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as an environmental hazard :
A case study of Delhi slums**

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Slums within resettlement colonies as an environmental hazard : A case study of Delhi slums*

Dr. Sabir Ali**

Introduction

According to the Census 2001, population of Delhi state is 1.38 crore of which a majority live in the urban agglomeration. Unfortunately, this urban population mostly resides in sub-standard conditions in the areas officially classified as slums.

As the population is growing at a rapid rate in resettlement colonies, use of facilities provided here have been stretched far beyond their capacity.¹

The crowded living space, and the inadequacies in bathing facilities, water supply, garbage management, solid waste disposal and sanitation add to the problem of environment.² In addition, inadequate health, education and recreation facilities in slums and resettlement colonies, further complicate the situation. At present, these colonies face the following problems:

- a) The resettlement colonies are becoming large in size due to the influx of new migrants from the neighbouring states and the movement of the population within the state for the purpose of employment.

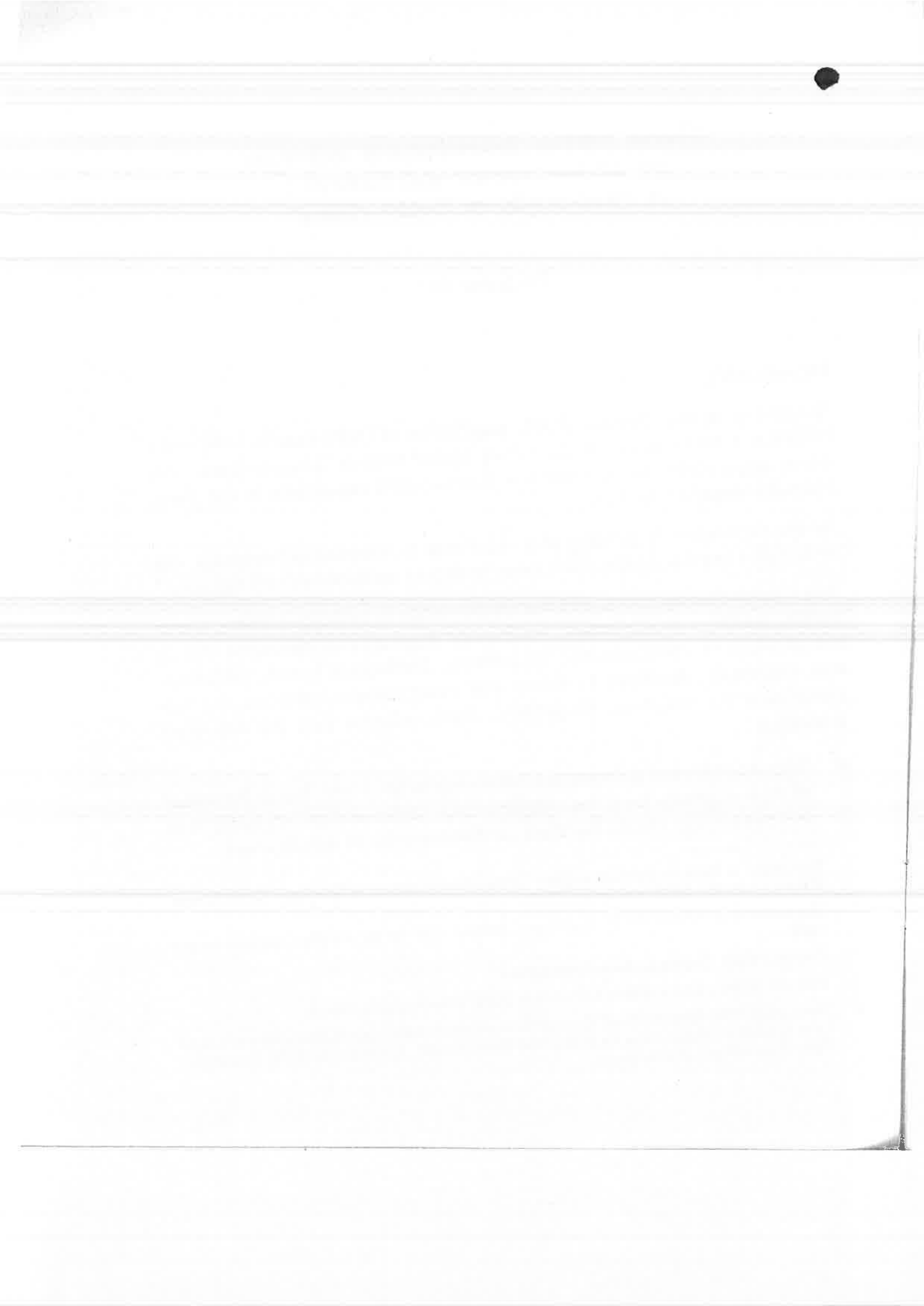
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1 Sabir Ali, (1991), *Slums Within Slums*, New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House.

2 Sabir Ali (1996), 'Evaluation of Environmental Schemes with particular reference to Low Cost Sanitation Programme in Slums and Resettlement Colonies of Delhi, Council for Social Development (Mimeograph).



- b) The quality of life is getting bad to worse due to overcrowding and inadequate socio-economic, sanitary facilities, and physical infrastructure.
- c) The poorest of the poor living on the pavements and JJ clusters face far worse environmental problems as compared to those in resettlement colonies.
- d) Resettlement colonies have variety of houses with insufficient facilities, leading to degradation of environment.

Study Area

The state of environment differs from one type of slum to another. Matters are highly complicated in the resettlement colonies of Delhi where thousands of squatters have forcibly occupied open spaces reserved for parks, housing, schools, shopping centres, religious places and pavements, etc. Some of these colonies are very large in size and population. Trilokpuri resettlement colony of Patpargunj Complex is one of them. It contains 36 blocks. Each block has 500 or more plots. The size of each plot is 25 square yards. The colony's present population is about 2.34 lakh. This colony is located in the Eastern side of Delhi. The study is confined to this colony only. The colony was initially planned to resettle 12,500 squatter households in 1976. Now about 38,700 households are living on plots in the colony (Table 1) and about 6350 households are squatting on open spaces like parks available within the colony.

TABLE 1

Basic information of Trilokpuri resettlement colony

Total no. of blocks	Total no. of plots	Size of plot (Sq. yds)	Total no. of households	Population (Approximately)
36	18,455	25 12 1/2	38,730	2,33650*

Source: Pradhan records, 2002.

* Population of squatters and pavement dwellers is not included in this figure.

Other than above, the following two habitats within Trilokpuri have also been selected for comparison of socio-economic and physical infrastructure, including environmental conditions. The two habitats selected on the basis of size and location are Feroze Gandhi Camp on a pavement of block No. 23 located in the centre of the colony and Dr. Ambedkar Camp in a common park of blocks 32 and 33. Total number of households in Feroze Gandhi Camp are about 105 and the population is estimated to be about 700. This camp was established in 1984. It has mixed population of Hindus and Muslims. Dr. Ambedkar Camp as indicated in Table No. 2. consists of about 1800 households. The estimated population, as reported by camp Pradhan, is about 14,000 persons. It was established in 1975. It also has a mixed population of Hindus and Muslims. The camp is located in the south of the colony, close to the main commercial place of the area. A good number of the inhabitants belong to Scheduled Castes and OBC communities.

TABLE 2

Basic information of Feroze Gandhi Camp (PDs) and Dr. Ambedkar Camp (JJ Cluster) in Trilokpuri resettlement colony

Name of settlement P.dwellers	Nearest block	No. of households	Year of establishment	Population
Feroze Gandhi Camp (Pavement dwellers)	23	105	1984	700
Dr. Ambedkar Camp (JJ Cluster)	32-33	1800	1975	14,000
Total		1905		14,700

Source: Primary data collection, 2002.

Objectives and Methodology

The present paper is an attempt to understand the state of environment of Trilokpuri resettlement colony in Delhi. The main objectives of the paper are:

- i) to study the phenomenon of squatters/J.J. clusters emerging in the open spaces reserved for specific purposes which adversely effects the living environment.

- ii) to identify the environmental factors caused by new migrants to J.J. clusters and to the pavement dwellers of Trilokpuri resettlement colony.
- iii) to identify the problems and the issues needing urgent intervention for the improvement of the quality of life in the said habitats.
- iv) to suggest measures to ameliorate the problems and issues identified above.

A list of all JJ clusters as well as settlements on pavements, was prepared after discussions with *pradhans* and knowledgeable inhabitants in Trilokpuri resettlement colony. To know the social realities, about 350 respondents were selected as sample size keeping in mind the socio-economic and environmental conditions in three type of habitats. From each of the types 230, 70 and 50 respondents were interviewed. Respondents were selected using a simple random sampling method. In addition, environment schedules were canvassed in each of 36 blocks of Trilokpuri and one block each in JJ Cluster and pavement dwellers in Dr. Ambedkar Camp and Feroze Gandhi Camp respectively.

The data used were collected in 1988, 1995 and 2000 by survey team of the Council for Social Development (CSD) in connection with different studies.

Slums Within Slums in Resettlement Colonies

From 1951 to 1976, about 98,438 squatter families were rehabilitated in 20 resettlement colonies as part of a Slum Clearance Programme. As a result, the number of squatter families decreased to 20,000 (in 1976). But during the last one decade the number of squatter families has again gone up. According to Slum Wing of Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD), there are about 1100 "Jhuggi Jhompri" clusters (JJ) comprising 4,80,000 squatter families (1994). It is significant to note that in one of the studies of Council for Social Development we found more than 94,000 of jhuggis squatting in and around resettlement colonies. Thus, many clusters seem to have emerged recently. The inhabitants of these clusters have occupied open spaces like parks,

land earmarked for health and educational institutions, road berms (edge of a paved road) etc.

As can be seen from Table 3 as many as 52.6 percent of the Jhuggi Jhompri clusters had emerged on Road berms and another 25.8% in and around parks of the resettlement colonies.

TABLE 3
Distribution pattern of clusters in spaces reserved for different purposes

Sr. No.	Space reserved for	No. of clusters	Percentage
1.	Road berms	110	52.6
2.	Parks	54	25.8
3.	Housing	4	1.9
4.	School	3	1.4
5.	Health	1	0.5
6.	Shopping	2	1.0
7.	Religious place	1	0.5
8.	Housing and Park	10	4.8
9.	Health	1	0.5
10.	Any other	23	11.0
	Total	209	100.0

Source: Primary data collection, 2002.

Most of the squatters in the resettlement colonies were migrants from rural areas of different States, most of them from Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Rajasthan, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh. Some migrants were more distant States like Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu, and some even belong to Bangladesh. The places of origin of immigrant squatters across six selected resettlement colonies of Delhi are shown in Table 4.

TABLE 4
Places of origin of the squatters

Name of the resettlement colonies	Places of origin of squatters
Garhi village	1. Uttar Pradesh, 2. Haryana
Wazirpur	1. Uttar Pradesh, 2. Bihar, 3. Haryana 4. Madhya Pradesh, 5. Rajasthan, 6. Tamil Nadu
Tigri	1. Uttar Pradesh, 2. Haryana
New Seemapuri	1. Uttar Pradesh, 2. Bangladesh
Nand Nagri Extension (Sundernagri)	1. Uttar Pradesh, 2. Rajasthan, 3. Bangladesh
Patparganj Complex including Trilokpuri resettlement colony	1. Uttar Pradesh, 2. Madhya Pradesh 3. Haryana, 4. Bihar, 5. Tamil Nadu 6. Maharashtra.

Source: Primary data collection, 2002.

A 1995 survey of 20 resettlement colonies found that all surveyed resettlement colonies were experiencing heavy growth of squatters.³

A January 2000 survey in Trilokpuri resettlement colony indicated the total number of Jhuggis as 6344 as compared to 8517 in 1995. The only reason for the decline discussed and observed was the drive to clear the road pavements. Out of the 6344 jhuggis, about 3294 are on pavements and remaining 3050 are in four JJ clusters in the parks of block Nos. 15,16, 28 and 32. The *Pradhans* of 36 blocks were interviewed separately to ascertain the reasons as to why these parks have been encroached, 35 cited lack of money to rent living space, 23 expressed that cost of living was cheaper in Trilokpuri as compared to neighbouring areas and about 13 *Pradhans* reported that encroachers were relatives and friends of resettlers. About 17 *Pradhans* were of the opinion that better wages and business attraction are the main reasons for squatters in and around Trilokpuri.

3. Sabir Ali, (1998), *Environmental Scenario of Delhi Slums*, New Delhi: Gyan Sagar Publications.

Factors for the Emergence of Squatters

When discussed with Jhuggi dwellers regarding factors responsible for choosing JJ clusters and pavements for living, their response was that there was no check on vacant land for encroachment at the time of constructing their Jhuggi in Trilokpuri. Invitation from friends and relatives encourages their settling. Some of the Jhuggi dwellers were also of the view that opportunities for self employment/employment and low cost of living were the other attractions for them. It was also indicated by the respondents that local pradhans and resettlers supported and welcomed their coming to this camp. While discussing about their previous stay, most of them were living in the villages of Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Bihar and West Bengal. During survey in JJ clusters and on pavements, inhabitants expressed their views that they completely depended and shared facilities and services provided to resettlers in the blocks of Trilokpuri.

The following issues were noticed:

- forced squatting/crowds in the open spaces like parks, road-berms etc.
- over utilization or dependence on health and education facilities of the resettlers by the squatter dwellers.
- lot of informal activities are generated in the area by the new-comers.
- over-crowding in public transport etc.

Recommendations

It can be concluded from the above that the phenomenon of squatting is observed in all 36 blocks of Trilokpuri. The main concentration of squatters is on road berms and JJ clusters. The squatters are mainly used for residential, commercial and productive purposes. Most of the squatters are migrants from Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Rajasthan and Bihar. The main factors for the emergence are invitation from the resettlers to relatives living elsewhere, opportunities for self-employment, low cost of living and no rent/no check on squatting. It also revealed that the phenomenon of squatting is a hazard to the environment. The survey result of Dr. Ambedkar

Camp and Feroze Camp also confirms the above observation indicating their total dependence on the facilities and services of the resettlement colony.

To improve the existing state of environment, the following steps be considered.

- Existing squatters on roads, road berms and small parks may immediately be shifted to other suitable sites like new resettlement colonies for smooth flow of traffic and proper use of parks by children and others.
- Big open places on the outskirts of the colony where squatters are residing, if not required for immediate use, may be taken up for improvement and development.
- The strict vigilance may be kept up by police and the Block people to curtail further squatting and encroachment in the area.

Training programme for different groups need to be arranged:

- (i) training facilities are required at all levels of staff starting with safai karamcharis, supervisory staff and senior officers, incharge of garbage management. Such programmes can be arranged through the aegis of the Council for Social Development.
- (ii) to ensure public participation and co-operation, it is essential that special workshops are arranged. These would, on one hand, provide a forum where residents could be consulted about their convenience regarding location and spacing of dalaos, the frequency of cleaning, methodology adopted etc, and on the other hand, educate them, through visuals, demonstration and films about elementary sanitary habits. Similar training programmes need to be specifically designed for shop-keepers and small entrepreneurs running different trades.
- (iii) the habit of keeping the house, locality and the city clean is to be inculcated amongst the children right from the very beginning. Such training could be imparted using specialised features in the form of stories, cartoons, stickers, lessons etc. which can be designed to catch the fancy and attention of children.

While collecting secondary data for this study, it was realised that not much data on the environmental components of resettlers is available. It is suggested that in order to understand status of the environment, suitable expert organization may be hired to provide base-line data and required input for planning and action research.

Special attention should be paid to cleaning and maintaining the buildings of education and health facilities of the resettlement colonies. Dalaos should be provided near these institutions to prevent unattended garbage from being dumped near them to keep environment liveable.

Parks and open greens are the only lung spaces available to the resettlers. An aggressive campaign should be mounted to clear the open spaces of existing rubble and garbage and make them green. Innovative land scape solutions are required to prevent further abuse of these parks and open spaces.

Regular repair and maintenance of street lights must be ensured to rid the resettlement colonies of the gloomy, dark, insecure atmosphere which now prevails in these colonies.

Maintenance of roads and streets should be undertaken keeping the relative level of the roads w.r.t. plinth level of surrounding houses, so as to prevent water logging during the rainy season. If required, the roads should be scrapped and freshly laid.

The open drains alongside the roads and alleys should either be fitted with removable covers or suitable vigorous arrangements should be made for their regular cleaning and to avoid accumulation of sewage and sullage in them.

The authorities should treat sanitation, water supply, roads, drainage etc. not as diverse and differing activities, but as various interrelated requirements of a single entity-environment. Thus, any policy regarding any of these facilities should be formulated keeping in mind its overall effect on allied facilities and environment.

If measures suggested above are taken in Trilokpuri resettlement colony, environment will improve significantly and ill effect of 'Slums Within Slums' can be avoided.