement.

The latest census data for migration is available for 2001. Out of the total population of 11.97 million, 5.18 million or 47.3 per cent population of Mumbai was categorised as migrant population in 2001 Census. Migration contributed 43.7 per cent in population growth of Mumbai between 1991 and 2001. The migrants are predominantly from rural origin from across the country, constituting two-third to three-fourths of all migrants. The largest proportion of migrants comes from Maharashtra (37.4%), Uttar Pradesh (24.3%), Gujarat (9.6%) and Karnataka (5.8%). Work/employment/business was cited as main reason for migration in the 2001 Census. Sex ratio among migrants from states other than Maharashtra was 615 indicating predominantly male or male-first migration from these states. Most migrants are unskilled or low skilled and fit into menial or minor jobs or are under-employed. With ever growing informalisation of the main employment provider, the service sector, half of the employment generated by this sector is carried by migrants. Besides, they also engage in home or cottage manufacturing as well as low income self-employment activities. At least half of the migrants have become indispensable to the city's economy by filling-in cheap labour-oriented and unskilled jobs (Mumbai Human Development Report, 2009). A baseline

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\* Manish K. Jha (manishj@tiss.edu) and Pushendra (pushendra@tiss.edu) are with the Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai  
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survey of 16,000 slum households done for Mumbai Metropolitan Regional Development Authority (MMRDA) in 2002 revealed that the average income of slum households was Rs. 2,978 and 40 per cent of the households were categorised as Below Poverty Line (BPL). Low income and poverty is further compounded by unaffordable housing and lack of supply of cheap housing, forcing the migrants to either live in slums, in many cases illegal/unauthorised, or squatter at public places as homeless. No surprise that 54 per cent of the Mumbai population in 2001 lived in slums under appalling conditions, occupying just 6 per cent of the total land area of the city. The Census of 2001 enumerated 11,771 HHs in Greater Mumbai with a population of 39,074. Additionally, the number of homeless HHs in the Mumbai City and Mumbai Suburbs were 7,184 and 4,591 respectively with corresponding population of 24,000 and 15,074. Though the number of homeless HHs as well as population in Greater Mumbai has been steadily declining since 1971 Census, the average size of homeless households has increased from 1.9 in 1971 to 3.3 in 2001, indicating that the homeless are increasingly living with families. It is likely that houseless population is under enumerated, and the same may also be true for some short duration temporary migrants as well (Bhagat and Jones, 2013). Unofficial estimates of homeless population in the city put the figure at 1.5 lakh persons<sup>1</sup>.

The year 1991 when the neoliberal economic policy characterised by liberalisation, privatisation and globalisation, was introduced, also saw introduction of a new city development plan for Greater Mumbai. The plan sought to further strengthen neoliberal urbanism in Mumbai. It, among other things, liberalised Floor Space Index (FSI), for the first time formally introduced Transferable Development Right (TDR) as a market-based planning instrument and allowed reuse of the land of former industrial units. Slum redevelopment and slum rehabilitation were linked with the TDR to free more and more land for construction and infrastructural projects, thereby freeing the state from the responsibility of housing for the poor as well as resettlement of the slum dwellers. The plan envisaged decongestion of Mumbai by moving out production activities from the city and also freeing the city from slums. The World Bank supported projects – Mumbai Urban Transport Project (MUTP) and Mumbai Urban Infrastructure Project (MUIP) resulted in large scale eviction and relocation of slum dwellers which also rendered thousands of them homeless. The Slum Act of 2001 further criminalises those slum dwellers who have moved in slums after 1995. The government in 2007 repealed the Urban Land Ceiling Act, a condition for funding under the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM). In 2005, 100 per cent FDI in housing and real estate was allowed. Basic social services have increasingly been privatised and several works of the Municipal Corporation out-sourced. Many more reforms are on the card such as changes in the coastal zoning and repeal of the Rent Control Act. The JNNURM envisages financial and administrative reforms in the governance of Municipal Corporation. To quote Harvey (2008), “Neoliberalism has also created new systems of governance that integrate state and corporate interests, and through the application of money power, it has ensured that the disbursement of the surplus through the state apparatus favours corporate capital and the upper classes in shaping the urban process.” Following the “Vision Mumbai: Transforming Mumbai into a World-Class City”, a document prepared by a global consulting firm, McKinsey & Company in 2003, the state government not only endorsed it but also came out with Mumbai Transformation Project 2003 to transform Mumbai into an “international Financial Centre” with world class infrastructure, citizen-friendly services and business-friendly environment (Banerjee-Guha, 2009). The entire project was estimated to have a cost of \$40 billion (about 1,82,600 crore) to be spent over 10 years, 75 per cent of which was expected to come in the form of private investment (Banerjee-Guha, 2009). The Vision Mumbai emphasised on slum redevelopment to free at least 60 per cent of the land occupied by them for commercial purposes. The government promptly embarked on slum demolition. In



2004-05, more than 90,000 of slum units were demolished. Since then periodically bulldozing the slums have been a regular phenomenon. Displaced families, if found meeting the 1995 cut off date criteria, were rehoused in densely packed clusters of tenement-style apartment blocks, each of 225 sq. ft. area, that are sprouting up in the marshlands on the city's periphery; those unable to meet the criteria find themselves homeless (Lisa Bjorkman, 2014).

The social cost of making Mumbai a global city and financial hub is starkly evident by rising social inequality, making the disadvantaged sections of the society more vulnerable, and dispossessing the poor (Banerjee-Guha, 2009). Adverse implication of policy restructuring on labouring migrants were treated by neoliberals as "private matters" and were justified as harsh forms of workfare (Bonoli 2005). While referring to New urban politics in the city of Ahmedabad, Chatterjee (2011) defines new urban politics by the dialectical interplay between 'governance as performed' (through entrepreneurial ethno-religious neo-liberalism) and 'government as inscribed' (through scientific planning), and the purpose of this interplay is to produce double narratives of the 'lived' and the 'inscribed' city. The 'purified spaces' of the 'beautified city' normalize a 'bourgeois urbanism' (Chatterjee, 2004; Wilson, 2004) that informalises labour, legitimizes the downward spiral of wages, sharpens socioeconomic inequalities and institutionalizes the displacement and social exclusion of minority groups (MacLeod, 2002). Further, marketing the city to attract capital involves a "hyper-marketised style of governance" (Weber, 2002, p. 520), often geared towards a cosmetic overhaul achieved through slum eviction, identifying 'blight', 'purification' through greening and beautification projects (Chatterjee, 2009). The direct implication of this style of government and governance is more and more eviction, dislocation and homelessness for toiling masses. Kundu (2000) provides empirical evidence to show that market reforms have increased poverty and informalisation and urban renewal projects are causing massive evictions of the poor. The public-private nature of this style of governance is increasingly motivated by growth, image and entrepreneurship, rather than social good, justice and redistribution (Harvey, 1989).

This paper looks into the issue of homelessness of the migrants in Mumbai through an empirical work undertaken at four locations in Mumbai in the backdrop of the politics of homelessness played by the state and civil society. We have tried to derive meanings from issues related to violence, eviction, insecurity, lack of privacy, livelihoods and struggle for essential amenities based on interviews conducted in four areas of Mumbai: a) Cross Maidan, near Church Gate Station of South Mumbai; b) Indira Nagar (part of Shivaji Nagar), the farthest eastern portion in M East ward – a resettlement site Near Mint colony, c) Tulsi Pipe Road, Mahim West near Mahim station in western suburb; and d) a garment manufacturing unit at Dharavi in Central Mumbai. The experience of the homeless migrants is deeply embedded in the larger economic and political developments transforming the city. Four such larger processes form the core of the analyses in the paper: a) the envisioning and planning of the city space in order to transform Mumbai as a city of global status requiring reorganisation, eviction, relocation, and/or redevelopment of the poorer social groups and their spaces; b) the ever-growing informalisation of labour and production processes following a definite neo-liberal shift in the economy that suits the needs of the global as well as Indian capital and business; c) the rise of middle class citizenship movement articulated by civil society that seeks to transform city space as landscape and landscape as an aesthetic scene; and d) the agency of the homeless who has to deal with various actors – state as well as non-state – in course of their daily struggle for retaining the space, basic amenities and livelihoods.

## Civil Society against Civility

Homeless migrants expose the paradox of urbanisation through the fragmentation and segregation of city spaces. Like other cities, Mumbai's landscapes feature the cohabitation of people living in poverty and those situated within more affluent circumstances. Geographers have emphasised upon the reality of increasing divisions between enfranchised and disenfranchised groups in contemporary urban landscapes (Cumbers, Helms and Swanson 2010). Baviskar (2003: 95-96) argues that the 'bourgeois gaze' identifies the poor as "disfiguring the landscape" creating a paradigm of the 'encroacher'. Anjaria (2009) explains the processes whereby citizens' group/civil society organizations exclude poor population and re-configure the nature of citizenship and draws the analysis from what Smith (2002) calls as 'urban strategy' that exhibits the shift from welfare to maximization of profit extraction. This process of profit extraction, dispossession and displacement and marginalization of labouring migrant poor in the city of Mumbai had been explicated by scores of authors (Banerjee-Guha 2002; Jha et al 2013, Anjaria 2009, Bjorkman 2014). As a consequence of economic liberalisation in early 1990s, the section of middle class in India could expand their economic wealth, improve social status and augment claim-making in political arena. This phase has also witnessed the distancing of the better-off classes from the politics of the poor. An emerging politics has inaugurated what (Harriss, 2007: 2719) refers as "dualism that distinguishes 'citizens' from 'denizens' (inhabitants, who may be 'done unto'), and that particular technocratic associational elite defines citizenship in particular ways..." More often than not, the articulation around particularity of new citizenship discourse is emphasized upon by influential section of civil society that prefers to call themselves as citizens' group. Such group along with middle and affluent class neighbourhood make claim and re-claim on public spaces by displacing homeless, hawkers, etc. and unleash new regimes of accumulations. The aspects of dispossession and displacement, experiences of insecurity, indignity, structural violence and restraining citizenship and contentious politics and practice around it are the focus of our inquiry in the following case of homeless migrants at the Cross Maidan near the Churchgate Station.

Under the 1991 Revised Development Plan of Greater Bombay, the state government has devised a policy for giving plots reserved for gymnasium/gymkhana, club, stadium, swimming pool, recreation ground, playground, gardens and parks on adoption/caretaker basis. The civic body's Mumbai Urban Heritage Conservation Committee (MUHCC) in 2004 okayed the restoration plan of 5 acres of the ground, submitted by city-based NGO Oval Trust (Organisation for Verdant Ambience and Land). The Maidan was finally opened to the public on 28<sup>th</sup> June 2010 after converting it into a recreational park with a jogging track, children's play area and a variety of trees, flowerbeds, a drinking water fountain and benches for senior citizens. Further, a large steel sculpture of "charkha" was established in the Maidan and finally it started hosting events of the Kala Ghoda Festival from the year 2012. The Maidan is protected by wrought iron fences. Tata Steel and Jasubhai Foundation financially supported various works under the restoration. The media along with many city architects, historians, high profile citizens, heritage activists, environmentalists and public space crusaders celebrated the opening of the Maidan to the 'public'. However, the Maidan had to be cleared from the hutments and hawkers who had occupied a part of the place for more than 40 years (in 2003, the Mumbai High Court had declared the area as no-hawking zone). Among them was Rajni, one among the many 'illegal' encroachers who were thrown out of the Maidan. Recounting her ordeal that continues till date, Rajni exposes the problematic of citizenship through the experience of migrants.

Rajni, 32 years and married with three children, lives on a pavement at Cross Maidan. She is engaged in rag picking and her husband, a native from Maharashtra, works for a local catering agency. She was born and has lived there all her life, the only difference being that until nine years back she was residing inside the Maidan but was forced out to live on the pavement as the Cross Maidan was converted into a park. Her father was from Tamil Nadu who migrated at the age of 15 and since then worked as a daily labourer while spending his night at the Chatrapati Shivaji Terminus. Her mother was raised by the people living at the CST since she was one year old. After marriage, the couple moved to the Maidan and lived inside it under a polythene wrapped tent. Several other families in similar circumstances lived there. Rajni's childhood was spent by begging at the station, taxi stand and other public places. Sometimes she would also work in middle class homes as domestic help. After an early death of father, her mother raised all the four children. Rajni was sent to an ashram at Pune to look after young children so that she would financially assist her family members. On her return, she got engaged with variety of livelihood options that includes rag picking, domestic help, etc. She got married and the couple initially lived in Govandi in a rented room. But after the birth of their first child it was increasingly becoming difficult to meet their daily expenses. They returned to Cross Maidan to her mother and put up their own tent. Rajni worked as maid servant in a family, mainly doing babysitting, and her husband in the same catering agency.

Then came the year 2006 when they were asked to sign on papers which stated that the government would provide them with shelter at other place. They vacated the place with expectation. But soon they realised that most of them were deceived. Only a few families, including her brother, got house at Mankhurd under the resettlement scheme, facilitated by the SPARK, an NGO. The footpath along the Maidan, facing the Railway Office, was vacant at that time which they occupied. They put a polythene cover over their head which had to be tied to the iron fence of the Maidan and partly spread to the other side of the fence in the rainy season to protect from rain waters. The Secretary of the Oval Trust would consider even tying of polythene with the iron rod as encroachment and many times would call police or BMC, turning down their plea to show mercy to their situation. Police or BMC would tear their polythene sheet and at times confiscate their belongings, causing immense hardship to them. Even their effort to block rain water flowing from the Maidan to their pavement, by putting wooden blocks, is also considered encroachment. Rajni along with some other women has met the officials of the Oval Trust at least three times in the past to persuade them against calling officials of BMC<sup>2</sup> particularly during the rainy season. However, this has barely fetched any favourable response. The Society has objection to their mere presence at the pavement as it spoils the aesthetics of the park. People are traumatised by the action of the BMC authorities. Rajni goes on narrating the woes of the families on the pavement because of BMC raids and how the residents, employees in the nearby offices and the crowd show utter indifference to their predicament. But the sheer need for survival has brought strong solidarity amongst them and made them struggle for their demands. Earlier when they used to live inside the Maidan, BMC would only occasionally come to bother them. They were much more secured from the outsiders, could maintain some amount of privacy and were not always under public gaze.

How are we to make sense of the story of eviction and, as a result, exacerbation of day-to-day miseries of Rajni that runs counter to the success story of the Oval Trust? How do we theorise it? Firstly, it problematises the notion that civility is at the core of civil society. Civility, as Shils puts it, would consider "others as fellow citizens of equal dignity in their rights and obligations as members of civil society; it essentially means treating others, including one's adversaries or detractors, as members of the same collectivity, even though they belong to different political persuasions, religious or ethnic communities whose interests run counter to those of yours (Shils

1991 as quoted in Dhanagare 2005). The gap between the normative civil society and actually existing civil societies (Chandhoke 2003) can be explained by the fact that civil society organisations are segmented and in this particular case it had a class perspective (of the middle and upper middle class) thus, restricting its domain to a particular group of citizens at the cost of others. Some of the active participants in 'restoration' of Cross Maidan have frequently claimed that they brought back the park to the 'public' and freed them from the squatters, thereby redefining the concept of 'public' by banishing the squatters from its domain. The Oval Trust pursued an agenda that looked most uncivil if viewed from the perspectives of the hawkers and the squatters. Despite being a non-statist entity, it was as coercive as any state machinery could have been and work in collusion with the politico-judicial apparatus to produce the same outcome that the BMC produces elsewhere on its own. Secondly, this points to a complex relationship between the state and the civil society, in this case the collector's office and the Oval Trust. The Oval Trust faced numerous difficulties in getting full access to the land which resulted in non-restoration of more than one-fourth of the land. And finally, after it succeeded in developing the land as a recreation ground, the collector's office decided not to renew the contract of the Oval Trust (as reported in Mumbai newspapers on 27<sup>th</sup> February 2015). Yet, throughout the episode, both the state and the civil society organisation shared the same notion and model of public space utilisation.

### **Life in a Slum: From Dispossession to Illegality**

The Shivajinagar slum falls under the M-East Ward (77.5 per cent of the population in this ward live in slum) and is inhabited by the evictees, displaced and relocated, the process of which happened in different phase since the year 1975. "Among the first arrivals were the lower-caste Maharashtrian residents of a long established neighbourhood in down town area of Churchgate, where many of them worked. Additionally, a large number of families came from neighbourhood settlements that were demolished in a series of urban development and infrastructure projects, including several in the gentrified areas on the western seafront, and in the city's present-day financial district of Nariman Point" (Bjorkman 2014:43). The trajectory of settlement in Shivajinagar and neighbouring areas is the history of demolition, resettlement and migration. The trail from eviction to resettlement was an arduous and complicated one for the people residing in this area. Identified as urban periphery, this area is on the swampy boundary of the Deonar dumping ground, city's biggest open garbage disposal place. The dumping ground relieves the city of thousand tonnes of garbage everyday and acts as a source of livelihood for many who work there as rag pickers. Besides, the city's slaughter house is also located here. "The entire area was laid out in phases - with 14 roads and at least 94 blocks (or plots) each with 8 lanes (or *chawls*). Chawls were designed to be allotted to 16 families (8 on either side of the lane), each with a toilet block and four shared water taps" (ibid). Despite severe crisis of water supply and other infrastructural facilities, this part is still considered well organized and falls within the conception of legally accepted notion of slum. A little later, a large section of migrants and displaced families had begun to inhabit in the huge marshy terrain beyond the gridded area specified above. The area known as 'Indira Nagar' is adjacent to Deonar dumping ground and is classified as an 'illegal settlement'. The Indira Nagar inhabitants, including children, have been sorting garbage and engaged in rag picking for years together. The makeshift shelter built of marshy land and garbage heap is characterized by tarpaulin sheet, tin shades, crowded and filthy lanes, overflowing drains and the overpowering stench from the dumping ground. The ethnographies of the locality and resident provide vivid description of precarity and insecurity of work and habitat, informality and illegality associated with access to basic services and experiences of humiliation and indignity while interacting

with the 'other'. Accustomed to the reality that their shelter would be bulldozed and demolished by BMC at least three times in year, the ethnography captures people's struggle, patience, perseverance, negotiations and assertion. The constant fear of eviction and experiences of unprofitability of livelihood by rag picking haunt the lives of men, women and children as they sift through the garbage. Excluded even in the urban periphery of M-East ward, an area that is infamous for its underdevelopment and lowest HDI in Mumbai, Indira Nagar symbolized poverty and marginality of migrant population in the city.

Shafina, a Muslim in her early forties, lives with her husband, younger brother-in-law and five children at the farthest end of Indira Nagar. She does tailoring though she does not get work regularly. Earlier she used to go for rag picking in the dumping ground. Her husband and brother-in-law do a variety of work as daily wage labourers, often supplemented by rag picking in the dumping ground. Her children are in school and also go to a private tuition. Her shelter was under construction at the time of our interview. The single room 10 x 12 ft shelter was made of thin tin sheets - the walls and the roof - with light wood logs supporting the structure. A tin door was yet to be fixed. Since there was no scope for windows or any ventilation, the shelter was boiling hot inside. There was no electricity in the shelter as pucca roof is a condition for getting electricity connection in the household. Her belongings - a few ragged beds, a large mat, a kerosene oil stove, some aluminium utensils, two large jerry cans for water storage, a bucket, an air bag and a suit case and a few clothes - were casually strewn in the shelter. One corner of the shelter was being used for storage of water and cooking and the other for washing utensils and perhaps bathing. Most of the domestic works are done in public as this kind of house serves limited purpose unlike the middle class houses. However, privacy has practically limited sense as all other families too live in similar conditions. Her children often fall ill particularly with breathing problem; the doctor says it is all because of the smoke-filled environment and advises changing the place.

The family belongs to UP and has been living in Mumbai for more than 10 years. Earlier they were living in a rented room in the colony but decided to erect their own room when the residents gradually reclaimed more marshy land after years of hard work of filling it. Like most other people living in slums or on streets she too has various identity proofs such as Aadhar Card, BPL card, PAN Card, birth certificate of children, etc. Shafina is active in the area and is associated with an NGO having office in the vicinity and a history of supporting slum dwellers for decades. They get water, for a fee, from tanker operated by a corporator. A private toilet service in the vicinity charges Rs.2 for every single use. Only the adults use the toilet service, children are allowed to defecate in the open to save expenses. The fear and anxiety about demolition of makeshift shanty is palpable because of its frequency in the locality. Shafina explained how the government first allows the people to fill in the marshy land and once the land is reclaimed and people put up their shelters, the BMC starts routine anti-encroachment drives on the land. The ritual is conducted two to three times in a year in which they use JCB to demolish the shanties and whatever household goods are confiscated are destroyed and buried there itself by using the JCB. Thus, they perpetually live in insecurity, suffer losses and undertake rebuilding their lives at regular intervals. The NGO is promoting SHGs amongst women, livelihoods training among the youth and has recently started on demand supply of clean drinking water in 20-litre bottle to households. On a few occasions the NGO has also given their representation to the authorities against the demolition drive. A few other organisations also work among the people on housing right issues, the Ghar Bachao, Ghar Banao being the most prominent one. This organisation has led several anti-demolition campaigns and street fights in the past. Political parties such as Samajwadi Party, Shiv Sena, Congress and BJP have their areas of influences in the Shivaji Nagar though the MLA belongs to the Samajwadi Party.

For Shafina and many other residents in the colony with whom we met and discussed the housing issue, demolition, atrocities by the BMC and the police, access to water are major issues as far as their everyday life is concerned. “No rich class people will ever prefer to live in this area as the filth, stink and the smoke from the burning garbage is unbearable. We have no option but to live here.” Emphasizing upon insanitary and dangerous living condition, Menon (2013) says “it can be surmised that given the quantum of faecal matter that is disposed of in the open, in and around the living spaces of the poor, means that the poor are literally living in the conditions of their own demise”. Living by the side of a dumping ground is the last thing on the earth one would imagine, however, they seemed to have reconciled to their situation as the place has become a hub of a number of entrepreneurial activities and businesses based on waste collection from the dumping ground. In fact, the residents are less anxious about earnings, as according to them, all able-bodied persons get some work or the other in the city, sufficient to make both ends meet and make minor savings to take care of contingent and social expenses. All of them conceded that they did not foresee any transformation in their condition unless their children excel in their education and become *sahibs* which is any way rare. They see generations after generation living and dying in similar conditions and facing the same existential issues. Stopping demolition drives and atrocities by the police, and free water supply and sanitation were articulated as the most urgent demands that can give them a sense of citizenship, as Shafina says that they feel like being a refugee in their own country.

The production of urban subjectivities is intimately tied to the production of space whereby slum clearance and resettlement politics in Mumbai constitute the core political processes enabling capital accumulation through redevelopment (Doshi, 2012). In several instances, in the processes of redevelopment and resettlement, thousands of households are classified as ‘illegal’ and therefore disqualified for relocation entitlement. The Bombay Prevention of Beggary Act (BPBA) 1959 criminalizes people for being homeless or without regular employment (*who they are*), rather than for their actions (*what they do*) (Goel, 2010). The act provides for the arrest and detention of not only those who beg but also their dependents. This is possibly the only legislation, with the exception of the Immoral Trafficking Prevention Act 1956<sup>3</sup>, where the offender’s family is punished for being dependent on his/her income. In Maharashtra, once detained under the Act, the detainee is made to work under the pretext of vocational training, as agricultural labour on large tracts of land attached to the beggars’ homes and paid wages of INR five per day (under the BPBA State Rules). The sub-text is obvious – the price to be paid for being homeless and without regular work in the city is forced labour with sub-human wages – to punish and ‘teach the person’ to become industrious labour (Raghavan and Tarique 2011). Besides, the overwhelming presence of the state agencies such as police, magistrates and civic bodies (Bombay Municipal Corporation, Navi Mumbai Municipal Corporation, etc.) makes the migrants’ everyday experiences precarious and undignified.

### **Conducting Private Life in Public**

Our next respondents, Binod and Neela, a couple in their late 50s, lived on the roadside pavement at Mahim near the station. They are from Rajasthan. They live with their extended family - their two married sons, their wives and grandchildren; married daughters with their husbands and children. Binod came to the city at the age of 15 when he used to work as a *pherivala* (vendor) in a train. Once he mustered the courage to travel up to Mumbai where an acquaintance from his village used to live at the pavement in Mahim, surviving on selling bamboo-made handicraft items, their traditional family occupation. Binod’s income was quite meagre from vending and involved backbreaking hard

work. Once married and finding income insufficient to survive, he decided to move to Mumbai. After sometime, he brought his wife too. They lived on the pavement in the neighbourhood of their relative. In the beginning, living on a pavement, in full public gaze, was shocking and incomprehensible for his wife. Somehow both managed to live on the street where their children were born, brought up and now married. They continue to live on the pavement even after more than 35 years. Earlier they used to get water from the railways but now they have to travel to a nearby public water tap in the neighbouring lower class colony and carry water in jerry cans on bicycle as the railways have erected high fences along the tracks. On the other side of the pavement is the residential colony which is also protected by high walls and wrought iron fencing. The BMC authorities occasionally appear with eviction threat though their frequency has reduced in recent years. All family members are engaged in making bamboo products and earn just enough to meet both ends.

However, it takes a lot of physical and mental energy to make a home on the streets. Living on the pavement demands integration with the “homeless street culture” (Hodgetts et al, 2012). The street culture is characterised by living private life into public with a thin veil of privacy maintained behind curtains or by ignoring the public gaze as non-existent. Yet homelessness represents continuation of their lifeworlds which have already been shaped by poverty, disadvantage and marginalisation. They experience homelessness as simply yet more hardship (ibid). Rajni of Cross Maidan explains her sense of home and conception of homelessness as “*Main yahan pe tab se boon, jab se maine aakh kbola hai*” (I am here since the time I was born). But the government or the people would look at us as homeless and so we are homeless.” Both at Cross Maidan and Mahim pavement, access to the toilet is an expensive and problematic proposition; needless to say that the homeless have no private access to toilets and bathrooms. They visit the nearby 'pay and use' toilets at the respective stations. Besides, they engage in strategic preparation to meet their need for a toilet; sometimes they pay or develop friendship with local shopkeeper or an obliging guard at a nearby building. Such expenses pose huge financial burden on homeless.

However, they barely have any option but to pee at public places, by the side of bushes, drainage channels or railway tracks. A temporary curtain of sari is put around at the pavement to be used for taking bath by women. Rajni says she no longer feels embarrassed; and not too conscious of surrounding or public gaze while taking bath in such arrangement. She would loosely drape her sari after bath and walk up to her hutment where she would dress properly. She would not even think about the passerby. However, if someone stops and gives deep gaze she would consider this as eve-teasing and shout at. According to her, the way people walk through their shelter on the pavement and look at them is demeaning and humiliating. People often find their spaces strange and their living uncivil. Males working around the area and passerby used to pee on the other side of the pavement in front of their hutment. In an another situation, experiences of humiliation and indignity was shared by Santosh

“A few days ago we were having lunch on the pavement near our stall. One young person who was dead drunk came in his private car. He got down and asked as to where can he urinate. My father told him about the place which is a pay and use toilet about fifty meters away from here. However, he shouted at my father and said that you prepare food here on the pavement and make the place dirty and tell me to urinate in the public toilet! I will urinate here where you people prepare and eat your food. My father told him to do whatever he wanted to...” (Tripathy, 2014)

For years, Rajni and some other people on the pavement kept taking up fight with every such person and now have succeeded in keeping the place clean. Neela of Mahim pavement tells us, “Many a times, drunken men touch and try to molest women. Sometimes, we catch them as well after which we ensure that they get a beating. We find it difficult to even complain with police

because of our insecure and 'illegal' habitation. Lodging complaint and approaching officials means wreaking insult and humiliation upon us." Living on the pavement sometimes invites very unpleasant or dangerous instances of misbehaviour by the people. She explains how a taxi driver once tried to allure a girl from her family. Having failed in his effort he once tried to abduct her in the midnight while she was asleep. But he was caught by the family members and given a good thrashing. He returned later, drunk, his taxi in high speed and tried to hit their hut. Two persons were badly injured. She feels such incidents can happen to others also but in their case they are dangerously exposed without any safeguard of private retreat.

However, such experiences of marginalisation, indignity, humiliation, insecurity and ultimately violence are not isolated or individual-centred cases. When Neela says that our two generations have spent their lives on the streets and the time is coming for the third, she is pointing to the structural aspects of their marginalisation that is beyond their control and rooted in the materiality of their social existence. The trajectory of migrants' life elucidates that they start and in most situations continue as homeless and live a life of deprivation, dislocation and therefore disempowered and disenfranchised. It is evident that they are the most faceless, voiceless and invisible group in a city's populace. Middle class worldviews tend to de-legitimate lifestyles associated with lower class life worlds, rendering "the poor" strange and distant (Veness 1993). Conducting private lives and activities in public may have been internalised by the homeless as part of the street culture but it causes further estrangement and objectification and aggravate social distancing from the middle class whose notion of "dirty" and "stinking" squatters gets reinforced. The sight of the poor and homeless in contemporary times in a city like Mumbai is no longer seen with sympathy; the uppish middle class population - earlier dwelling on progressive thoughts and carrying apology of denying justice to the poor - have not only become nonchalant enough to shun the homeless but even contribute in making strategies - legal or non-legal - to prove the latter's right over the urban space as illegal (Banerjee-Guha, 2010).

### **Homeless Workers of Multinational Brands**

The category of homeless migrants is most often than not engaged in vulnerable employment. Vulnerable employment, also often referred to as precarious employment, is generally characterized by uncertainty and economic insecurity for temporary or part-time workers. Typical conditions of precarious employment are low wages, poor protection from termination of employment, lack of access to social protection and benefits, and limited or no ability to exercise human rights at work (ILO 2011). The link between precarious employment and poverty is evident in India, where about 92 % of a workforce of 457 million is estimated to be in unorganised sector (Ferus-Comelo, 2014). The precarity and insecurity stretches itself from work to shelter; the homeless population, without exception come from this segment of the society.

A study of a garment manufacturing unit in Dharavi reveals how work, workplace and shelter conjoin to extract the maximum labour from a worker and, at the same time, keep the worker homeless and precariat. The unit takes job work for multinational and big national brands. At times of low work order, it also manufactures shirts to be sold mainly through street vending as well as retail units. The unit operates from a two floor *chawl*. Rooms on both the floors are of approximately 7 x 5 feet. The room had walls from three sides and one side was open, this wall had a shutter to lock the unit during night. The three walls were full of wooden racks with small cubes to keep the unstitched clothes and stitched clothes separately. The staircase to the upper part of the unit was through a dark and narrow lane just beside the unit. It was a thin, narrow and straight iron made



ladder which was very difficult to climb. After a few steps a thick rope was found hanging from the roof so that the climber can hold it for safety. Inside the room it was very hot and humid and there was no cross ventilation. The six workers working at that time were in briefs. The room was separated in two parts. In one side of the room stitching machines were kept where workers were engaged in their work while the other part of the room was giving the impression of being used for living purpose. Beds were fold, rolled mats were kept standing in the corner of that part of room. Bags of workers were kept on one another, clothes were hanging on a rope tide through walls, a stove and a few utensils were kept. The part of room which was used for work purpose during day was also used as living space at night after moving the machines and table in one side of the wall. There was no source of water and toilet within the premises. They had to use public tap for water and the facility by 'Sulabh' in the locality. Upon our inquiry we realised that all the workers were migrants. They could not afford renting in a room in the city because of their low earnings. We found similar conditions in several other units in Dharavi, P. N. Lokhande Marg and Govandi. The workers stretch their body endurance to the optimum to earn as much as they can as the wages are on piece-rate basis. They told that they did not consider the place as home as they had no permission (as well as no space) to host any guest or family member inside, nor did they have space to take rest during the work time in case of illness. Those were shelters they just used to sleep in the night. Further, since the shutter had to be closed in the night for safety reasons, it was just unbearable to sleep in summers.

The Dharavi unit is an example of how present capitalist production relies on supply of cheap labour from the rural sector. Coming from a subsistence sector they lack the capacity to bargain and get fair wages and decent working condition. Interestingly, such units are invariably registered under the Shops and Establishment Act rather than Factory Act, thereby avoiding application of provisions of the Factory Act favourable to the workers. This happens in full knowledge of the labour department. However, this is hardly an issue for the department in neoliberal times when the Centre has unleashed comprehensive labour reform measures aimed altering the basis framework of protection of labour in the interests of the capital, Indian as well as those coming through the Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) route. Migrant labour, the world around, unfailingly provides a fertile field to understand the nuances of their precarity, insecurity, struggle, coping as also ability to negotiate with city-space and society at large.

## **Conclusion**

Following the wave of economic globalisation in India, the city space in Mumbai is dominated by powerful elites – industry, business, finance, real estate developers, media, etc. – more than any time in its history. As a natural outcome, the condition of the urban homeless, most of whom are migrants, is found to have been worsening with a concomitant withdrawal of State from generating employment, providing housing and basic services for many. The urban reform agenda along with other neo-liberal developments has restricted access to affordable housing, services, work spaces, social welfare and participation that can undermine the daily living experiences of these groups and their legitimate access to city spaces. Scores of statements and constructions crafted around homeless migrants and branding of them as shameless, illegal occupant, beggar, encroachers and the related stories contribute in changing the 'moral colour from red/wrong to green/right or at least yellow acceptable' (Galtung 1990). And that's how contrary to the fact that there is public gaze transgressing into private lives of homeless, they are dubbed as shameless. Despite the fact that they are evicted from place and dislocated from work sites, they are summarily dubbed as illegal and

encroacher. They are not only defined as the 'other' based on what they lack, but also 'they have become depersonalised' (Parsell 2010). The reaction and response of better-off sections of the society also portray moral obtuseness and a general disconnect with the lives and circumstances of dispossessed.

Illustration through four ethnographic explorations exposes the homeless migrants' everyday encounter with structural violence through the experiences of indignity, humiliation and insecurity. Galtung (1990:292) sees violence as avoidable insults to basic human needs, and more generally to life, lowering the real level of needs satisfaction below what is potentially possible. Unlike cases of direct violence where actor and factor can be traced, structural violence is silent and without an apparent actor and hence looks natural. The process of normalisation and wide-ranging societal approach towards homeless migrants clearly shows what Galtung explains that structural violence is built in the system and in the structure; and it's operated as regular practice of government, governance, society and culture. The illegality of housing claims, informality and precarity of work, indignity and humiliation at shelter, exploitation and repression by state agencies and different other layers of homeless experience depict the structural and systemic apparatus and operationalisation of violence. This explains how the perennial structural violence perpetuated on homeless migrants is covered as normal, natural and even desirable. In a city like Mumbai, the issues and concerns of homeless do not find space in any kind of political discourse. The political parties and their representatives' agenda and manifesto revolve around concerns of middle class (lower, middle and upper) housing societies and settlements with bare minimum basic necessities like water and electricity for slum population. The fragmented, sparsely populated labouring homeless migrant is beyond the sight of political gaze; the approach of neoliberal state is increasingly exclusionary and apathetic towards the poor migrants.

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## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/other-states/homeless-in-a-wet-city/article4989176.ece>. Although officially, the census figures put the homeless population to be 35,408, civil society organizations deride this conclusion and claim that about 1.5 lakh people in the city are living as homeless.

<sup>2</sup> Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation, also known as Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai is the civil body that governs the city of Mumbai.

<sup>3</sup> The ITPA, 1956 criminalises 'living off' the earnings of a woman in prostitution, thus making dependant family members of a victim of prostitution liable to prosecution.

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# Labouring Dangerously: Death and Old Age in the Informal Economy in Mumbai City

Mouleshri Vyas \*

## Introduction

Informalisation of work and the resultant social insecurity are visible across the world (Webster and Bhowmik, 2014). A preliminary survey of literature points to key concerns relating to these processes in the global south as well as north. In insecure conditions, lacking identity and documents that define their citizenship and related entitlements, millions of people move in and out of cities struggling to survive. Their number is increasing with spatial reorganising of manufacturing at a global level, and restructuring of manufacturing industries. Studies of different types of work examine the specificities of workers' lives in the informal economy, working conditions, as well as industry level changes that have taken place in recent times. The discourse on precarious labour further highlights the role of the state and the contribution of trade unions and other forms of organising that build new spaces for giving a voice to informal labour. That the state is needed is undeniable, and even more important as employment based social security is absent for majority of the population, and labour regimes have become increasingly exploitative and extractive. However, it is a different state, one with a neoliberal agenda that individuals and collectives now have to negotiate with. The characteristics of such an agenda are: the belief in the power of the market to most efficiently allocate resources and to encourage economic development; the privatization of state-owned enterprises in order to encourage market forces and to stimulate economic efficiency; “deregulating” (which often simply means regulating in a different way) the economy –particularly labor markets – so as to limit the “distorting” effects of governmental intervention; the cutting of state expenditures on social welfare provisions; and the ideological attack upon notions of collectivism and an ideological support for the values of economic individualism (Herod and Aguiar, 2006; p.3).

Cities such as Mumbai have been built through the labour of migrants from various parts of the country. The economic history of Mumbai highlights the once thriving textile manufacturing hub that it was; the impact of the closure of mills; and the growth of the service sector, which transformed the very character of the city. The anti-migrant political environment in the past few decades has created a confused socio-political and economic environment where the migrant worker is essential to manufacturing and service provision, and able to find work, while being unwelcome in terms of occupying physical, social, political and cultural space in the city. The spatial expansion of

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\* Professor, Centre for Community Organisation and Development Practice, School of Social Work, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai  
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the city, the simultaneous ghettoisation of certain populations, and the preoccupation of people with survival, are some of the factors that add to the challenge of building working class solidarity and collectives in Mumbai.

Beyond poverty and informal work, what is needed at this juncture is perhaps a nuanced examination of changes in people's work and lives that are manifestations of structural violence – of factors that shape their lives, and yet are beyond their control. These are evident in certain types of work, and the extreme powerlessness that those engaged in this work experience in their everyday lives.

I have attempted this through a study of migrant labour around two phenomena – morbidity, and the employment of the elderly in the informal workforce; and in two different occupations. The paper examines death and old age in the informal economy as visibilized through work related morbidity within solid waste management and elderly workers in insecure jobs in the private security provision industry. To begin with, I would term these two features of the labour market as 'extreme precarity' to set apart these conditions of severe vulnerability within the informal economy from the otherwise insecure conditions that characterize most work and labour in this sector.<sup>1</sup> The discussion of concepts in the next section would set the backdrop to locating these sections of labour within the precariat.

Of the next three sections, the first outlines key concepts in the study of informal labour; the second focuses on the case of conservancy who have lost their lives because of the nature of their work; the third discusses dimensions of work in the security provision industry.

### **(i) Key Concepts in the Study of Informal Labour**

With the coinage of the term 'informal sector' in the 1970s by Keith Hart and various studies, it was acknowledged that this unregulated and expanding sector of the economy was here to stay. However, with the dominance of capital and its ability to control labour power, the definition of informal as 'sector' proved inadequate, leading to a body of research that followed Martha Chen's explication of the informal 'economy'. She pointed out that it should be the employment relations that determine the definition of the informal, and not the nature of the enterprise within which they are located, since informal employment could exist within what is understood as the formal sector, while enterprises in the informal sector could have secure employment.

From the late 1990s, the ILO advocated the agenda of Decent Work which refers to work that is productive and gives a fair income; workplace security and social protection; better prospects for social integration and personal development; and freedom to organize and participate in decisions that affect one's life. The merit of this concept is perhaps its comprehensiveness. It has aided in clearer assessment of worker conditions, and strategizing for advocacy for rights of workers. Yet, like many ideas, it has been severely criticised too as a *social-liberal* adjustment and response to *neo-liberal* globalisation (Waterman, 2013; emphasis original).

Further conceptualizations of precarious work, precarity, and precariat,(Arnold and Bongiovi, 2012; Standing, 2013) are theoretically interesting and useful in practice because they recognized differential vulnerabilities such as education, age, occupation, family responsibility, labour market processes, among other factors. They also acknowledged that geographies of production had expanded, with margins for workers shrinking. Clearly power relations are skewed in favour of capital, which is able to control the labour process. Precarious work in this context is shaped by the relationship between employment status, form of employment, dimensions of labour market

insecurity, social context, and the social location (Arnold and Bongiovi, 2012 citing Standing, 2011). This analysis makes way for a calibrated study of the informal economy.

The precariat is characterized by insecurity. Standing's typology identifies seven categories of workers located on a continuum of insecurity; at the bottom of the ladder is the precariat, which is marked by minimum trust relationship with the state, and no social contract relationships (Standing, 2013, p.2). Some of the features that define the precariat are: lack of social income (community support, state benefits, private benefits); lack of work based identity; not part of solidaristic economy; lack of occupational identity (ibid, p.5). The concept of precarity seeks to signify a new phase of capitalism that is different from previous ones, with new ways of looking at the system as a whole. It refers to the condition of precarious workers as well as a more general state, and is "not only about disappearance of jobs, but questions of housing, debt, welfare provision, and availability of time for building effective personal relations" (Arnold and Bongiovi, 2012, Neilson & Rossiter, 2008, citing Foti, 2004).

While these ideas are also contested through a nudge towards postwork politics, they are relevant as they make a case for "re-entering precarious, casual, and informal workers as a new kind of political subject, rather than an anomaly from standard employee" (Arnold and Bongiovi, 2012, p.15), and it is in this light that I proceed to detail certain aspects of their work and lives in the next two sections.

## **(ii) Work Related Morbidity – Conservancy Workers**

In my earlier work, I have examined the tenuous conditions under which migrants live, work, and compete for jobs that are viewed as difficult and are the last resort for entrants into the city who lack skills and the formal education that are valued in the current market situation. Work with waste, which now comprises several categories of male and female workers, is one such type of work. This was one of the aspects of transit labour in Mumbai city, partly explained by privatization of solid waste management in urban centres in India (Vyas, 2012). The vulnerability and precarious conditions of this section of city labour is enhanced by the fact that collectivizing them is an immensely uphill task. The political environment and formal and informal sector divide add to the challenge of union building, and hence claiming of entitlements by these populations (Vyas, 2009). The existing literature highlights the hazardous nature of this work (Vyas, 2014: 90-92), the social stigma associated with it (Vivek, 2000), the precarity of labour emanating from the contract labour regime, and the biopolitics embedded within it (Jha et al, 2013).

Newspaper reports, as well as data with trade unions present a darker and even more morbid side of this work. Several workers lose their lives due to the structural conditions within which they labour. It could be an accident with the vehicle they are working on, a disease that they have been afflicted with due to the nature of work, or an overall sense of despair that makes survival and dignity difficult to sustain. The death of workers engaged in particular type of work such as waste collection and disposal, and the continued struggle for the family and next generation along the same lines, manifests compounded hazards and vulnerability. A closer look at some such cases of worker morbidity could enable an understanding of this aspect of precarity<sup>2</sup>.

Five of the workers engaged in cleaning or what is known as conservancy work were among those that lost their lives between 2008 and 2013. The youngest was 28 years old; the oldest among them was 45. Their life histories were constructed through interviews with family members, co-workers, or union representatives<sup>3</sup>.

The five workers are second generation migrants in the city. Four of them are from other districts in Maharashtra, while one is from Bihar. Parents of the former four, all Dalits, migrated to the city in order to escape drought conditions and abject poverty in the village. Millions of people of Maharashtra experienced two consecutive severe droughts during 1971 to 1972. The drought of 1970-73 affected almost 80% of the villages in the state and about 15 to 30 million people out of a population of 50 million. During the decade of 1961-71 agricultural growth in the state was 0.07 per cent per annum, while the population grew at the rate of 2.7%. Consequently the condition of agricultural laborers deteriorated.<sup>4</sup> A study by S.N. Kulkarni of migration due to this drought revealed a stark picture of its impact: among the migrants, 53.7% migrated due to the drought, more specifically due to failure of agriculture, and absence of any work in the village. There was migration of individuals and entire families; one of his sample surveys shows that nearly 60% had migrated as entire families; some households moved with their cattle as well. The administration on the other hand claimed that sufficient relief works had been created and there was no reason for people to migrate. With this high magnitude of migration, despite the satisfactory rains in 1973-74, about 50 percent of the migrants could not return to their homes, evidently due to lack of confidence at being able to find remunerative work in the village.

Many of the conservancy workers in Mumbai belong to the families that did not return to the village. A few of the workers whose families owned land in the village could not survive on it as it was too small a land holding, or rain dependent. The land owned by Sampat's family was acquired by the government for construction of a water body, and the compensation given was too meager to be of much help to them. They sold the remainder of their plot of land, and migrated to Mumbai. With this, their link with the village was broken.

Working as casual labour in Mumbai did not allow for parents to send the children to schools that offered a decent quality of education. All of them went to municipal schools and dropped out at some stage without completing their 10<sup>th</sup> standard, to join the labour market. One of them started work as a tin cutter after studying till the 8<sup>th</sup> standard; he earned Rs. 28 per day. Another dropped out in the 7<sup>th</sup> standard and took up a cleaning job; one of them did not go to school at all and joined his father in his work of selling ice creams as a street vendor. None of them have had access to decent formal education, and were compelled to start work, and take up any kind of job as soon as they could, in order to contribute to the household income.

Multiplicity of jobs i.e. holding more than one job simultaneously is a feature of the urban poor in the informal economy. These workers continued with their initial occupation even after getting into the conservancy work on contract basis. This was possible because they worked in shifts. For instance, Jagannath, who was introduced by his aunt into the *jhaadukhaata* or job of sweeping the streets as a contract worker, continued with his job as tin cutter after his shift at the municipal corporation got over, since the Rs. 40 that he earned as daily wages was inadequate for survival. Jeetu another worker arrived in Mumbai with his wife and built a small hut on a marshy piece of land in what is now a well established low income area in an eastern suburb of Mumbai. He begged for food from others in the initial days when he had no work; he found a job as a construction worker and his wife started as a waste picker. She continued to do this work even after he joined a voluntary organization that had taken a contract for city cleaning work. He wanted to return to the village to till his small piece of land, but lost hope of being able to do so when the situation in the village continued to be grim even after 3 years. Eknath, who was born in Mumbai, to parents who worked at construction sites, married a girl from a village. They do not have any land in the village, and the income is too insufficient for her to even visit her village. His wife works as a wastepicker. Azim got the job of *safai kamgar*<sup>5</sup> with the help of his neighbours since the dumping ground (landfill) is close to



the place where they and other conservancy workers live. Initially his monthly income was Rs. 2300 per month in 2004 with either morning or evening shifts. In addition to this job, he used to take up some part time work in the nearby areas. His wife Shaziya stayed indoors and was not engaged in any economic activity to support her family.

These young men who took up conservancy work related jobs on contract basis were optimistic that they would gain employment security or permanency over a period of time. Jeetu paid a bribe of Rs. 500 to get the job with the voluntary organization that had a contract for cleaning. He then joined the union of contract labour in the hope of becoming permanent in the job because he had noted that some of the migrants in the city who were doing this work, had become permanent in their jobs. Sampat's first job was on the *kachra gaadi* (waste collection truck); he was introduced to it by his friends in 2001 and he joined the union in 2005. His income of about Rs. 60-70 supported his wife and three children; they lived in a rented hut in a *basti* <sup>6</sup>.

Conditions at work have been tenuous, to say the least, because of the way the contract system operates. Take the case of Jeetu: he started work in the morning shift in the *Jhadukhata*<sup>7</sup>, sweeping and cleaning the roads and drainage, between 6.30 am to 1.30 pm at Thakkar Bappa area of Chembur; his wife worked as a wastepicker, i.e. as an own account worker. The work of *safai* with a voluntary organization, became the mainstay of the family and was supplemented with the income of his wife. Jeetu got a daily wage of Rs 40 and a holiday on Sunday. Other than this, any absence from work resulted in wage deduction. There was no bonus, no social security or equipment like gum boots and gloves even for hazardous work like cleaning the drainage. The contractual nature of work did not offer any future protection.

The reasons for the death of these young workers are as obvious as they are complicated. They point towards a number of factors that make for a difficult life in the city. Jagannath's family troubles bothered him; his relationship with his father was strained after his step mother arrived. Sometime after he took up the corporation job, he started consuming alcohol regularly; which led to domestic violence. He died due to alcohol related problems in 2008. At the time of his death, his relatives and family members were present, but there was no other assistance from elsewhere. Jeetu, after working in the cleaning job from 1997, was diagnosed with cancer in 2004. Even after the treatment he continued to work with no financial or social support and died in 2008. Sampat, after doing this work for seven years, was diagnosed with tuberculosis in 2008; his alcoholism aggravated his condition and he could not be cured. He died in 2008 and his family had no source of financial support or security. Eknath met with an accident, when he was trying to board a bus to go to work, and died of head injuries. Azim died at the age of 28 due to some stomach ailment.

The condition in the workers' families continues to be precarious after their death. Jagannath was in the category of 580 workers whose case was being fought by the union and was under litigation. Since he had not registered for any insurance scheme, his family did not get any benefit after his demise. His wife joined the same occupation and started work on a contractual basis. She lives with her son and daughter in a hut that she owns. Her daughter continued her schooling till the 9<sup>th</sup> standard and dropped out after failing the 10<sup>th</sup> standard examination, and son is studying in the 10<sup>th</sup> standard. The daughter stays at home and makes flower *gajra* (garlands for putting in the hair) that are sold at traffic signals or on the streets. The union has association with the family at the workplace. The family has no ties with the village as there is no land and no social or family support and is preoccupied with their daily struggle for survival.

Jeetu is survived by his wife, a son and a daughter. The daughter who was around 15-16 years old was married and the son was just 10 years old. He dropped out of school and started to work in *Dattak Basti Yojna* <sup>8</sup>. He subsequently enrolled for night school to complete his schooling.

After his death, Jeetu's wife did not get the job in his place and no ex-gratia payment was given to the family by the municipal corporation or the voluntary organization that had employed him on behalf of the corporation. The only solace was Rs. 30000 that they received as insurance amount under one scheme because the union had helped them to sign up for it. Jeetu's wife continues to work as a wastepicker and runs the household. Her son has started work as a *safai karmachari* and goes on trucks to collect solid waste. He has also joined the union and shares the hope of his father that some day he will become a permanent *safai* worker with the help of the union. The family is not apologetic about the garbage work but recollect that Jeetu was reluctant to take up this work when he had migrated to Mumbai. This is a life that could perhaps have been saved if medical check-ups were available for contract workers.

Sampat is survived by his wife Anita and their three daughters, the third of whom was born shortly after his demise. His wife runs the household through her income as a domestic worker. She joined the *Dattak Basti Yojana* but the scheme was terminated in 2013-14 and she had to get back to domestic work. She works through the day, and earns Rs. 4500 per month. All the daughters study in municipal schools. She remarried a few months ago, mainly for support for her children. Her husband who works as a driver, has two children from his first marriage. He does not live with Anita, but visits frequently and helps her financially occasionally.

After his death, Eknath's wife lives with their two sons aged 15 and 13 in a small hut in a *basti* in the city. It is a low lying area and surrounded by garbage. She continues working as a wastepicker, and earns about Rs. 100-150 per day, half of what she earned before the system of door-to-door collection was started at the city level<sup>9</sup>; this she says is not enough for the family to survive. Her older son dropped out of school after the 7<sup>th</sup> standard, and works as a helper with a caterer; he gets 8-10 days of work in a month, where he earns Rs. 100-150 a day. The younger one is studying in the 7<sup>th</sup> standard. With Eknath's demise, the family has lost his income of Rs. 203 per day. The tension of survival and malnutrition has taken a toll on her. She looks very fragile with wrinkled face and several years older than she actually is. Since Eknath died in a road accident, neither the municipal corporation nor the union has rendered any assistance to her. She does not feel like returning to the village since there is no land.

Azim is survived by his wife Shaziya, three sons and a daughter. The son was nine months old when his father died. All the children go to municipal school. Shaziya stays with her parents in a one room that has two storey sleeping arrangement under one ceiling. Shaziya's two brothers who are married, one who is single, also stay in the same home. Her grandmother who is ailing lives with them. The Rs. 25000 that Shaziya received as insurance from Jana Shree Bima Yojna has been utilized for fees and schooling expenses for her children. In addition, she also received her husband's wage arrears of Rs. 3000. Shaziya is anxious about her future after her parents pass away, and wonders how she will support her children without any source of income. She took up the work of cleaning utensils in houses after the death of husband but father did not let her, saying that he would take care of her children. He is insistent that she should not take up *safai* work, though she did try to get the job. She earns Rs. 2000-3000 per month through work as a helper with a voluntary organization in the area. She wishes to educate her children so that they can have a good life.

Conservancy work on a contract basis is structured to extract maximum work while keeping labour in a feudal relationship with the contractor. While there are other workers who have lost their lives while at work, the cases in this section point to the subtle yet undeniable links between the work and the cause of death. Alcohol consumption for instance, is a significant health issue for this section of labour. It is often explained away by workers as necessary to enable them to deal with the stench and filth that surrounds them through their working hours. However, that it is an issue that must be

problematised, cannot be denied. Municipal authorities are responsible for providing decent working conditions, if not transforming the nature of work that is indecent. The quality of state-run health services that the workers have access to is poor, and incomplete. Hence the overall conditions that make life miserable continue as they are, with sporadic efforts by individuals and The condition of the families after losing its main income earner indicates the absence of social income, and any significant support. With children dropping out of school, joining the informal workforce and even the same occupation, unless the conditions of work change for the better, ensuring Decent Work for this section of the workers, the next generation is likely to fall into more difficult times.

### **(iii) Sleepless in Mumbai – Elderly Security Guards**

One of the visible changes in the city of Mumbai is the presence of significant numbers of what appear to be elderly or older migrants working as security guards across various types of properties. The beginning question here is: what brings into the workforce, these populations that should now ideally have the choice of leading less strenuous lives; why do they take up these jobs that appear to pay poorly, demand 12 hours of work, and deprive the worker of sleep and social security? What does this indicate about the role of the state and structural nature and violence embedded in poverty? Is this section of the workforce another manifestation of 'extreme precarity'?

According to the Planning Commission (2011), by 2050, one out of every five persons in India will be aged above 60 years. The demographic profile of India has led to a projection that the total number of elderly in the country is expected to increase from 6.9 per cent of the population in 2001 to 12.4 per cent of the population in 2026 (Subaiya and Bansod, 2011). Using NSSO data from 1983 to 2004-05, Selvaraj et al estimated the total number of elderly workers in India to be 31 million – about 7 per cent of the total workforce. Most of the research on elderly in India has focused on issues of health, residential arrangements, social security and ill-treatment (Dhar et al, 2014: 4). The few studies that have looked at workforce participation, have described trends in employment and wages (ibid).

While most of the elderly workers belong to the 60-69 year age group, the workforce participation decreases with increase in age. A study of workforce participation among the elderly in India (ibid) finds that there is a decline in workforce participation rate among the elderly, as well as increasing informalisation of the aged workforce - of workers in the 60-65 year bracket by about six percent. While this result may be attributed to jobless growth in the Indian economy squeezing out the elderly from the formal sector, such an explanation overlooks recent trends in employment in India. Given the easy nature of entry in to the informal sector labour force, this has led to aged workers from low income households flowing to this sector to augment household income (ibid, p. 20). Workforce participation of the elderly, may in the short run, enable them to be economically independent, 'particularly in view of its externalities'. But the declining workforce participation rate for the elderly is likely to be due to declining job opportunities, poor health, lack of skills to match with modern production techniques, and unfriendly public transport (Dhar et al, 2014: 14; Pandey, 2009), or because of the "buffer provided by MDM, NREGA, PDS etc." (ibid: 16) The elderly workers in urban areas are found more in the service sector. What is a matter of concern is that they are employed in sectors that are marked by low earning, with their earnings being lower than those of others in that sector. Inadequate social security adds to the financial distress, dependence, and health problems of the elderly, particularly for the rural elderly, female elderly living in nuclear families, and elderly with health problems.

Further, Selvaraj (2011) found that more than 70 per cent of the elderly workers are illiterate or do not have primary education. This implies that “it is economic vulnerabilities that ‘force’ the aged to work in India. Labour force participation is higher among the poor elderly than among the richer elderly. However, this difference is more marked among the female elderly workers.” (Dhar et al, p.6). In developing countries, on the other hand, policies targeting elderly from low income households have failed to attain their objectives. This calls for other substitutes to protect the aged population from destitution and poverty. One such instrument is the labour market (Dhar et al, 30 - 31).

More interestingly, although the elderly workers receive lower wages than the non-elderly, their contribution to the total household income is substantial, amounting to 4-5 per cent on an average (ibid). Data of 2009-2010 finds that the elderly among the scheduled castes are participating more than others in urban areas, while in the rural areas, it is the elderly among the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes who participate more. Since care work, household chores and care of grandchildren is not being counted here (ibid, p.7), it is likely that the work of women elderly in particular is highly underestimated.

Existing studies appear to point to the fact that the participation of the elderly in the workforce is prompted by difficult economic and social conditions in the household, especially when they take up low paying insecure jobs, as they do in the global south, and in industries that are poorly regulated, and yet have large numbers of the workforce competing for the jobs. The larger structural reality, the inadequate social security regimes, as well as the micro level struggles for surviving in conditions of poverty, have created work spaces that allow for subsistence and survival, while pushing populations like the elderly into the workforce. One of these spaces is within the security provision industry where young and old workers are absorbed, trained, and deployed to stand guard for different types of properties or individuals.

Literature on security provision highlights some of its key features: in the North American context (United States and Canada) the shift of this service from the public to the private sphere occurred as early as the 1970s. Research by Shearing and Stenning in 1983 points to the growth in “private security”, which provides police services on a fee-for-service basis to anyone willing to pay. The service offered by private security is also seen as more comprehensive than that provided by the public police force. Further, public policing and private security operate in different contexts: the former within the ambit of public law and the criminal justice system, and the latter within the context of “private justice”. Private security in North America now outnumbers the public service, resulting in restructuring of institutions for maintenance of order, and a gradual erosion of the role of the state in this regard. Thirdly, the nature of spaces that need to be protected has changed. With increase in “mass private property”, private corporations have taken charge of the protection of these properties. This shift has taken place without any opposition because of the nexus between private property and private security and the consequent legitimation of the latter. The analysis of this industry discusses its non-specialized character; its client-defined mandate; and the character of the sanctions that it employs (ibid, p. 499-500). This was the situation several decades ago in North America; these are the issues that are perhaps relevant in the Indian context at present.

Dhar et al (2014) find that Brash’s work (2006) speaks about how “new spatializations of social processes empower certain social groups and disempower others, and become sites and weapons of struggle as well...new forms of spatial politics create new possibilities for political action (p. 349-350).

Interestingly, a study in Kenya points to the fact that security provision is a highly unregulated sector (Abrahamsen and Williams, 2005). While it is an important part of the economy

and a significant employer, it is a “notoriously low paid occupation...long hours and very little remuneration”. In spite of a minimum wage stipulation from 2003, there are variations across companies, and many do not pay the minimum wage. At the industry level, survival for the smaller companies is challenged if they have to adhere to payment of minimum wages; the justification for this rests upon the labor surplus economy where there is competition for low paying jobs (p. 426-428).

An appraisal of the security provision industry in Thane city, which is part of the Mumbai Metropolitan Region<sup>10</sup> points to the existence of tens of registered companies that provide security personnel for protection of various types of properties – those owned by the government and those owned by individuals/collectives or private firms; residences or official, and so on. There is an active presence of regulatory bodies such as the Labour Commissioner, and the Police Commissioner, who play the role of licensing, and monitoring the functioning of these registered companies that are engaged in security provision. A Security Guards Board for Brihan Mumbai and Thane district <sup>11</sup>, constituted by the state government works according to The Maharashtra Private Security Guards (Registration of Employment and Welfare) Act 1981 and has mandated rules for the companies, including minimum wage payment (monthly wage to range from Rs. 10705 – 13015 depending on the category of guard), upper and lower age limits for recruitment and employment as security guards. However, there is considerable variation in the scale at which the companies operate: some have 30 to 35 employees, while others claim to have 1500 – 2000 recruits that are placed across various properties. Wages vary significantly across the companies from less than the minimum wage to what may be termed as a more decent wage.

However, with multiple stakeholders: the government attempting to control and regulate this industry, the companies as the contractors/recruiters, the private property owners as the employers, and the security guards at the bottom of this hierarchy, the situation is complex, and appears to be in flux. One thing seems certain: the employee as a security guard is the least in control of his work conditions and choices, and has multiple agencies that determine his work situation. One of the stipulations is that the recruits should be between 18 and 60 years of age. While the lower age limit is one that the recruiting company adheres to, they do not do so with the upper age limit. There is an internal justification for it: housing societies are loathe to pay the stipulated wage; they seek alternatives and are ready to employ an older worker who is ready to work at less than the official wage. At another level, what is the physically able worker who is above sixty years of age, and in need of a means of subsistence for himself and his family, to do? It is evident that when rules are not followed, it sets in motion a series of interactions between the regulatory authorities and the companies where things are covered up through bribery on one level, and through underpayment of wages on the other. In a context where social networks and connections provide opportunities for contractors to bring in ‘their own’ people into such jobs, such informality thrives and is sustained in the underground economy.

Interviews with some elderly security guards indicate that they seem to be located in a structural and systemic context that works against them. None of them wanted to mention the names of their contractors or employers.

The arrival at Mumbai, and the initial years of finding a foothold in the city, have been struggle filled for all migrants. Sushil Surve, now 73 years old, migrated to Mumbai from the neighbouring Raigad district at the age of fifteen, with his uncle. He had studied till 2<sup>nd</sup> standard in Marathi medium. Landlessness and poverty compelled him to migrate. In Mumbai, he started work in a hotel for Rs. 2.5 per month. After two months he shifted to a Central Bank branch and worked as cleaner. It gave him stability as the job was permanent in nature and offered him Rs. 68 per

month. However the permanent nature of job turned out to be provisional when his service was terminated in 1980 since he did not meet the educational qualification which was prescribed after bank nationalisation. He then worked at the canteen of a multinational firm for Rs. 250 per month for the next nine years, after which he was asked to leave because he had white hair, and the employers thought he had passed the retirement age. A dejected Sushil started to work in a pest control company for Rs. 1200 per month. However he found this work difficult and left after 6-7 months as he started to develop eye and other health problems due to the pest control medicines. The chain of jobs with relatively decent working conditions followed by this adverse condition at the pest control firm demoralized him, and he decided to stop working, and rested at home for two years. In this period his family was supported by savings and the income of wife who worked as domestic help.

After two years he started work as a security guard in Navi Mumbai, where he worked for more than a year at Rs. 1800 per month. After this till 2012, he did not take up a job. In 2012, he was approached by a private security agency through which he was placed to work at the office of a voluntary organization for Rs. 7500 per month. He has no social security, and gets a day off when the organization is closed.

Narayan Mishra belongs to a Brahmin family, and came to Mumbai from Jaunpur district of Uttar Pradesh when he was 16, with a person of his village, in order to support his family, and three sisters who were yet to be married. He dropped out of school after the 8<sup>th</sup> standard. Their 30 acres of fertile land notwithstanding, the family was hard pressed for money. In Mumbai, he started living in a central suburb in the tenement provided by his employer who had a flour mill; he worked here for Rs. 50 per month in addition to the free accommodation. His elder brother was already in Mumbai for a year when Narayan arrived here.

Narayan continued to work at flour mill for 6 years; his salary was Rs. 150 per month. He would start work at 10 am and handle all the operations of the flour mill; at 2 pm he took a break to go to his room, cook, eat, and rest, and resume work at 5 pm to continue till 11 pm. He was assisted by a person who cleaned the place. Narayan purchased the flour mill after 6 years through his savings and by selling the land in the village. In the next four years he was able to start new flour mills in three other locations; he also repaid the loan of Rs. 6.75 lacs.

It is family circumstances and inadequacy of single incomes that has brought women from migrants' families into the workforce, and made the male member take up multiple jobs and occupations. The gradual entry into the occupation of security guard has largely happened when the more physically demanding jobs became difficult for these workers. Sushil had got married in 1965. From the time he came to the city he lived in a slum in the north east part of the city, in a semi-concrete tenement. His wife started to work as domestic help to support the family. She is now 65 years old. Their two older sons earn Rs. 5000 per month; both work as assistants at the clinic of a dentist. The youngest son works as a driver and earn Rs. 9000 per month. Sushil lives in one house with two of his sons and their families; the eldest son lives in the same colony in a rented tenement due to paucity of space in the father's house. The family still functions as joint family and Sushil's wife manages the salary of all three sons. In addition, she earns Rs. 2000 per month as domestic help; Sushil earns Rs. 7500 per month. Thus the total income of the family of Rs. 29000 per month supports him, his wife, three sons, five grand children and their education.

Narayan was married at a very young age even before he came to Mumbai. He brought his wife and two sons to the city too after some years, in 1980; his sons started school. His monthly income was Rs. 12000 of which he saved Rs. 6000 each month. With the savings, he bought a Fiat car, and started driving it as a taxi, which he did for the next 35 years. In the meantime he bought

two more taxis on loan and repaid it in the next 15 years. In 2011 he stopped driving the taxi and started to visit the village frequently, in order to support the family of his brother, who had passed away. Narayan's wife passed away in 2011, and in 2014 he also came back to Mumbai to be with his children as none of his peers in the village were alive, and he was lonely.

Rajendra Kamble, who came to Mumbai from his village at the age of 30, worked at a textile mill at spinning thread for 8 hours a day. He recalls difficult times with noisy machines, smoke, heat and steam in the mill. He recollects it as 'dangerous' work. While other departments had relatively better conditions, the spinning department was the worst. After retirement in 2003, he stayed in the village for some years and thereafter joined a security agency in 2008. He used to get Rs. 782 as pension in 2008; it was highly inadequate to support the family so he took up the job of security guard. Initially he started at Rs 3500- 4000 per month and at present gets Rs. 11000 per month in a security company. He is anxious and is working under compulsion to feed the family and save money for his daughter. He finds this job to be better than that at the mill, because it has 8 hour shifts, and is not very difficult.

Asif Khan, now 75, from a family of carper weavers, came to Mumbai when he was barely 12 years old. After dropping out from school, he had spent three years with a *karigar* (skilled person) and learnt cycle repair. This was the job that he started with when he came to the city; he worked for an uncle for a few years and then got a job at the cycle company. He once assembled a cycle for the son of a sheikh from Dubai, who went on to win a cycle race. The sheikh was impressed with Asif, and called him to Dubai, where he gave him a job to help with visas in a travel company. Asif worked there for four months, but then returned to Mumbai, where he continued to do some work for the Dubai Consulate. He lives with his wife, son and daughter in law; his five daughters are married. He started working as a security guard in 2013, primarily because he was bored sitting at home. However, his physical condition speaks another story: he looks lean and fragile, and does not appear to be in good health. He has no savings, since he spent them on the weddings of his daughters, and has taken up this job in order to feed his wife and himself. As a person who witnessed the 'Quit India Movement' in Mumbai, he has views about how the city has deteriorated since after Independence.

Shinde, now 63, worked in a textile mill, which stopped working in 2007, rendering him jobless; he was desperate to get any work. Between November 2007 and August 2008 he worked at a wholesale outlet of a tea company as security guard, for Rs. 4500 per month but complains that it was difficult to run the household since the income has been almost reduced to half of what he was getting in the mill. Here with 8 hour shifts, he had duty of standing and making entry of in and out vehicles and gate passes of the visitors. He is now with a private security company. He does not complain about the job and says that it has dignity, as he recalls the steam and smoke filled working condition of the mill where he worked. He says that health is not at risk in this job as he does the job while sitting. He traces his journey of working with two security agencies before joining this one. His son is 22 and has studied till the 12<sup>th</sup> standard. He says that he worried about the future of son but he will continue to work till his health will permit. He says that if he stays at home he may lose dignity at home and among relatives.

In their old age, many of the migrants who are working as security guards seem to have precarious conditions at home. When being asked about the city or working in his old age, Sushil smiles and says that he has no complaints with the city. It has given him a livelihood, and a better life than that of his parents as landless agricultural labour in the village. Although he looks healthy even at the age of 71, working as security guard for 12 hours, does not allow any time for rest and leisure;

life is monotonous. But he consoles himself by saying that he and his wife are in good health and can work and in turn support the children.

Narayan's sons drive his taxis but do not support him financially. He lives by himself in a room, and has taken up the job of security guard at the ATM outlet of a bank some distance away; these are 12 hour shifts and he is 73 years old; he earns Rs. 7000 per month. He has developed a severe backbone problem over the last two years due his years of work at the flour mill and the taxi driving and has been advised complete rest by the doctor. However he continues to work without telling his doctor. Most of his salary goes towards his treatment since his sons are not supporting him enough. An emotional Narayan said that his flour mills were in his brother's name, and so he has no income from them. He is depressed; his sons blame him not for doing anything for them and giving away all the money to his brother. He looks very fragile and is trying to build his broken life at this age.

It is evident that none of these older workers are getting the stipulated wage; their poor bargaining position is also evident from the description of social and economic conditions in their respective homes. The legal regulation is obviously well intended, but it has led to the flourishing underground security provision industry, with security guards subjugated by the contractors. Given the long years of struggle in Mumbai by each of them, they seem to have built the family through immense hard labour in difficult conditions, and slipped again after a point, due to family relations, and other vulnerabilities.

## Conclusion

From the study, it appears that the reality of the lives of these two sections of the informal workforce is shaped by factors beyond work and wages – their living conditions, inability to cope with any exigency including illness or death, the atomised lives that they lead in the city in comparison to the village, absence of social security or access to quality welfare service, make for conditions of extreme precarity for them and their children. This reproduction of the Precariat within the increasingly inadequate welfare regime promises to be one of the biggest challenges for the country in the years to come.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> The fieldwork for the study was undertaken in the city of Mumbai, through interviews with workers, family members, and trade union activists (in the case of conservancy workers).

<sup>2</sup> These workers were members of a trade union of contractual conservancy workers.

<sup>3</sup> All names have been changed to maintain confidentiality

<sup>4</sup> [http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in:8080/jspui/bitstream/10603/4402/12/12\\_chapter%203.pdf](http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in:8080/jspui/bitstream/10603/4402/12/12_chapter%203.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> 'Safai' means cleaning and 'kamgar' refers to worker. The other phrase used interchangeably in this paper is 'conservancy worker'

<sup>6</sup> Low income settlement, also referred to as a slum settlement

<sup>7</sup> Sweeping related work/department

<sup>8</sup> This is a scheme under which solid waste in slum settlements is collected and transferred by members of community groups, to a common collection point for the municipal vehicle to take away. The municipal corporation gives a monthly honorarium to the group. This citizens' involvement in what is actually a key function of the municipal authorities, is a form of privatization in Solid Waste Management.



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<sup>9</sup> The Municipal Solid Waste Rules of 2000 made several changes in the solid waste management system across the country. Providing the door-to-door collection service meant that the transportation workers did this work. One of the fallouts of this change was that wastepickers' access to waste at the roadside bins etc., was stopped.

<sup>10</sup> MMR comprises Mumbai city, and its neighbouring urban agglomerations

<sup>11</sup> The Board has 3000 registered Principal Employers and 35000 registered Security Guards working with registered Principal Employers.

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# **Migrant, Vigilants and Violence: A Study of Security Guards in Mumbai**

**Ritambhara Hebbar & Mahuya Bandyopadhyay \***

## **Introduction**

This paper is set within the paradox of exploring the lives of migrants who serve as security guards or protectors to a city that is known for its politics of violence against them. How do security guards relate to their role and work when their situation and identity as migrants is uncertain and accompanied with suspicion? Mumbai's long and complex history of migration is made evident in the extremely diverse and continually shifting migrant population and through its politics of polarized identities along ethnic lines. Mumbai is known for its 'cult of violence' against migrants that came into prominence in the 1960s with the rise of the Shiv Sena and its leader Bal Thackeray and remained thereafter as the hobbyhorse of political parties to rekindle nativism for political advantage. This 'cult of violence' and the homogenized ways in which the migrant is perceived and represented form the hegemonic public discourse around issues of migration, the sons of the soil movement, changing forms of labour in the city and the emerging context of security, terror, panopticism and surveillance. The experience of the migrant security guard is framed by this paradox of multiple vulnerabilities and the work of protecting and ensuring safety, vital to life in the city.

This paradox unfolds variously, not just in the everyday experiences of security guards, but also in specific cases, which have over the years implicated them in different crimes in the city, as well as in a long drawn out legal battle over the control and regulation of security guards in the state. In exploring the organization and experience of security work in the city through these aspects, we attempt to challenge and move beyond the linear and descriptive understanding of the precarity of migrant labour; the fixity often assigned to the category, 'migrant'; and the simplistic understanding of security. The reexamination of these concepts lead us to an understanding of the various expressions of urban socialities in security work and the ways in which they coalesce with or militate against established discourses on security, migration and labour.

Following this introduction, the paper is divided into five broad sections. We begin with a note on the nature of fieldwork, and the challenges of doing multi-sited ethnography. The second section gives an overview of the security industry, with specific focus on Mumbai. Here we discuss the nature of the industry in Mumbai and the unique legal framework of security services in the city.

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\* Ritambhara Hebaar is a Professor, Centre for Study of Developing Societies, School of Development Studies, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai and Mahuya Bandyopadhyay is an Associate Professor, IJSW and Publications, School of Development Studies, School of Research Methodology, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai  
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In the third section, we present a thematic history of migrant labour in Mumbai to demonstrate the continuities in the processes that polarize the migrant in Mumbai. The fourth section ethnographically elaborates these processes in the contemporary context and also unfolds the structural violence embedded in the everyday work and life of migrant security guards. The last section, which is also the conclusion, conceptually engages with the idea of structural violence and its implications on the lives of migrants in the city.

## Locating the Field

Our first challenge was to get a sense of the number of security guards in the city. There is no official figure on the number of security agencies in the city or even on the number of people employed as security guards. We employed two routes to get a sense of the field. One, we visited security agencies, met agency owners to comprehend the nature and extent of the private security agency business in the city. Two, we engaged in fieldwork across the city of Mumbai, as we interviewed security guards in their workplaces, hung out with them and observed them while they were on duty, met owners and managers of private security agencies and conducted more formal, but open ended and unstructured interviews with them, in their offices. Given the limited time frame of this research we decided to interview only the male security guards. As part of our fieldwork, we also spent considerable time at the Maharashtra Guard Board, a large state run security service provider, which came into existence after the legislation to regulate the working conditions of security guards and the offices of one particular union of security guards.

We locate our work within the realm of multi sited ethnography. Multi sited ethnography defines as its objective the study of social phenomena that cannot be accounted for by focusing on a single site, geographical and otherwise; and often also requires the use of different methodological strategies. Multi-sited ethnography involves a spatial de-centredness (Falzon, Marcus 1998). For us, the study of the migrant essentially is the study of movement as we will argue later on in the paper that the category of the migrant is a perennial and not a fixed, decisive category. Thus, to understand the nature of urban sociality through the lives and worlds of the migrant we realized that such sociality could not be contained within one site or one kind of social phenomena. So not only did we traverse multiple locales such as different private security agencies, the residential buildings, offices and other service buildings, such as ATMs, a *dharamshala*, where security guards were on duty, the office of the Guard Board and the workers' union office, we also used different methodological strategies. For instance, we used the format of narrative interviews when we interviewed guards at their place of work and the more formal, yet open ended interview for owners and managers in the private agencies. The interviews with the guards at the workplace were conducted by a research assistant who also attempted to meet the guards in different shifts. The officers of the Maharashtra Guard Board appeared very cautious and 'guarded' in their response to our questions and here we visited as often as we could to enhance familiarity. We also realized the guard board wanted to put the legal framework that governs the work and business of security guards at the centre of all discussions. In keeping with their intent, we probed the legal cases and were able to procure some of the judgments of the cases around the 1981 legislation. The legal frame of reference is one of the significant aspects of this research and as ethnographers we realize that even if the judgments were to be read as 'texts' in the Geertzian thick description mode, it requires a different kind of training. At this point, we admit that our reading of the legal case material is rudimentary. How do we use the methodology of thick description to unravel the layers in the judgments? This raises important methodological questions.

Owing to these limitations in this paper, the legal frame appears as a backdrop to the structure of work and business within which the lives of the security guards are encased. It enables us to articulate the invisibility of the violent, demeaning and dehumanizing experience that becomes the life of the migrant security guard. Simultaneously, the ethnographic descriptions of everyday struggles of security guards, the cases of violence against guards, the cases where guards are deemed perpetrators of violent crimes – these instances make apparent the otherwise imperceptible violence of everyday life.

## **The Security Industry**

The private security industry is considered to be one of the fastest growing industries, and employs over 6 million private security personnel across the country. There are three segments in the industry- manned guarding, cash services and allied services. Manned guarding which includes ‘surveillance and protection of industrial, commercial and infrastructure facilities goods and people (both static and mobile), security checks, crowd management (e.g., event security) and close protection’ is the largest segment of the industry (FICCI 2013 a). Cash services, which pertains to ‘provision of secured logistics for cash and other valuables from banks and other corporate entities’, and allied services, that primarily refers to electronic security services, are small in comparison to manned guarding services (Ibid: 7). The contribution of manned guarding services to the private security industry is almost 90% (estimated to be worth approximately Rs. 350 billion). There has been an increasing demand for manned guarding services with infrastructure development and the perceived security threat broadly identified as ‘political and governance instability’ which include ‘strikes, closures and unrest’, and ‘terrorism and insurgency’ (FICCI 2013 b). Not surprisingly, the major customers of private security services have been industrial and corporate entities.

Even as the manned guarding services seek to provide an alternative to government security services, the manned guarding segment is fragmented and largely unorganised. The share of the industry in the organised market is 35%. While there are organised large companies that cater to large organisations, big retail and corporate units, the small and medium enterprises and individual establishments continue to largely rely on unorganized players for manned guarding services (FICCI 2013 a: 15). The big companies within manned guarding segment include multinationals such as G4S, SIS, Securitas India, and TOPSGRUP. Some of the companies with a national and regional presence are Bombay Intelligence Security India, Checkmate, TRIG Guard Force, Securitas, Hunter Security, Eagle Security, Sentinel Security, and Global Detective Agency. Other than the big companies, there are about 15000 small localised companies, highly unorganised and fragmented part of the industry, which concentrate only on providing manned guards. There is lack of clarity on the nature of these agencies, in the way they function, the nature of their operation and the extent of malpractices among them. Ironically, the government’s focus remains on capitalising on the market for these services with little or no interest in comprehending the security implications of an unmonitored manned guarding service.

Irrespective of the scale of their operation, the security agencies generate revenue on a ‘per guard basis’. ‘Companies enter a contract to supply guards across shifts for a premise, and get paid based on the number of guards supplied. Manpower-related expenses for the companies include wages, bonus and statutory contributions such as PF and ESI.<sup>1</sup> Companies add a markup on the cost to company of a guard for invoicing to the client. ...Leading companies often have branches across states, which serve as sales offices for developing relationships at a local level. Branches also serve as recruitment centers for guards. Moreover they often have their own P&Ls and they are responsible

for their own revenue, costs and meeting guard deployment requirements' (FICCI a 2013: 16-17).<sup>2</sup> This model reveals many issues that plague the industry. Our field research exposed the different ways by which agencies seek to optimise their profits through this model. Since the revenue is generated on the number of guards supplied, many agencies budget for more guards but in practice supply less number of guards by doubling up the duties of the guards they supply to maximise their revenue. In such instances, a guard would be expected to perform additional duties such as housekeeping, double shifts etc. Many of the guards we interviewed work two shifts, of 12 hours each and very often in different locations. They get paid an average of Rs. 5000 for each shift. Working double shifts help the guards to scrape a living in the city. For many, it takes care of finding shelter for the night in a city like Mumbai where housing is very expensive.

Mumbai has seen the mushrooming of private security services in the last few decades to cater to security requirements of private housing societies, private industrial houses, banks and malls. According to an agency owner who has been in the business since the 1980s, there were about 25 to 30 security agencies when he started. Now there are over 100 registered agencies, and thousands of unregistered agencies that operate illegally. To quote one of the security guards we interviewed,

...Mumbai mein bahut saare Jholachap (fake) security agencies hain doctor ki tarah...security line mein bahut tanashahi hai aur chorbazaari bhi hai...sab apna jhola fela ke bethe he, aur aadmi ko phasa phasa ke loot te hain...

(There are all sorts of security agencies in Mumbai, like fake doctors...there is dictatorship and double dealing in the security line...people are cheated and looted as everyone wants to make good money in this business...)

The quote reveals the dark underbelly of the security business in the city. This apparent lack of clarity on the number of security guards and agencies in the city is indicative of the shrouded nature of the industry, the stealthy nature of its operation and the political connections that it harbours. Our interviews with a few security agencies working in this field only confirmed our suspicions as they revealed how many of the politicians (mainly hailing from north India) are owners of prominent security agencies, and have an understanding with the top officials in the bureaucracy that allow them to run their businesses in the city without legal and administrative encumbrances. Besides politicians, the business is also dominated by retired army officials, who are have been provided the required permits and assistance by government of India for setting up security agencies. Another feature highlighted by private security agency owners is the red tape and corruption within the business. According to one of the registered Agency owner,

'In order to run an agency in the city, we need to get an exemption from the government of Maharashtra which is valid only for three years. After three years, the applications have to be resubmitted. There are 21 conditions and each of the condition requires verification from government officials. The process is tedious and takes minimum two years to be completed. For instance, one of the conditions for exemption is that you need certification from a training centre, a facility that most security agencies don't have...retired police officers have licenses for training so most of the agencies have to approach them for certification. Also one of the conditions is that no guard can be hired without police verification. Since most of the security guards are rural migrants, they are not permanent residents and without necessary documents to get police verification...It doesn't end with one license; there is multiple licensing..we need licence under PASARA too, which is given for 5 years...'

What this exposition does not reveal is how the entire industry survives on a system of brokerage or the ability to broker or facilitate delivery of state services in order to sustain itself. Agency owners exercise their private power to influence and negotiate with government officials to get clearances and certifications to run their businesses. For the migrant, his/her entry into the workforce is sealed through favours from the employer, friends, relatives and a whole chain of

networks that not only exposes his/her dependence on these 'significant others' in order to survive in the city, but also entraps the migrant into regional, caste and kin based socialities. These then become the basis for a sense of belonging, as well as estrangement, in the city wherein migrants never really emerge out of their rural constrictions. Even in relation to the agencies that hire them, they are in a double bind. They are dependent on the agency for securing official approval for them to work in the city, even as they feel stifled by the conditions and terms of work offered to them. This system of brokerage sustains the asymmetrical relationships within the business as well as in the city, and within which the rural migrant is the most vulnerable and powerless.

This vulnerability and the system of brokerage is also embedded in a legal context, largely hidden in the narratives of the migrant security guards, and yet, a defining aspect of the structural contours of the security business. While there are many laws that govern workers' lives and the contexts of primary employers and shops and establishments, we will refer here to two legislations – the Maharashtra Private Security Guards (Regulation of Employment and Welfare) Act, 1981 and the Private Security Agencies (Regulation) Act, 2005 (hereafter, PSARA). The former, (hereafter, Welfare Act 1981) emerged as a consequence of the efforts of a few union leaders who took inspiration from the Mathadi Act (headloaders). Some of the members felt that it was imperative that the lives of those who were responsible for securing and protecting property worth crores needs to be secured.

To begin with we encountered these two Acts as apparently conflicted, and the story of this conflict was told and re-told in the different interviews we held with owners and managers of security agencies and representatives of the Guard Board or the union leaders and members. In the narratives of security guards this antagonism, though not expressly mentioned, is reflected in the stories of negotiations with employers, with working conditions, and in the narratives of new connections in the city and the thriving of old networks and relationships, central to the work and lives of the migrant worker. The Maharashtra Private Security Guards (Regulation of Employment and Welfare) Act, 1981, a state level legislation regulates all security guards hired by principal employers by ruling that all such employers must hire guards from the state run security guard board only. Simultaneously, the Act offers certain exemptions from this rule. For instance, those providing armed guards are exempt from being under the jurisdiction of the above act. The PSARA, a national Act covering all states with the lone exception of the state of Jammu and Kashmir, intends to regulate the functioning of private security agencies through the setting up of a licensing system, implying that anyone carrying on a business of a private security agency can only do so after acquiring a license under this Act, which is granted, provided the company fulfils all other labour regulations and those concerning shops and establishments.

This legal framework and specifically the two apparently oppositional legislations leave the private agencies mired in a complex system of licenses, exemptions and bribes. The Guard Board is in an apparent situation of power, and yet well aware of its powerlessness, given the fact that they can only control a very small segment of the total business of providing manning services in Mumbai. Further, the Guard Board and the private security agencies are locked in a continuing legal battle as either the Guard Board or the Private Security Agencies Association file cases challenging the validity of the Acts that govern their business, with the intent of strengthening their positions, extending their fields of influence and securing a larger share in the overall business. Thus in focusing on the lives of security guards and the business of manning services we encounter a complex scaffold of antagonistic relationships between multiple organisations such as individual private security agencies, the Maharashtra Guard Board, the many workers unions with their corresponding political party affiliations, the private security agencies association, the strong personalities that dominate these organisations and the migrant and non-migrant security guard.

As our ethnographic illustrations in the paper will demonstrate, the labour and life of the security guard is at the mercy of the complex intentionality that governs the seemingly whimsical turns that the relationships between these multiple actors take. Thus, the conditions of work, the relationship of the worker to the principal employer and to those the guard serves, and the everyday implications of the larger legal tussles, contributes to a sense of disempowerment. This enhances the experience of marginality of the worker.

## **Mumbai and the Migrant**

The history of labour in Mumbai is complex and dynamic. This section draws on this history for an understanding, however limited, of migrant labour in Mumbai. The history of labour in Mumbai has predominantly centred on the growth of the cotton textile mills in the early and mid 19th century, the working class resistance, and the dramatic rise of the Shiv Sena that shook the foundation of the working class base of the communists in the city (Weiner 1978; Chandavarkar 2009; Prakash 2011; Purandare 2012). The decline of the textile mills in the 1980s, and subsequently the integration of the city into the global economy, has challenged our understanding of the nature of the working class in the city. There has been, according to Chandavarkar (2009: 44), a 'neglect of labour beyond the factory gates' owing to a 'paucity of sources'. It is both a political and a methodological challenge on how to locate and comprehend the conditions of the working class that is dispersed and fragmented across various businesses in the city. One of the ways of dealing with this challenge is to know more about the 'history of various trades, employments and occupations by which a vast majority of the working class and urban poor struggle to survive' (Ibid). History of labour in India is increasingly looking towards oral history to present emic perspectives on processes and personal experiences of labour that interestingly intersect with structural confines within which they survive (Adarkar and Menon 2004). The attempt in the paper is precisely this- to identify how the labour processes and the personal experiences coalesce in the context of security guards to reproduce conditions of structural violence.

There are a few discernible patterns of migration and migrant labour that emerge in our reading of this history. For one, the feature that stands out in this history is the figure of the migrant.<sup>3</sup> Despite the centrality of migrant labour in the making of the city, the category of the migrant emerges as a precarious one. This precariousness is reflected in the history of migrant labour in Mumbai, in the various ways in which migrant labour was sought to be regulated and disciplined through different institutional practices prevalent in the labour market. Mumbai had emerged as an important port and biggest cotton market in the world by mid 19<sup>th</sup> century (Chandavarkar 2009). The establishment of railways in 1860 connected Mumbai to the adjoining regions facilitating movement of people into the city seeking employment in the cotton mills. By the late 19th and early 20th century, cotton mills offered work opportunities to migrants in the various skilled and unskilled activities. The labour force was drawn significantly from neighbouring regions of Konkan, Ratnagiri, the Deccan, Kathiawar and Kutch in Gujarat, and north India (Chandavarkar 1994). The influx of migrants was directly or indirectly related to the agrarian situation in these regions. The combined impact of the land tenure system introduced by the British, growth of cash crop cultivation, conditions of drought and demographic growth led to peasants, tenants, smallholders, landless labour along with traders and merchants particularly from Gujarat and Konkan migrating into the city in search for employment. Thus even as Mumbai developed into a prominent industrial centre by the early and mid 20th century, its labour force was largely rural. Thus what brought migrants to the city

was not the security of the Mumbai labour market, but the insecure situations and lack of options in their native places.

In fact, the labour market in Mumbai was far from stable and secure. By the late 19th century, the textile industry employed workers for various activities, which varied from handloom weaving, dyeing, spinning, printing of cloth, tailoring, and dressmaking. There was also a demand for specialists such as electricians, blacksmiths, mochis, mechanics, and carpenters. An interesting feature of Mumbai manufacturing industry was its flexible production strategies, wherein it employed a large number of casual labour to overcome seasonal and trade related variations as well as maintained a small scale of operation specifically in relation to certain jobs such as tanning, dyeing, spinning, etc. Small workshops were set up employing small number of workers. Both the conditions of work and terms of employment were provisional.<sup>4</sup> Many other factories and industries grew alongside catering to the city population, opening up avenues for employment and small and home based businesses in the local market. Casual and unskilled jobs were mainly found in the dockyards, godowns and warehouses. Also known as Mathadi, it was the most physically demanding and hazardous form of labour and the least secure. The pattern of employment for such labour was not based on contract or a monthly basis, but on the basis of need. Seasonal and trade fluctuations then determined the availability of work as well as the wages.

Chandavarkar mentions how a significant number of people were listed as 'itinerant traders, pedlars, and hawkers' in each census, an indication of how many textile mill workers took to self-employment to survive through unemployment and periods of strike (1994: 92-3).<sup>5</sup> Amidst this irregularity of work opportunities, indebtedness of various kinds was rampant. Security concerns led to the emergence of security services as physically strong labour was hired to guard property, shops and establishments from theft and noncompliant workers, serve as bodyguards to the propertied, and recover rents and debts. Chandavarkar (1994: 93) mentions how in the early 20th century, the Pathans were a popular choice as security guards. Despised by those they displaced, they were victims of communal riots that took place in February 1929. They were replaced by Nepalis who subsequently were displaced by workers from north India, primarily from Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. In recent times, there have been people from Odisha and Assam seeking jobs as security guards.

In this competitive and uncertain condition of the labour market, migrants were left to compete with each other. Jobbers or intermediaries between employers and workers became indispensable in regulating unskilled and casual labour in the market. Recruitment of labour through jobbers, critical to the industry for ensuring a sustained supply of unskilled labour and production, also ensured the circulation of labour at regular intervals. The figure of the jobber has been significant in regulating and limiting the interaction between the employer and the worker. The jobber system restricted the growth and affinity to any employer and work space, as the affiliation was with the jobber and not the recruiting firm or establishment.<sup>6</sup> For migrants, the jobber was the gateway to a life in the city, someone who wielded great influence in the market and also very often in one's caste, kinship, village and neighbourhood circles. In fact, the 'irregularity and uncertainty of work' in Mumbai compelled the migrant workers to retain ties with their villages as well as establish newer 'network of associations' based on caste, kinship and regional affiliations to even out the insecurity of life and work in the city (Chandavarkar 1994, 2009). While this enabled the migrants to secure a life in the city, it denied them access to other forms of sociality particularly in relation to their work space.

Clearly, in this exposition migrants are not those who are new or outsiders to the city, but those who are entrenched in a set of structural relations that treats them as itinerant asylum seekers. In this sense, the category migrant is not a temporal category; it is perennial, experienced and



reproduced structurally in the conditions that keep them vulnerable and uncertain about their rightful claims to the city.

Agrarian crisis remains one of the main factors for migration into the city as evidenced by our interaction with security guards in the city. Agricultural involution or 'where a growing part of the workforce is absorbed on the basis of fragmentation of land and sharing of work' has been responsible for growing rural urban migration (Sanyal & Bhattacharya 2009: 40). This has been so, for many of the security guards we interviewed. Most of the security guards we interacted with have agricultural land back home but not enough to eke out a living. Probably what distinguishes security guards from earlier migrants is that they form a part of the 'survival circuit' of the global city (Ibid). In discussions on the changes in the urban political economy, wherein cities no longer serve as sites of production but are dominated by the service sector that have emerged as sites of 'management of surplus' evidenced in the growth of financial and retail sectors, there has been the corresponding rise of 'immaterial labour'. This form of labour is 'wealth managing rather than wealth generating labour' (Ibid: 43). Security guards belong to that part of the informal economy that attends to the unskilled low paid jobs generated by the service sector (Ibid: 44). In this context, it was interesting for us to comprehend the conditions of work of security guards in this new location of migrant labour.

The migrant has always been a peripheral figure within the history of labour as well as in popular politics. The history of labour reveals how migrant labour was never allowed to develop ties with the city. The migrant's relationship to the city has always been mediated by institutions of caste, kinship and village. For this very reason, the migrant has been a figure of hate and contempt in popular politics. In fact, the politics of belonging in the city has survived by keeping the figure of the 'despicable migrant' alive in its collective memory. The question however is as to what it means to belong in a situation where chance and indeterminacy are central to one's existence? The section that follows seeks to explore the relationship of the migrant with the city in the specific context of our study of security guards, the uncertainties that characterises their work and life in Mumbai. We articulate multiple vulnerabilities and people's differential capacities in dealing with them. The section also focuses on layering the experience of and subsequently, the category, 'migrant'. Most of the security guards we encountered through our fieldwork in the city of Mumbai are migrants from the states of UP, Bihar, Odisha and from certain districts in Western Maharashtra. All of them said that their movement could be attributed to the impoverishment of their own contexts and the perceived opportunities for work, livelihood and mobility in the city. Yet, in the politics of the city these migrants are separated as the Marathi and the non-Marathi migrants. The category Marathi *manoos* is juxtaposed against the *bhajiya* (essentially the migrant from UP and Bihar). This differentiation, with pejorative and discriminatory overtones, is further replicated in such identities as the house owner vs. the non-owner or the resident vs. the tenant. These binaries coalesce in the ingrained, yet external and academic formulation of the outsider and the insider.

## **Everyday Life and Work of Security Guards**

In this section we have thematically arranged selections from our in depth interviews with security guards to provide a glimpse into, and a perspective on, their life in the city as migrants, their struggle to survive in the city, the nature of exploitation at work, and the challenges of security work.

## Migration and the Promise of City Life

As discussed above, migration is symptomatic of the crisis within agriculture. However, the extent of the crisis is evidenced by the number of upper caste (Brahmins and Kshatriyas or thakurs as they are known in Uttar Pradesh) security guards we encountered during our research.<sup>7</sup> Declining revenue from agriculture and the inability to fulfill family obligations and an aspiration for a better life seem to be some of the dominant reasons for migrating into the city.

### CASE 1

A security guard, an upper caste Thakur from Uttar Pradesh, recapitulates the reasons for moving to Mumbai and on why he prefers to work as a security guard,

Our share in the property gradually reduced, with property getting divided among all the members of the family. Each one of us was left with smaller portions of land. We owned large tracts of land but after division, I'm left with only 5 bighas of land.<sup>8</sup>

I came here in 1980s. My uncle had arranged a job for me in BARC (Bhabha Atomic Research Centre). My uncle asked me *'will you work as a sweeper? (jhaduwale ki naukri?), (jhadu maarne ka kaam karoge?)'*. I was shocked. I said, *Jhadu! (Broom)*. How can I do the cleaning job? *Kya chacha aap bhi humko aisa naukri dhund ke diye. (What uncle, what kind of a job have you found for me!) Praan jaaye to jaaye par hum aisa kaam katai nahi karenge (Even if I have to die, I won't do a job like this). Humare ghar me jo bivi bache he unse ham kabe, humara jo hain tum sab kha jao, uske liye humko kitna bhi mehnat karna pade hum tayyar hain. (I told my wife and children that you can 'eat up' all that I have; for that I am ready to slog as much as required)'*

Since the kind of job I was getting in Bombay was not appropriate this time too I thought of going back to my village. Before coming to Bombay I used to work on my agricultural field. We had irrigated land, motor etc. There were 4 to 5 families of field labourers who would work in the farm. We would supervise their work. *'Mast chalta tha?'* (Was going on fine!) But when the division of the family land happened, it reduced the share per person.

Inflation has also led to several changes in the wages of farm labourers. Earlier the wages of the labourers was in kind which included food (one and half kgs of rice); roti at breakfast and lunch was served to them by 12 noon. The final quantity of agricultural harvest was shared with the labourers too. Also, the brothers began demanding their share in the property. So the family property was divided. The land area under cultivation reduced. Earlier there was a time when the farm land produced more than enough to feed 70 family members. Now it cannot even produce enough for 7 members. Our position became very weak. I came here and now agricultural production is entirely dependent on the labourers. Every year, in the different agricultural seasons, I had to invest approximately Rs. 25000. Earlier we were very rich and could support more than 200 labourers. During the time of harvest, labourers were allowed to take as much as they can carry. As part of tradition it is the payment for their work so we cannot stop them from taking agricultural share, but it was a loss for us. Earlier we had more than enough produce with very little investment cost, but later it became difficult to manage the cost for agriculture with reduced production. It was a business of loss. I had to invest this huge amount of time to start agriculture as per seasonal needs. But could not say anything and ignore when the labourer would take away more than what he is entitled to get, as I was dependent on the farm labourer for my agriculture. ...there was only outflow of money and very less income from agriculture. *Malikana kheti me babot ghata hua (farming on my own land was unprofitable), to usebatai me de diya to ab tension khatam ho gaya (so leased it out on share cropping basis)*. If children need money for education we sell some grains.

## CASE 2

I never brought my wife to Bombay as once women come here, they don't want to go back to the village. They become more aware of the rights (kaayda kanoon) and forget their culture (sanskaar)...like my bother's wife...she also came from the village but now she doesn't want to go back to village as life here is easier. Back in the village one has to bear the heat and do hard work for overseeing agricultural work. Here in the city, they get all vegetables by buying and have to simply cook it.

## CASE 3

Generally we Brahmins prefer to select work, which involves lesser physical stress. As you know Brahmins traditionally are not habituated to work under other people and our traditional profession does not involve tiring/hard work. There were many other work opportunities like working in factories, but for that one has to bear the heat of the fire and do a lot of hardwork. We Brahmins cannot go through it. This job of security is good for us. I had studied till 10th standard and could have managed to find a job during my youth time. But I never bothered to get a job. I was more convinced about working on my agricultural farm rather than serving others. But who can predict the future. I decided to get a job when I faced financial problem at my home.

The selections reflect the situation in agriculture, wherein not only has it become unprofitable but also unattractive for the landed to directly engage in farming. The changing attitude towards agriculture is also because of the changes in agrarian relations as they now find it difficult to employ labour on their terms. This also suggests the phenomenon of 'devalorisation of labour'. Devalorisation of material labour has been discussed in the context of the emergence of immaterial labour that undermines traditional labour, for its association with grime and soiling of hands. There has been a systematic displacement of traditional labour by immaterial labour involved in the production of immaterial products such as care work, travel and tourism, education, advertising, entertainment etc. Although this concept has been elaborated more in relation to the 'upper circuit of global capital', the effect of devalorisation is evident in the 'survival circuit' too, particularly among the upper caste migrants who seek clean jobs in the city. In the cases presented above, the 'devalorisation of material labour' in the village extends to the professions that these migrants seek in the city (Sanyal & Bhattacharya 2011: 44).

However, there is also a fear of city life breaking the habit of hard work required in agriculture. This fear is qualified by the aversion many of our respondents have for manual labour in the city. Such aversion is often anchored to and justified through the norms of caste, patriarchy and gender. Through such responses one gets a glimpse of the continuities in the life of the migrant and even as we are aware that this is a sociologically significant argument, it is nuanced in many of our interviews as in the one presented below with a notion of convenience. The act of migration and the choices and decisions that the migrant makes to secure a livelihood in the city, to organize work and family life and maintain links with the village are indeterminate and based on the circumstances that the migrant encounters. The sociological emphasis on continuity suggests that the migrant has control over the decisions made in the course of migration however our research shows that this is not necessarily the case. Mostly, choices made are as indeterminate as the circumstances that the migrant encounters in the city even though the categories of caste, gender and patriarchy are evoked to restore a sense of control.

## CASE 4

Another Muslim security guard belonging to Bihar recounts his multiple attempts to set up business in his village, in the hope of finally settling down there with his family. This desire to finally move back into the village is also one of the reasons why migrants prefer a flexible relationship with the city, so as to keep the option of moving in and out of the city as per their convenience.

I came to Bambai around 2010, five years ago. I keep going back to the village leaving my job as security guard here...because I wish to develop...Usually I go in October and come back after March. But that is not fixed either. When I make enough money to invest in this business then I go back around this time. That is the season of eggs when I do wholesale business. When I don't get enough returns then I wind up my business and come back to Bambai to earn money. Since now my business is confined only to winter months of the year, I have to come back. Gradually I would like to start some other business for other seasons so that I can make enough money and will be able to leave Bambai forever. I plan to set up a general store or sell fashionable items. I get some help from family also, to invest in my business.

I do not have any relatives in Bambai. But when I want to come back then I call the supervisor to search for a job in the same company. I leave for Bambai again when this supervisor confirms that he has already spoken to the manager and arranged a job for me. If anytime there is no vacancy for security job in the same company then I stay back in my village without any source of income till I get a job here. It is not necessary that I get the same site the next time. Wherever the vacancy is available then I have to go there for work but I have till now worked only in nearby places in south Bombay as I can avail of this room facility.

For most of the guards we interviewed, their personal story of migration does not end upon moving to Mumbai but really begins in their search for a foothold in the city. Asif Khan (age 54), originally hailing from Uttar Pradesh, had moved from Bhendi Bazaar in 1992 following the communal riots that destroyed his friend's shop in which he worked. It is then that he decided to take up a job as a security guard. Srinivas (age 55) originally from Telangana, moved to Mumbai at the age of 12. His father worked at construction sites. He too continued with the same work and in fact worked in Dubai for about two years as a construction worker. On his return, he moved back to his village and worked his farm for a few years but continued to work in construction sites in Mumbai during the off season. He moved back to Mumbai permanently following the death of his father and also because farming had become unsustainable for him due to unavailability of water. In the last five years, he has been working as a security guard, a decision he took after he developed diabetes and could not continue working in construction sites. As a security guard, in the last five years he has served at different establishments such as shops, clinics, and residential apartments. Gupta (age 50) has worked as a security guard ever since he moved to Mumbai in 1989. His father was a Sahukar (moneylender) who was murdered by dacoits. His father's death changed his life forever. He became a feriwala (moved from one place to another selling clothes) to make ends meet. On moving to Mumbai, he looked for alternative employment opportunities. He did two jobs initially. During the day he sold fruits, and worked as a security guard at night in different locations. Now he works as a guard in a residential apartment and also does other work related to the society such as washing cars, care taker chores and running errands for the society office.

Through these narratives we reiterate the diverse ways in which the promise of city life is conceived and managed by the migrant. While these multiple voices enable us to problematize the homogeneity built into discussions of the migrant experience, they also resolutely echo the idea that

the city of Mumbai holds tremendous potential to change lives. Whether the narrative of movement to Mumbai is seen through the lens of the impoverished migrant or the socially and culturally privileged migrant, the image of Mumbai as a city of hope persists.

### **The Paradox of Security Work**

For the migrant who enters into the security business this sense of hope is tinged with fear and dread, experienced in everyday life through demeaning relations and fragile and insecure conditions in the workplace. The life of security guards is full of insecurities, a paradox that reflects in the way they perceive their work and its significance in the larger context of guarding the city. Presented here are excerpts that reflect this paradox of being protectors in a city that labels them as outsiders and untrustworthy, who can be affronted by those they guard, accused of theft and reprimanded for their actions done in good faith.

Presented below are two responses of security guards that bring out this paradox of being protectors, who are treated like dogs.

*Hame jagah ki raksha karna sikhaya jata hai. Agar koi bada admi aa gaya to use salam karne ka. Sabse pehle to uniform pehanane ka matlab kya he ye sikhaya jata he. Usme sikhaya jata he ki, 'me ek rakshak admi hoon. Agar koi jagah hame dedi jati he to hamara dharm banata he ki uski raksha kare aur jaroorat padne par chhod ke bhage nahi. Security banana par teen chije lagu hoti he, mann jaan aur samman. Apne se bado ka man karo, agar jaan khatre me he to khatre me jane do, aur samman ka matlab he samne vale ko salam karte rabe. Ye tin chije sabse badi hoti he. Agar ye tino chije karoge to Mumbai me security line me koi nahi nikalega, sabko yahi lagega ki tum koi police department se ho.*

[We are taught to safeguard the place. If are told to respect and salute important people (bada admi). We are first taught how to wear our uniform. Then we are told to remember that we are security guards. It is our duty to protect the place we are assigned to. There are three things that are important for a security guard- heart, life and honour. Respect important people; don't fear for your life in times of danger, and to show respect means to learn to salute people. If these three things are followed by a security guard, no one can remove him from this line. Everyone will think you are from the Police department.]

This sense of purpose in the narrative of one of the guards is at odds with a comment made by another guard, 'Gaon mein log kutta palte hain, yahaan par log security palte hain' (In the village, people keep dogs, in the city they keep security guards). It starkly brings out the contrast between the ideal and the actual experience of security work, one which is all about unreasonable hours of work, poor remuneration, and insecure terms of their employment. This dual perspectivity is what dominates the sense of their job and its significance to the city. The following excerpt is an instance that illustrates the thin line between security and insecurity for the guards, on being implicated as a criminal in the course of their everyday work.

The following incident happened as the respondent was being interviewed. A lady resident called up the respondent complaining about how there was no electricity in one of her rooms after electricity was restored in the society, to which the guard told her that he would pass on the complaint to the electrician the next morning.

How can I help out with the electricity problem in someone's home? It is not a part of my work; neither do I have the knowhow for it. It is also risky to go to someone's home at such an odd hour. Anyone who checks the cameras can question my going to residents' flat at night. *Pehle apna Suraksha karo fir dusro ka.* (I have to first protect myself, then others.)

The guard then went on to describe his own fears of working in the night illustrating the lack of preparedness in case of an emergency. Calling the camera his twin, the reference is on how like the camera the security guard too is only a witness to what happens, to scare people by his presence, but beyond that, the guards according to him are just showpieces.

When I work at night shifts I do fear for my life. Har aadmi ko jaan ka darr to hota hai (Everyone fears for their life). Lekin phir bhi hum to logon ko darraane ke liye bathe rehte hai (Even then, we are here to scare others). Hamara Judwa bhai hamesha se camera hai (The camera is our twin). Watchman ka duty jo hai showpiece hai (a watchman's duty is that of a showpiece). Hamare paas to danda bhi nahi hain (We don't even have a baton). Jab hum log dress pehente hai toh apni safety pehle dekhte hain (We first secure our safety before we get into our uniforms). On joining as guards in a new place, we first check the whole building and remember all the exits from where we can escape if there is any unfortunate incident or any emergency like fire, bomb blast etc.

Nobody in my village knows that I work as security guard. I tell people that I work in computer sales shop and do repair work. If I tell that I am working as security guard, *hamara image kam ho jayega na. Hindi me chowkidaar kaha jaata hai, urdu mein bolte dafaadaar* (My image would get spoiled).

Across the interviews we conducted, there is a sense of futility associated with the work of security guards. While some expressed a lack of activity in the job and describe it as boring, some others consider it as a job fit for fools. *Bewakoof log yeh security guard ka naukri karte hai. Aur log bhi security guard ko bewakoof samajhte hai. (Only stupid persons take up the job of security guards; and security guards are also considered as stupid by people.)* This self-deprecation emerges in the context of the larger condition of work that undermines their self-esteem. The next section illustrates the humiliation and ill-treatment meted out to guards on a daily basis that makes them question the worth and importance of their work.

## **Everyday Struggles and Experiences at Work**

*Vardi pehen liye toh chalu hain aur khol diye toh free hain*

(When I am in uniform, I am working; when I am out of it I am free)

This response of a guard on being asked whether he gets a break from work suggests the level of disaffection among security guards in relation to their work. The following excerpts bring out the extent and nature of exploitation of security guards, the malpractices within the industry, poor conditions of work, poor and irregular pay, the constant fear of losing their jobs, and the adhoc and informal nature of their terms of work which inhibits a sense of stability in their life and work.

### **CASE 1**

Since the time I have started working as a security guard, this is the place I enjoy the most. Working in different security agencies, I have experienced a lot of exploitation. Now this is the last stage of my work. I will go back to my home as soon as both my sons are settled.

I like this place among all the places I have worked for... At other places, security agencies treat us really badly; their only agenda is to maximise money out of our services. While employing us on a contract basis, they deduct commission per security guard. They deduct money for uniform. It is difficult to get the full salary; they deduct money in some way or the other. Contractors focus on their profit. Even if they pay us lesser than what they have promised, we cannot complain. They force us to put in extra hours of duty. I am alone here with very less support. If I dare to raise my

voice against them, they retaliate. The salary would never be paid on time. Many times they pay as late as the 25th of the month. Sometimes the salary for the previous month would be paid only after completing more than 25 days of work in the current month. If we leave in protest, even then we are paid only the previous month's salary and are not paid for the days of service that we have worked for in the current month. If we complain, all they will do is get angry with us and tell us about our mistakes while working. The salary we get is what is left after deduction. If we demand the promised amount of salary which we rightly deserve, they not only refuse but argue with us...sometimes they even beat us since we are alone and therefore weak. They are stronger as they function in teams. There are no rights to which security guards are entitled to, nor any protection from such mistreatment. I never enter into any fight with anyone. I would either change my job or suffer quietly. I am generally soft spoken so I have never picked up any fight with them but of course it hurts.

All the security agencies are *chor* (thieves) and *lootnevale* (usurpers). Unfortunately I have mostly come across security agencies who have only looted the security guards. While I was working in Belapur SBI, there was one officer who used to ensure proper payment for us and make them pay us in front of him. Another security agency which was owned by retired army personnel... he was also an honest person.

Security job is a matter of responsibility. I got employed with the help of my relatives but I did not help anyone to get the work, as those who refer for work becomes guarantors and if he makes any mistake, guarantor also faces problem because of that. It is a booming business here. Now you will find maximum people from UP and Bihar working as security guards. *Earlier there was a trend of hiring a gunman from these two states, but now gunmen are not allowed so they left their gun back home and started working as normal security guards.* One has to keep looking for alternative earnings in case of losing one.

This case, as well as the other cases in this section, reveals the malpractices not just in relation to the guards, but also within the business that clearly compromised on the security of the city. The trend of hiring gunmen as security guards brings out the risks such practices entail for the city and for the guards. They live in constant fear of being wrongly implicated in criminal dealings. Also for the guards, good experiences in relation to their work stems from paternalistic associations, in the generosity and benevolence of particular individuals. It makes them dependent on such associations to add meaning to their work and derive a sense of self-worth. However such associations are an outcome of non standardization of work and lack of social protection. Both these aspects are at the core of their vulnerability and misgivings.

## **CASE 2**

Before this I have worked in D road at Lakshmi Niwas building. Then Anand Niwas near Jai Hind college in residential sites. I also worked as security guard at Salt water, fast food restaurant near Ambassador hotel at Nariman point. There also I was placed through the same security agency. For 12 hours of work in a month, I used to get Rs. 6000 as salary. I used to work on either day or night shift. So whenever it was day shift I would get food to eat. But I did not get any food for night shift. They would not deduct the charges of the food from my salary. This food was served to us in the kitchen. Till the time I finished eating my food in the kitchen, I would sweat equivalent to 3 glasses of water. Since we are workers, the restaurant management wouldn't allow us to sit at the serving area...as these areas are reserved only for visitors or customers. If worker (waiters, sweepers and watchman) also start eating from the same place like the customers then what self respect the customer will have; how will their business survive? That is why all the waiters, sweepers and

watchman would eat their food in the kitchen. I left that job because the heat emitted from the kitchen became unbearable for me.

### **CASE 3**

In 1991, I came to another relative's staying near Govandi station. My uncle was a fruit seller. So I began assisting him. He used to pay me Rs. 500/ month for assistance. I was also selling pani puri, bhel, etc. I started my own business of fruits after that. But it was not profitable. Then I started working at both places, during day time I worked at the fruit stall and at night I worked as security guard. As a security guard I used to get 1600 per month for working for 12 hours a day till 2001. Once in a year 1200 used to be deducted from salary for uniform. There was no such provision of holiday, payment was made as per the number of days worked.

After leaving 'S' security I started working in 'P' security. It used to provide services at commercial as well as residential sites. I got a job as a security guard in a residential society which had a hospital on the ground floor and residential houses in the above floors. There was 'M' hospital on the ground floor of residential site at Chembur naka. In 2001, I used to earn Rs. 1600 per month as salary for working as security guard at 'M' Hospital. The agency used to get payment in cheque and I used to get the payment in cash. I learnt through the residents that they paid Rs. 1950 as salary for security guard to the agency. But I was paid on Rs.1600 by the agency as my salary. I had to put 12 hours of duty. Doctor 'S' worked there in the hospital. When he bought a flat in this apartment, he insisted that I work here. I joined here in 2005. He was secretary of this society for a long time. Now he has shifted to some other apartment but still two of his cars are here. Here I am not employed through any security agency; I am paid by the society. They pay me Rs. 7000 per month plus Rs. 8000 for washing cars. It is not just a security guard work. "Apne ko sab kam karna padta he, maintenance ka security, kuch kharab hua to technician ko bulana, sab repair karvana etc" (Here I have to do all kind of jobs- maintenance related, contacting the technician of required, getting things repaired etc). Now it is difficult to get someone who is ready to work for less than Rs. 6000.

### **CASE 4**

Generally supervisors or rounder of security agencies are contacted for getting job, for which rounder get commission from the person he employs as guard. The actual salary of a security guard is Rs.7000- 8000 per month, but rounders take their commission out of it and pay as low as Rs. 4500 or 5000 to the guard. Initially when I was offered this work the rounder offered me Rs. 4500. It was not enough for me so I directly contacted the security agency and told them about my unwillingness to work for such less payment. After that they offered me Rs. 5000 which was later hiked to Rs. 6000. At present I am paid Rs. 6000. Payment is done in cash within the first ten days of the month. Salary is not paid on Saturday, so if 10th day of the month falls on a Saturday it is paid either before it or after it as security agency is named after a God who is worshipped on Saturday. The rounder gives the salary to us in person. We do not get any bonus also. Kabhi building valon ne kuch de diya to wohi. Koi site wala bonus nahi deta. (If the building people give something, only that. The site person does not give bonus.) Wo board wale security jinko 10000-15000 salary hain unko milta hai. Humare jaise chote pagaarwale ko nahi milta hai. (The security guards with the board who have 10000 to 15000 salary get bonus; we small salaried people don't get anything)

Usually security agencies provide uniform-shirt, pant, tie and topi (cap) and ID card. But this agency has not given anything except shirt (only one) for which they deducted Rs. 600 from my



salary. If they provide pants, they will deduct 1200 from my salary. I had pants so I took only the shirt.

I am employed on a contractual basis. Hence insecurity of losing the job is very high. Security agencies prefer to employ persons who are ready to work for lesser salary, so if they get a new person who is ready to work for lesser payment, they will remove other security guards who are already working with slightly higher payment. When they get such persons with lesser wage demand they can remove me over any petty issue by saying that my work is not satisfactory or I was found sleeping during duty hours. The rounder might come and click picture while I might be dozing/ taking a short nap sitting on the chair during duty hours. These petty complaints are often given by the rounder as he is the one who will earn commission out of new recruitments. Rounders don't have any timing to come. They can come anytime. After two-three visits, the rounders keep changing. It's not the same rounder who comes for supervision. We don't have any place to go for we do not have any associations or unions of the security workers to deal with such issues.

## **CASE 5**

One more person is employed here as supervisor of the security guard he works in day shift and I prefer to work in night shifts. Shifts are divided in work schedule of 12 hours. There are two reasons why I am working in the night shift. The person working in the day shift does not have his own house. He has to adjust with his other roommates so it is important for him to work during the day and go back at night. Other reason is day time involves a lot of work and negotiations with residents of the society compared to night time. It is better to avoid attending to too many complaints. Working on the post of security sometimes involves being treated badly by residents of the society. As a security, there are incidents of residents talking in a bad manner and treating us as inferior human being. *Kabul me bhi Gadhe Hote hain* (There are donkeys in Kabul too). Not everyone residing in such big buildings have learnt to respect people. They do not even respect the elderly. I have to work here as I get paid, but I can minimize such interaction by working at night hours. During night time such problems get reduced.

While working it is important to save one's *izzat* (honour) because - *Choonaa, moti aur insan bina paani ke kuch nahi hota* (limestone, pearl and human beings are nothing without water). For me the best policy of working here is to be good to everyone and others will have to be good to me. *Insaan ki izzat apne hath me, agar ham kuch galat karunga tabhi to samne vale ko mauka milega na hamse bure se bat karne ka* (Our self-respect is in our hand, only if we do something wrong that the person in front of us will get a chance to be rude). Regularly *hamari bat to sirf society ke logo se hi hoti hai vo bhi agar kuch kam hua to* (I only interact with the persons in charge in the society). *Company me to kabhi kabhi phone karne ki zaroorat padti hai* (I have to call up the agency at times). When some guard is on leave for a longer time I need to call the company to ask them to send some other guard. Generally if guards take leave for two three days we manage it by ourselves but if they do not come for a longer time, even residents of the society also enquire about it. It can be looked at as lack of responsibility of the company so it is better to call for new person instead of ruining the name of company. Generally there are no other problems for which we need to talk to the company. Our direct contact to our company is through phone and through the rounder. Rounder comes periodically to keep check on us. However it is not necessary that same rounder will come, they keep changing periodically. The rounder keeps check on whether we doze off during duty hours or doing our work attentively. My duty is during night hours and nights are meant to sleep so obviously I feel sleepy. Generally after 2 am it is natural to doze off. I make two to three rounds to avoid sleep, read

for a while and sometimes listen to the radio. If rounder finds any one dozing off he can complain about it. But it has never happened till now. I am a human being and I tend to do mistakes. Certain people are generous enough to let it go while other express anger and behave rudely. It is part to this job to listen to your clients.

Honour is one of the defining aspects of the making of the migrant experience. As in the narrative above, security guards often use honour as a strategy to explain their decisions at work. For instance, refusal to do housekeeping chores is often explained in terms of maintaining honour. In the case above, the guard chooses to work in the night shift to avoid interactions with residents in the society. This helps him to avoid situations that are humiliating. The cases in this section also disclose the different techniques of surveillance and disciplining of security guards. They illustrate the significant role played by the rounder in the work life of the guards. The rounder is the person employed by the agency to visit its different sites and check on the work of the guards. He is also the key contact person between the guards and the agency. The cases illustrate the vexed relationship between the rounder and the guards. The rounder typically visits at least expected hours. His supervisory role is perceived by the guards with suspicion. The rounder, who gets a commission for every new guard appointed within his site of supervision, is always on the look out to catch a guard on the wrong foot and replace him with a new person. This system functions with the tacit complicity of the agency. Even as the agency recognises the significance of rounders in managing the guards, it prevents the rounder from becoming influential in the system with their practice of regularly transferring rounders from one site to another. Despite the fact that they are drawn from the same social network, guards and rounders are unable to develop familiarity with each other and the agency. This creates an additional sense of instability in their work lives.

### **Migrant and the Local: The Politics of Belonging**

The narrative of Marathi pride and the cultural politics within which the migrant from the northern states of the country are located is a familiar one. In this section we attempt to examine this question of what it means for the migrant security guard to belong to a city and a context, otherwise replete with instances of his disenfranchisement. However, we do this not through a direct critique of the ostensible political narrative against the migrant and a call to the 'sons of the soil' but through the migrants reflections on the taint of being a migrant in the city.

#### **CASE 1**

Coming from another place always gives you a *jhatka* (jolt), because of non-ownership of residence I am an outsider to the city. We are always treated as outsiders (*parpranti*), because of that we do not have any *izzat* (honour) here. We do not have a place to stay; it makes us lose our *astitva* (identity). We can experience it in our daily lives while going to market for vegetables, travelling in train and bus etc. Even if many do not say it straightforwardly to us, I can hear their talk about us and it makes me feel bad and insulted. I get this feeling of being *parpranti* continuously- twenty four hours. If we were from Maharashtra then we would not have been insulted. Or if we would have had enough job opportunities in UP we would have stayed back and not been insulted. Since we do not have jobs for everyone we have to come here. More than 90% people who work as security guards in Bombay are from UP. As compared with UP Bombay is more developed and hence there is more demand for security work. Here we also get higher salary. I feel the same. If we had enough job opportunities in my place why will I come here to work?

Police treat us well because they understand that we both work to provide security and safety. For them the area of supervision is unrestricted while for us the area is restricted. We respect them. They seek our support and we also provide them required information.

## CASE 2

“Gav ki zindagi ab ras nahi aegi. Hamara to ghar parivar sabkuch yahi par he ab kis bat ke lie vapas jae.”

Now I have a ration card of Mumbai. I own a house in Shivaji nagar. I bought that plot of land in 1995 for Rs. 37000. I spent Rs. 42000 in all for buying the land as well constructing the house. There I only had to pay the bill for electricity and water. Later I sold it for 1.40 lakh in 2004. In 2005, I started earning Rs. 3000 month. I bought a new house in Juhu in 2007. For two years we lived in a house rented for Rs. 1200 per month at Sidharth Nagar. I had some savings and with the help of my father in law I bought new house in Juhu. It cost me 2.25 lakh. Gradually I paid back the money to my father in law. It is located in Indira Nagar of Juhu.

## CASE 3

I prefer settling down in my village and not in Bombay. *Bambai mein crowd hai, fraud hai, fashion hai. Yahan rehna toh hamara majboori hain.* There is crowd, fraud and fashion in Mumbai. It is perforce that I have to live here.)

I think the attack which parties like MNS did on north Indians was due to the pressure he felt during elections. Otherwise yahan to itna property banake rake hai dusre state ke logon ne ki security guard ki zarurat to padti hai. Yeh logon ne aaraam kiya, baaki logon kaam kiya.

## CASE 4

Colour se lagta hain ki local hain lekin jab muh se saraswati nikalti hai, toh log samajh jaate hain. (By my complexion people think I am a local but the moment I speak, it is obvious that I am not) However I don't feel at home here as my family is at my village. I cannot adjust with the culture of the city. Being from Bihar I don't think anyone can stop me from migrating to any place in India. *Saara hindustaan apna hain, hamare saath kabhi misbehave (durbahav) nahi hai. Koi bhi marathi sab anpad hain. khud apna ghar nahi sambhalta. First Desh gulaam yahan se hua hai...1700 baras mughal nahi raj karta aur angrez bhi nahi raj karta. Hum log saala khatthe hain, marte hain. ghas ka roti toh maharana pratap ne khaaya. aap toh yahan aaram se rehte the. (Entire India is ours. No one has ever misbehaved with me. All Marathi are illiterate. Cant take care of their own house. India was first colonised here. For 1700 years the mughals and the British would not have ruled over here. We people slog it out here. Even Maharana Pratap ate rotis made of grass. You live here in great comfort.)*

Apparent in the narratives, there is a deep sense of being a migrant (*parpranti*), felt acutely at all times. And yet there emerges, strongly expressed in local idioms, an assertion of having built the city with their labour and hard work. The local in their perception appears docile, lazy and ensconced in the very comfort the labour of the migrant has created. In locating the politics around the migrant and the non-migrant in electoral politics and its associated opportunism, the migrant chooses to resist the polarised discourse and the stereotypical ways in which he is viewed. Migrants also claim their right to the city by buying property, procuring ration cards and aadhar cards, seeking government employment, bringing and settling families in the city, arranging marriages through city

based networks etc. Despite such efforts, there remains within the migrant a nagging sense of being an outsider.

### **The Migrant and Structural Violence**

In ethnographically exploring the different modes of security work, we have elaborated the practices of surveillance and the paradoxes it reveals. A panoptic culture of surveillance ostensibly secures us, warns us and prevents dangerous situations from arising. Yet, it also shatters the myth of private, intimate worlds. The public and the private are often forced to coalesce in dangerous ways, leading to fatal consequences. We refer here to the cases where security guards, those entrusted with protecting and providing a sense of security have turned predator, destroying the lives they have been hired to protect as in the case of the young woman who was sexually assaulted and brutally murdered by a security guard of the building in Mumbai, where she resided. While there are many issues such as those of gender, class, and power embedded in an understanding of such a violent crime, such cases of violent criminal activity by security guards reveal the imbricated relationship between security, vigilantism, protection and the larger contexts of panopticism and terror. Thus, the role of the security guards is marked by deep ambivalence, owing to the violent acts that some have been involved in and their experienced and perceived vulnerabilities of being migrants. The portraits of security guard as criminal, as protector, sometimes a gun-toting one, as vigilante, as a police substitute, and as the migrant as outsider and therefore subject to violence, is juxtaposed with their fragile and often violent work and life contexts. The flagrant violations of work norms as well as existing regulations for the recruitment of security guards, the lonely and deeply insecure lives of the guards themselves, the ways in which the panoptic mechanisms are used – these are the issues around which the central idea of how migrant labour shapes and produces urban spaces, are revealed ethnographically. Implicit in this discussion is the thematic of new urban socialities. The new urban socialities are presented here as a series of contestations: between people marked insiders and outsiders, between spaces – the public and the private domains, between legal frameworks, such as state and central laws, and their policy implications and the larger contexts of terror, panopticism and global consumerism. The lives of migrant security guards are uniquely poised to unravel these contestations and their connections.

These migrant experiences may be analysed as structural violence, systemic violence, exerted systematically but indirectly, in a manner that the violence is not really visible. Everyone who is part of a social order has a role to play in the exertion of structural violence and this makes it difficult to pin blame for this kind of violence on an individual or a group. This often leads to great unease in a moral economy otherwise oriented to pinning blame on individuals. While the notion of structural violence is useful in narrating the ‘social machinery of oppression’ and exploitative systems, such narrations become effective only when they are able to move beyond the diffuseness implicit in the idea of structural violence, to point to the roles played by the construction of hegemonic discourses, and the erasure of diverse stories of identity, labour and everyday struggles; and the varied and complex processes of the entrapment of migrants within structures. Implicit in the narratives are two aspects of such entrapment: first, the legal aspect and the ways in which apparently contradictory laws are used to regulate the business of security and second, the multiple social networks that the migrant accesses and even considers enabling, while ironically, recognising the potential of such networks to unsettle lives.

To further understand these aspects that have the potential to unsettle lives, we take recourse to Farmer’s (2004: 308), notion of the chronicle of adverse events. Anything that unsettles everyday

life, the circumstances and relationships that inhibit both a sense of belonging, and an enthusiasm to cultivate new social relations and sustain old networks, despite their imminent fragility in the migrants' lives can be seen as adverse events in the life of the migrant. Farmer (2004) further locates these adverse events and an understanding of the social therein, in a materialist approach. The social requires construction material and the ethnographer must pay attention to the 'building materials' in the construction of urban socialities in and through the life of the migrant. Thus, for Farmer, the adverse outcomes associated with structural violence such as loss of job, lack of or loss of shelter, threat of starvation, death, injury, illness, subjugation, stigmatization, psychological terror find their common expression in the material. In the case of the security guards, the material may be tied to reactions in the corporal body or they may be linked to the material sphere of the production and reproduction of life itself. In addition, the erasure of history and the creation of hegemonic accounts of what is going on are all part of the process of structural violence (Farmer 2004).

A focus on the material expression of violence, for instance, through the supposed involvement of a migrant guard in an act of violence such as the rape and murder of a young resident, brings us to the obviously visible, overt and directly confrontational aspect of structural violence in the life of the migrant security guard. However, this confrontational aspect of structural violence which is a part of the security guard's everyday life is ignored and underplayed to dramatise and enhance the implications of the act of violence by the guard. The dominant and dramatic narrative of the guard as perpetrator thus erases other narratives of everyday violence, germane to the same context. Thus the criminal act and the ensuing public discourse around it taint not just the individual guard, but extend beyond the perpetrator to implicate the category 'migrant'. This public denouncement of the 'migrant' reinforces stereotypes and the polarization of the migrant in the city, thus justifying the conditions of structural violence that they most live with.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> PF and ESI are acronyms for Provident Fund and Employers' State Insurance respectively.

<sup>2</sup> P&Ls is an acronym for Profits and Losses.

<sup>3</sup> In 1911, 75% of the coolies, 66% of the cartmen, and 30% of the millhands were 'periodic migrants' to the city (Chandavarkar 1994: 149). Mumbai is a city of migrants. Even as early as 1881, its Marathi speaking population was 50.2%. In 1921, 84% of the large working class population was born outside of Mumbai. And by 1951, the migrant population in the city was more than 70% (Chandavarkar 1994; Purandare 2012).

<sup>4</sup> Chandavarkar (1994) refers to M. N. Joshi's study of seventy nine tannery workshops outside Dharavi an example of this pattern. Fifty nine of these tanneries employed less than five workers, with only one tannery employing over fifteen workers.

<sup>5</sup> In the mid 19th century, the migrants were mostly male. There were only about 500 women to 1000 males till the mid 20th century. Men migrated alone, leaving their families behind in their native place. Even when women did move to work in the textile industry, they mostly took up casual work. Other services they took up included domestic services, sweeping, scavenging, petty trading, and about 3000 were also identified as prostitutes by the census in 1921, many of whom were widows and abandoned women (Chandavarkar 1994: 94-99).

<sup>6</sup> Chandavarkar (1994) discusses how there was a practice of subcontracting among jobbers, wherein they competed to retain their hold over labour.

<sup>7</sup> Kundu and Saraswati (2012) analyse migration and urbanization patterns to argue that a decline in poverty induced migration from rural to urban areas and an increase in migrants from relatively higher social and economic strata. This is due to the inbuilt screening system of the migration process, and the urban centres becoming capital driven, which make them 'less accommodating to the poor'.

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<sup>8</sup> The measurement of bigha varies from one region to another in India. In Uttar Pradesh, one bigha is less than one acre (about 0.25 hectares).

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# **The Emergence of the Migrant as a Problem Figure in Contemporary Mumbai<sup>1</sup>: Chronicles of Violence and Issues of Justice**

**Simpreet Singh \***

## **Introduction**

Mumbai, the city as it is seen and understood today has covered a journey from seven islets to a megalopolis spreading across some two centuries. Today, tall high rise buildings standing next to the flat laid spread out settlements known as slums, points out to the processes of contestations and negotiations that would have been and are being engaged in by the residents of these two or more than two worlds.

The city of Mumbai as we understand today, has taken the shape and nature due to the significant role played by the migrant category, from within the state as well as more importantly from outside the state of Maharashtra. The process of migration was facilitated and encouraged by the colonial rulers and has continued post-independence also. The difference has been the numbers and nature as well as in the idea and understanding around the social category of 'migrant'. The emergence of the idea of 'son of soils' was concomitant with the idea of blaming the 'outsider', the 'migrant' which according to the 'local' were responsible for everything that was wrong in the city; ranging from the over-crowded trains to the rise in crime rate. The 'migrant' has been labeled as 'illegal', 'terrorist', 'burden on city's resources' and what not.

The paper is an attempt to map the trajectory of emergence of 'migrant' as a problematic figure in contemporary Mumbai, the actors-forces-reasons behind it and also its political economy in the background of economic transformation of the city from a manufacturing center to a service center.

## **Bombay/Mumbai the City**

"Mumbai is...a city of staggering contrasts. On one hand, a vast majority of its population lives and works in abysmal conditions, densely packed into the city's teeming "slums," and making a precarious living in the so-called informal sector. On the other hand, its affluent elites pursue lifestyles of calculated extravagance, fit to rival their counterparts in London or New York" (Kidambi, 2013). There have been shifts and changes in the character of the city particularly in the realm of economic activities, from a port city to a manufacturing center to the present stage of being

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\* Phd Candidate, Tata Institute of Social Sciences and Social Activist  
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a hub of financial activities and service sector. This process has been furthered by outlining a trajectory which encompasses transformations in the sectors ranging from physical and social infrastructure, economic growth, governance, housing to strategic planning. Towards achieving these ends, series of interlinked and interlined projects and processes have been undertaken, which include amendments in the rent control act, repeal of Urban Land Ceiling Act, Re-development related policies, undertaking of Mega projects like Bandra Worli Sealink, Metro Rail, MUTP-MUIP, Beautification drives in select areas, iconic towers, Trans harbor sea link project, Network of Elevated rail& Roadways, Introduction of Fleet Taxis, Airport Expansion, Dharavi & other such Slum Redevelopment projects. These shifts and changes have come to signify different meanings for different sections of the society differentially.

In recent times, Mumbai has poised to transform itself into an international financial center which in turn would mean attaining the status of a “world class city” for which massive investments in construction and infrastructure for rebuilding, renovating and expansion of central business areas has been undertaken in order to strengthen the space for global city functions. With large amounts of global capital being pumped into the local land and construction market, the impacts have been felt on slum settlements and the understanding around it. One clear shift is the viewing and labeling of slums as ‘encroachments’ and the policy as well as the public debate revolves around this thread only, thus dehumanizing and criminalizing the large number of human beings that live in such settlements. The way certain spaces have been categorized as ‘illegal’, similarly certain populations have also been categorized as ‘unwanted’.

The city has also been witness to a continuous history and trajectory of violence, direct as well as structured. State as well as non-state actors have been engaged into it, under the pretext of governing or that of ruling. Colonial and the post-colonial state always had the sovereign control over use of violence, few of the noteworthy examples are; the use of force by colonial state during the plague riots and the 1942 Naval Mutiny and of the post-colonial state few examples are that of killing of 105 people demanding for formation of modern day Maharashtra, massacre of 10 dalits by the state police at Ramabai Ambedkar Nagar in 1997. Violence by non-state actors has mostly been on lines of religion, caste, language and labour mobilization. Few examples of non-state actor violence is the 1893 hindu-muslim riots on the issue of cow protection, stabbing of CPI leader Krishna Desai by members of Shiv Sena, killing of 900 people(mostly muslims) in the 1992-93 riots, violence against migrants from Bihar by members of MNS in 2007.

The city also has been one of the centers of militant left wing trade unionism that played a central role in the life of the city at some point of time; it also has been the birth place of the militant Dalit Panther movement.

## **Economic Trajectory of the City**

The social and economic character of the city has changed over the decades from the 1930s to 1990s: from a labour intensive orientation it moved to that of capital intensive production, and almost recently to financial services. The watershed event for change **in** the economic character was the decade of the 1960s when the state of Maharashtra came into being.

According to political scientist Jayant Lele “during the decade of 1960s when the state of Maharashtra came into existence, major changes in the structure of Bombay’s economy occurred. State sponsored private capitalist development begun to emerge (Lele 1995). And also during the period of 1960 and 1965, Bombay “attracted a disproportionate share of industrial capital compared to other the rest of India and there was growth of private industrial capital” (ibid.).



During the period of last four to five decades, the worker's occupational distribution shows clear shift from manufacturing to trade and commerce (Table 1). The share of workers in Manufacturing sector decreased from 41 per cent in 1961 to just 28 per cent in the year 2001. At the same time the workers share in Trade and Commerce increased from 18 per cent (1961) to 32 per cent (2001).

Industrial Activity	1961	1971	1981	1991	2001
Agricultural	1.89	1.26	1.38	.84	1.12
Manufacturing Industry	41	42	41	37	28
Construction	2.66	3.05	3.35	4.24	6.41
Trade and Commerce	18	22	21	24	32
Transport and Storage	11	11	10	11	12
Other Services	25	20	22	22	18

(Source: Singh 2010)

These shifts in the economic structure are concomitant with the emergence of the nativism and 'sons of the soils sentiments' in the city is my hypothesis, which will be talked about in more detail later. Scholar Banerjee-Guha notes that the city has "seen a gradual but steady shift from manufacturing to trading and services in the economic base of Mumbai" (Banerjee-Guha, 2002). The decline of manufacturing industries, especially the downfall of the textile industry has triggered the emergence of various tertiary sector activities which are major component of the city's economy now.

In the recent times, Mumbai has attained the status of financial capital of the country and has attained an economic boom since the liberalization. Since then the city has emerged as a major financial hub in the global chain of financial centers" (Singh, 2012).

In the past, the city owed its prosperity largely to textile mills, manufacturing industries and sea port but the local economy has since diversified to include service sector, real estate, entertainment hub, health care, IT and ITES and most importantly financial services. Over period of time, although the contribution of the primary sector to the city's economy has remained the same but the contribution of the tertiary sector has increased from 62 per cent to 73 per cent in the short duration of twelve years (Table 2).

Years	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary
1993-94	1.25	36.12	62.64
1999-2000	1.87	31.46	66.67
2005-06	0.88	25.30	73.82

Source: Directorate of Economic and Statistics, Government of Maharashtra, Mumbai cited Singh, 2010

There has been a consistent decline in the formal sector employment, which also indicates the decay of manufacturing industries in the city. The total employment in the formal sector that was about 11 lakh in 1971, increased to 12.7 lakh in 1981, but has since declined to 11.8 lakh in 1991 and

further to 11.5 lakh in 1998 (Table 3). At the same time the growth of formal sector jobs in the services sector has not been adequate to fill the void created by the decline in manufacturing jobs.

<b>Year</b>	<b>Number (in lakhs)</b>
1971	11
1981	12.7
1991	11.8
1998	11.5

*Source: Report on Employment Generation in Post Globalization Era in Greater Mumbai, 2006*

Economists Joshi and Joshi in their noteworthy study titled "Surplus City and the City state" that over the years "the number of workers outside the organized sector increased both absolutely as well as a proportion of the total labour force" (Joshi and Joshi 1976).

### **The Space Economy of 21<sup>st</sup> Century Mumbai**

The process of shifting economic character of the city from a port city to a manufacturing center to a service based economy should not be understood merely as deindustrialization of the city but more importantly as a process of spatial reorganization. Post the era of introduction of liberalization, privatization and globalization; Mumbai has been at the forefront of the production of space. The production of space in Mumbai has been done through the route of de-industrialization. In the year 2012 the organized real estate space (residential, office and retail) constructed was in tune of 350 million sq.ft

Urban geographer Swapna Banerjee Guha observes that "during the latter half of the 1990s with further expansion of globalisation, Mumbai's policy became proactive in making the city a significant centre of finance, services and TNC headquarters at the cost of industrial decline in many areas" (Banerjee 2002).

The major impetus to the space economy was received after the closure of the Mills and later on some 1000 acres of land on which these were located have been transformed into corporate parks, shopping malls, super luxury stores, five star hotels and luxurious apartments.

Starting with the year 2000, the regional development authority of Mumbai- MMRDA has constructed some 1, 30,000 housing units of the size 225 sq.ft to rehabilitate hundred thousands of people who have been relocated from different parts of the city to what are being called R&R colonies.

The space economy got impetus with the introduction of Transferable Development Right (TDR) in the year 1991 when the new sets of Development Control Regulations were introduced in Mumbai. The instrument of TDR separates the land from its development right and makes it transferable to another site or location. In simple words TDR is a form of paper economy as holders of TDR receive a paper certificate issued by the municipal commissioner of Mumbai giving the details of the land owner, the area and location of the plot which has been surrendered to the municipal corporation, the quantity of TDR and the zone in which it is issued. These certificates can be traded in the market as they can be sold and bought.

In 1997, Maharashtra's Shiv Sena-BJP government further liberalized the TDR instrument and offered it to developers in exchange for carrying out slum redevelopment project for high density slums. Under slum redevelopment projects, TDR was offered for surrender of lands as well

as for construction, so both the land owner and the builders were compensated by giving them TDR certificates equal to the area they had surrendered or constructed upon for rehabilitation of slum dwellers (Nainan, 2008). Development charges and TDR have become the new and significant means of capital investments for the MCGM as well as government of Maharashtra.

As per a recent news report, in the year 2014, around 30% of the BMC's Rs 17,500 crore revenue income came from building projects that were sanctioned by it and a decade ago this was a meager 7% (Rs 233 crore).

## **The City and the Migrant, Trajectories of Migration**

It is a well acknowledged fact that since the beginning of the city, its growth- in terms of size and population has been due to the factors of in-migration. Migration has played the most significant role in the changing demographic profile of city (Singh 2007). In the first half of 20th century, Bombay grew mainly on account of movement of people from other parts of the country. According to sociologist Sujata Patel “the economic activities of the city attracted migrants from nearby rural districts and eventually from the whole country.

Gerald Aungier, the third governor of the Bombay, encouraged settlement from neighboring parts of the then Bombay. Nineteenth century migrants hailed from the areas today included in Maharashtra and Gujarat. Workers from coastal Konkan strip and the Western Ghats manned the docks and cotton textile mills. Most of business and trading groups came from Gujarat. In the twentieth century, particularly after independence new waves of migrants arrived from both north and south India” (Patel 1995). There was diversity in the category of migrants when they came to settle in the city, ranging from the language they spoke, part of the country they belonged to and the economic activities they engaged in. Migrants from Maharashtra were mainly concentrated in the cotton textile mills while the concentration of workers from Andhra Pradesh was highest in the construction sector. Gujratis dominated the trade and commerce along with Marwaris and Sindhis. Migrants from UP and Bihar dominated the sectors of Taxi and Auto drives, home based industry etc (Joshi and Joshi 1976). Further, “the ethnic and communal diversity of Bombay’s business world was striking: it included merchants belonging to many communities of Gujarat, including the Parsis, the Hindu Vaniyas and Bhatias, the Muslim Bohras, Khojas and Memons, as well as businessmen from other provinces of India (Sind, Marwar), Baghdadi Jews” (Markovits 1995).

Muslims in Bombay/Mumbai have never been a monolithic community. Although they have been in and around the city for more than a century but the trajectory has been varied and the source also multiple. There are Gujarati Muslims, Hyderabad Muslims, Maharashtrian Muslims and Muslims from Uttar Pradesh and finally Bengali Muslims. The Memons are famous for their trading skills and come from Gujarat as do Bohras and Khojas. Then Malabari Muslims dominate the hotels, tea stalls and eateries. Konkani Muslim families entered the China trade and made lots of money. Ansaris from UP also known as Momins are engaged in garment making and power looms and many of them were employed in the Textile Mills as skilled workers. The Muslims from UP are engaged in labour intensive activities, as labourers. The Marathi Muslims are engaged in petty business of varied kinds. According to Khalidi (2006) Mumbai probably has the largest number of Muslim laborers in the country. Majority of them have been involved in the leather industry, zari work and embroidery, bakeries, garment making and tailoring, jewelery making.

Amongst Dalits, Mahars were the first ones who came to Bombay in search of employment and many of the movements were result of the regular droughts that occur in central Maharashtra and also to escape caste violence of the villages. Mostly were engaged in contractual jobs and

unskilled employment. Mahars in comparison to other untouchable castes of Maharashtra like Chambhars and Matangs were relatively more mobile and self organized.

Bombay acquired much of its population through in-migration rather than natural growth and majority of the city's working population consisted of migrants (Joshi and Joshi 1976). Net migration has been an important component of population growth for Greater Bombay since 1901. The city grew by net migration alone till 1931 and even in the decade 1931-41. The migration contributed about 39 per cent of total population growth of Greater Mumbai during last decade of 1991-2001 (Table 4).

<b>Decade</b>	<b>Total Population Growth (in'000)</b>	<b>Percentage Share of Natural Increase</b>	<b>Percentage Share of Migration</b>
1901-11	221	-58	158
1911-21	231	-72	172
1921-31	18	-322	422
1931-41	402	1	99
1941-51	1194	20	79
1951-61	1158	48	51
1961-71	1818	50	49
1971-81	2274	60	39
1981-91	1682	83	16
1991-2001	2053	61	38

(Source: Singh 2007)

The expansion of the trade in the city attracted migrants group to the city. In addition, the city also attracted distress migration that occurred as a result of famines and floods (Patel 2003). In the year 1961 migrants accounted for 84 percent of the working population and between the period of 1941 and 1971 two thirds of the city's residents had been born outside the city (Patel 2003).

The migration into the city has always been one of the main factors for the city's population growth, a pattern that sustains despite the city shifting its activity from the manufacturing sector to the services sector (Singh 2010). Variations over time in the flow of migration have very broadly followed the city's economic function and nature (Joshi and Joshi 1976).

<b>State</b>	<b>1981</b>	<b>1991</b>
Maharashtra	43.5	42
UP	16.3	19.7
Gujarat	10.53	12.13
Karnataka	5	6.7
Tamil Nadu	2.57	3.5

## Share of Migrants from Various States

The most noticeable change in contribution of migrants to Greater Mumbai over last fifty is observed from the northern state of Uttar Pradesh which shows an increase from 12 per cent to 24 per cent and Bihar from 0.2 per cent to 3.5 per cent. The state of Gujarat and Goa indicate continuous decline in their share of migrants. The migrants from Gujarat has reduced from 16.9 per cent to 9.6 per cent while migrants of Goa indicate a decline of 3 per cent to 0.6 per cent.

The intra district migrants from the state of Maharashtra also show a decline of about 4 percentage (i.e., 41.6% to 37.4%). An overall emerging pattern of migration over last half of 20th century indicate that flow of migration to Mumbai is dominated by North Indian states while the contribution of migrants from four southern states (Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Karnataka) remain between 15 to 16 per cent.

The proportion of migrant moving to Greater Mumbai is dominated by rural migrants over the last 50 years. In 2001, more than two-third of all migrants reported to move from rural areas. In comparison to migrants from within the state reported higher percentage (74.3%) from rural areas than interstate migrants from rural areas (66.0%).

During the decade of seventies, recurring droughts in Maharashtra occurred, especially during the years of 1970-73 due to which large number of people; especially those belonging to the dalit population migrated to Bombay due to which the population growth of the city was over 4 per cent per annum against the average of 2.5%.

Mother Tongue	1881 Census	2001 Census
Marathi	50	
Gujarati	28	
Urdu	12	

## Violence and the City

Violence has been integral and as a process throughout the history and geography of the city of Bombay/Mumbai. The plague riots of 1898 and the strike of dock and railway workers that led to casualties of 19 and 42 wounded. The Royal India Navy Revolt that was violently dealt by the Colonial rulers led to death of 7 solders. While Morarji Desai was the Chief Minister of the Bombay Province, a police firing on peaceful protestors led to death of 105 people. During the twenty years of the encounters undertaken by Mumbai police, more than 1500 people were killed and labelled as encounter deaths. During the eviction drive of year 2004-05 undertaken under the grab of transforming Mumbai into Shanghai led to death of around 15 people. During the 1992-93 bomb blasts and riots around 900 people lost their lives. During the later years, the state and Shiv Sena almost established their sovereignty over the use of violence. In a way, it will not be an over stated statement that violence has been institutionalised in this city, there is violence that is everyday and violence that is episodic.

Gyan Prakash notes that “violence against enemies was not an unfortunate by-product of Shiv Sena’s activities but an essential method” (Prakash, 2010). It has been on record, the statement of Bal Thackeray on the Dussehra rally of the year 1994 that “if they (Muslims) have Dawood, we (Hindus) have Gawli. These (Amar Naik and Arun Gawli) are aamchi muley (our Boys)” (Zaidi, 2014). After coming to power, Shiv Sena gave ticket to Ashwin Naik’s wife- Neeta Naik for the

elections to the Local Body. The urban restructuring of the city, initiated at the start of the era of liberalization organised the use of violence into organised groups popularly known called underworld. The use of the underworlds' violence in land transactions has been well narrated by Hussain Zaidi in his book *Byculla to Bangkok*. The section below lays before us the use of violence by state and non-state actors against the migrants in general and in particularly the three groups of dalits, muslims and urban poor who together constitute the migrant population of the city.

### **Violence against Dalits**

Shiv Sena from the very beginning did not had a high regard for the politically radical dalit sections of Maharashtra. In a way it created distance between the OBC-Marathas, the followers of Shivaji and Mahar-Dalits the followers of Ambedkar. In the year 1978 the state assembly had adopted a unanimous resolution to renaming the Marathwada University at Aurangabad after Babasaheb Ambedkar, the Shiv Sena had a dubious distinction of being the only political party that consistently opposed it. Bal Thackeray had ridiculed dalit demand saying, “people do not have flour at home and they demand university.” This resulted in large-scale protests all over Marathwada accompanied by violence against dalits affecting some 1200 to 9000 villages in the region, rendering about 5000 people homeless.

In the year 1974, the Shiv Sena unleashed riots against dalits in the Worli BDD Chawls in Mumbai which spread to other areas of the city and continued for a week. The trigger of these violent clashes were the objection raised by members of Shiv Sena to certain speeches made by Dalit Panther leaders about Hindu deities. A Dalit Panther activist Bhagwat Jadhav was brutally killed by the Shiv Sena activities, marking the beginning of the anti-Dalit feud of the Shiv Sena against the Dalit community.

The most gruesome act of state violence against dalits was in the year 1997 and is infamously known as Ramabai Ambedkar Firing Case. On 11<sup>th</sup> July the people of Ramabai Ambedkar Nagar, a slum locality in Central suburban of the city found out that a garland of chappals had been put around the neck of statue of Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar. In response to this act, large number of people mostly belonging to the schedule caste community assembled near the statue and on the Eastern Express Highway. While the talks were going on between a section of police officers and the protestors, a Striking Force Group of the police headed by PSI M. Y. Kadam open fired on the crowd resulting into 10 deaths. This incident resulted in protests and condemnation across the state and the government of Maharashtra appointed a Commission of Inquiry into look into the details of the incident. The Commission headed by Justice S.D. Gundewar came out with a report which is generally known as Gundewar Commission Report. The Commission concluded that the “public reaction towards the incident was spontaneous and not instigated by anyone”, the “police had neither used any force at the statue nor taken any steps for the dispersal of and the crowd” and the “firing was without warning, unjustified, unwarranted and indiscriminate” and PSI M.Y. Kadam is responsible for this.

In response, the Government of Maharashtra accepted all the findings/suggestions of the Commission and on the finding of culpability of PSI Kadam, the response that “appropriate action will be taken”.

## **Criminalization and Fracturing of Urban Poor**

The State through its various instruments has been criminalizing the poor. Section 3 (z) (6) of the Maharashtra Slum Areas Act, 1971 was amended in the year 2001 and slum dwellers who were found residing in slums after the year of 1995 were made liable for prosecution and jail term of one to three years. Section 3Z-2 (6) of the said Act says that “the owner/occupant or who has abetted the construction of an unauthorised or illegal structure shall be guilty of an offense, on conviction, shall be punishable with imprisonment for a term which shall not be less than one year but may extend upto three years and a fine”.

The Maharashtra Slum Areas Act also introduced the concept of “cut off date”. According to this only those slum dwellers have protection against eviction and claim over compensation if they are able to prove that they have been residing at the particular place before that cut-off date. Thus the population is divided into two groups, one that is prior to the cut-off and the second that is post the cut-off. The way

In the year 1987, the cut-off date was extended from the year 1980 to 1985 and in the year 1995 it was extended from the year 1985 to 1995. In the year 2014 the said cut-off was extended from 1995 to 2000, till where it stands as of now.

The law introduced the idea of un-authorised and illegal that has been used against the urban poor of the city that are constituent of the migrant population. The claims of the migrants over the resources of the city, in which they have a moral and economic claim are being rejected by using the weapons of un-authorised and illegal that are a legal import in which the executive and judicial arms of the State have played a role. The claims over space have been labelled as ‘encroachment’. Slums have been labelled as vote banks and encroachers by many judicial pronouncements.

## **Violence against Muslims**

Omar Khalidi observes that the settlements of Muslims in Mumbai are prone to destruction during violence, especially targeted against Muslims...they had to face the fury of the Shiv Sena and other Hindutva organizations in the riots and pogroms of 1984 and 1992-93 (Khalidi, 2006).

For five days in December 1992 (6th to 10th December 1992) and fifteen days in January 1993 (6th to 20th January 1993), Bombay was rocked by riots and violence unprecedented in magnitude and ferocity. The final tally of casualty figures for December 1992 and January 1993 were : Dead — 900(575 Muslims, 275 Hindus, 45 unknown and 5 others). The causes for the deaths are police firing (356), stabbing (347), arson (91), mob action (80), private firing (22) and other causes (4) Injured — 2,036 (1105 Muslims, 893 Hindus, and 38 others).

Around 90% of the Bakeries were owned by Muslims and more than 350 of them were burnt down during the riots.

In the month of March this year, the President of India gave assent to the Maharashtra Animal Preservation (Amendment) Bill, 1995 anyone found to be selling beef or in possession of it can be jailed for five years and fined Rs 10,000. This ban has already affected the livelihood of thousands of people who have been involved in the associated trades, especially belonging to the Qureshi community.

## **The Emergence of Problematic Migrant: The Un-worthy, the Un-Invited, the Un-authorized and the illegal**

According to anthropologist Jim Masselos the city has always been “ambivalent in its attitude towards migration” as “it needed migrants but not the problems that came with them” (Masselos 1995). He further states that almost from the beginning of the city, it was made to look attractive to the migrants since the city did not had enough people, especially those with the required skills and talents. “Workers were also actively sought out...during the eighteenth and well into the nineteenth century the Company(East India Company) scoured the subcontinent for skilled craftsmen and artisans to work..” (ibid). As early as year 1856, the categorization of migrants as ‘worthy’ and the ‘unworthy’ poor started with the bringing in of the Act XIII of 1856 by the colonial rulers. At that time they were categorised as ‘polluting’, ‘foreigner’, or ‘beggars’ depending upon the situation and the context.

Another watershed period during which the category of migrant emerged as the problematic category was the decade of 1960’s. In late 50’s and early 60’s, Bombay was to witness the emergence of ‘linguistic regionalism’ and struggle for demand of ‘samayukta’ or united Maharashtra that was based on unification of areas where Marathi speaking population was in majority. The struggle was fought under the banner of Samayukta Maharashtra Kirti Samiti and led by noteworthy communists and socialists like SA Dange, SM Joshi, Madhu Dandavate, KS Thackeray amongst others. According to communists “battling for Maharashtra meant going to war with the capitalists by other means, such as language and identity” (Prakash 2010). It was led by the communists and socialists like SM Joshi, SA Dange, PK Atre, with quixotic slogan of ‘samyukta maharashtra, samajvadi maharashtra’ (United Maharashtra, Socialist Maharashtra). This movement created distance between Marathi speaking and non-speaking residents of the city.

The Shiv Sena was founded as a political party on June 21, 1966, projected the issue of South Indians grabbing jobs in Mumbai and effectively began to split the working class endearing itself to the industrialists and political class. The emergence of Shiv Sena also had a root in the struggle of the Bombay Pradesh Congress Committee (BPCC) and Maharashtra Pradesh Congress Committee (MPCC) over the status of Bombay. The former represented the interests of the Gujarati business class that resisted the idea of keeping Bombay into the future state of Maharashtra and the later representing the interests of the landed castes of rural and Marathi speaking community (Rodrigues and Gavaskar, 2003). Bal Thackeray used to refer to migrants as Uppra, the un-invited. In July 1981, the then Chief Minister of Maharashtra- A.R. Antulay initiated a demolition drive named ‘Operation Eviction’ under which slums were demolished in large numbers across the city and the poor were packed into trucks-buses and dropped at faraway places from the city with the objective of not letting them come back.

In the year 1995, an amendment was made in the Maharashtra Slum areas Act.

In the year 1998, when Shiv Sena headed the government in Maharashtra, initiated a drive of deporting what it thought as illegal immigrant from Bangladesh. In the same year around 1000 Bengali speaking Muslims were forced in the Kurla Howrah Express but after protest in West Bengal by Trinamool Congress the drive was stopped. Nevertheless, the issue of illegal immigrants from Bangladesh has always been raised by the right wing parties as well as the local police force to justify their violence on Bengali speaking residents of the city.

In the year 2004 a group of prominent residents of Mumbai including prominent Maharashtrian literary figure, film personalities and journalists filed a case in the Bombay High Court, seeking to ban slum dwellers from voting and particularly those residing in un-authorized slums as



according to them they were obstructing the infrastructural development works. They asked the High Court to order deletion of names of slum dwellers from the electoral rolls. Although the High Court dismissed the petition observing that the petition was “wholly misconceived”.

The latest stand of the anti-migrant stand is the emergence of Maharashtra Navnirman Sena headed by Raj Thackeray, the estranged cousin of Udhya Thackeray-son of Bal Thackeray. In the year 2008 raised the issue of Chhath Puja celebration by people from Bihar at the Juhu Beach and other such places. When dropped in favor of Uddhav, Raj Thackeray launched the breakaway Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (Maharashtra Reconstruction Army, MNS) in 2006.

In regard to Shiv Sena one can see three stands of Shiv Sena, three axis of breaking the working class solidarity in the city. This was achieved by positioning itself as anti-working class, anti-dalit and anti-muslim.

Overall, in context of Mumbai; the narrative around migrants in Mumbai can be summed up into three responses- *un-worthy, un-invited and illegal*. During the colonial rule, the worthy migrants were welcomed while those who were in-appropriate in regard to the economic functions of the city, they were labelled as un-worthy and thus resisted in the city. Post independence, with the emergence of Shiv Sena they were treated as un-invited and over decades the shifting targets were south-Indians, Muslims, Dalits and North Indians. The constituent of the un-invited migrant has been shifting as per the political exigencies of Shiv Sena and the requirement of the capitalist demands of the city. Starting with the decade of 70s the anti-migrant campaign has made in-roots in the law making through the bringing in of the Maharashtra Slum Areas Act by the executive rulers and court rulings by the Judicial rulers. The legal onslaught has treated migrant as un-authorized and illegal and thus equally dangerous.

### **The Migrant and Surplus Appropriation**

The city of Bombay was initially built and developed by the indigenous populations as traders and mercantile community of Parsis, Gujaratis, Hindus and Muslims. After the emergence of the Textile Mills, the labouring class was initially drawn from the coastal belt of Konkan and later on the Marathas and Kunbis from central Maharashtra. The trader class of the city till independence constituted and was dominated by Parsi, Marwari, Muslim and Gujarati communities who because of their hold on the capital dominated the public and political life of the city (Hansen, 2001).

The Samyukta Maharashtra movement mobilized Marathi speakers as a political entity, but it was Thackeray who successfully deployed it as an anti-immigrant, populist force (Prakash 2010). For its emergence and rise, in the later years; Shiv Sena (SS) identified migration from other cultural region as the main culprit (Lele 1995). Sociologist Sujata Patel writes that after the creation of the state of Maharashtra, the city became firmly integrated within the state and henceforth the regional political elite, speaking the Marathi language, set the agenda for the city. These developments initiated a process of fragmentation of the existing class, community and language identities amongst the elites (Patel 2003).

Sociologist Gerard Heuze is of the opinion that “because the economic situation of many strata of the people (industrial workers, street vendors, students from the popular milieu was (is) getting worse, or remaining stagnant that a cultural populist movement like the Shiv Sena could arise and remain for long in a prominent position” (Heuze 1995).

Thus the role par excellence of Shiv Sena in the context of Bombay was to break the solidarity of the working class that was based on the economic factors and replace it with the fragmented solidarity that is based on cultural factors like language or place of birth. In the process,

the real beneficiaries were the capitalists of the city. According to sociologist Sujata Patel, Shiv Sena “mobilizing this underclass and incorporating them into a new elite-oriented agenda of globalization” (Patel, 2003). This might also explain the proximity of Bal Thackeray and Shiv Sena with the major industrialists and referring to big capitalists as *annadatas* (Gangadharan, 1970 cited in Lele 1995). According to Lele, by blaming on the outsiders, SS “managed to deflect attention from the socio-cultural and economic consequences of unchecked capitalist development in industry and of the state assisted distortions of land, housing ...and job markets” (Lele, 1995).

Since the formation of the Shiv Sena Thackeray had opposed the Communists. Although his father Keshav Thackeray associated with Communist leader Dange in the Samyukta Maharashtra movement, but he was always against them and their idiom of class struggle. According to historian Gyan Prakash, “the Samyukta Maharashtra movement had mobilized Marathi speakers as a political entity, but it was Thackeray who successfully deployed it as an anti-immigrant, populist force” (Prakash, 2010). In the year 1968, Shiv Sena formed the Bharatiya Kamgar Sena, which opposed the idea of class conflict and sought to broker peace between the mill owners and workers (Purandare). The tension that emerged between the migrant and the local population that is also reflected in the form of the sons of the soils movements is not a product of its own or a cultural phenomena rather it is shaped by those who owns the forces of production. And it serves their purpose of fragmenting the solidarity of the working class in respect to struggles that are around issues of labour and space. One clear shift is the fact that the hard struggles around wage and work conditions have been substituted by soft struggles around housing and space.

Political Scientist Myron Weiner in his seminal work *Sons of the Soil: Migration and Ethnic Conflict in India* concluded that in India “nativism tends to be associated with a blockage to social mobility for the native population by a culturally distinguishable migrant population,” placing the ‘sons of the soil’ phenomenon as a question of “social mobility versus spatial mobility. According to him, Shiv Sena is “a protectionist movement” in the labour market, demanded by local groups vis-a-vis the migrant labourers. Though this might explain partly but the whole picture. Many of the target groups of Shiv Sena has been eateries, taxi drivers, daily wage earners and these occupation groups were never on the radar of aspirational Marathi Manoos. And the anti-negative strand has not been just exhibited by the actors outside the State but also by State actors like police, executive and judiciary. Till the time, the main economic function of the city was based on labour extensive systems, they were welcomed but the stage when there was a turn in the economic functions of the city, the same migrant became a problematic and thus were linked with the economic transformation of the city from a manufacturing centre to a service centre.

On the basis of the discussion in the above sections one can say that the shift from a fordist city dominated by massive manufacturing units where surplus extraction was taking place to a city where the production of space itself becomes the site of surplus extraction is concomitant with the emergence of the idea of the migrant as a problematic figure.

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## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Post the year 1995, erstwhile Bombay was named Mumbai. In the article, use of Bombay or Mumbai is in reference to the time period being referred to, for time period pre 1995 it has been referred to as Bombay and post 1995 it is referred to as Mumbai.

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