

Case Study : Night Shelters' and Differently abled homeless in Delhi

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I met Lallan Yadav (name changed) in December, 2014 when I visited Anand Vihar Night Shelter (NS 214) to collect the oral histories of the homeless as a part of research on homelessness being conducted by former teacher of my department. I developed a very good rapport with him and then DUSIB student volunteer program happened and I thought to prepare a case study on him. This is his journey brought to life on paper by me. I strictly followed the research ethics. I read the final draft in Hindi to him and the photo here were taken with his wilful consent. This is my honest effort to study the phenomenon of homelessness in the context of differently abled homeless population which are in anyways most vulnerable and marginalised.

I sincerely hope that this case study shall serve its purpose i.e. better welfare provisions for the differently abled homeless in night shelters of Delhi Urban Shelter Improvement Board, Government of NCT of Delhi.

Before I start, we must understand the definition of homelessness. According to the U.S of A section 330 of public health service act (42 USC, 254B), a homeless person is an individual without permanent housing who may live on the streets, stay in a shelter, mission, single room occupancy facilities, abandoned building or vehicle, or in any other unstable or non permanent situation. In India, the 2010 Supreme Court orders arose from media reports in the winter of 2009-10 of death of homeless people in New Delhi. The court deemed wide scale deaths on the streets a violation of constitutional right to life, enshrined in article 21 and directed cities to construct 1 shelter for each location inhabited by 100,000 people. To date, there are nearly 271 homeless shelters in Delhi. There is still much to be done. Investigations by the Asian age and the New York times, respectively reported that nearly 18000 identified bodies were found on the streets of new delhi from 2009-2014.

Lallan Yadav, originally hails from Eta District of Uttar Pradesh. He came to Delhi in 1998 and sells tobacco products on his tricycle outside Anand Vihar ISBT. He is 32 years young (as he call himself) and wish to get married soon (with a bright spark in his eyes). His family consists of mother, 2 brothers and three sisters. While interacting with him, I sensed that how family dynamics and masculinity makes a differently abled homeless more vulnerable. They



own nearly 30 beeghas of agricultural land in village. But still he can't claim his share as the brothers are demanding equal share in the expenses incurred on sisters wedding which runs in lacs of rupees. Since he can't repay the amount and it also hurts his masculinity so he came to

Delhi to fend for himself. I as a researcher also observed that somewhere he was a liability on his family and they wanted to get rid of him. He usually don't prefer to visit his village. Lallan took a loan of Rs 120,000 at the rate of 10% and started his life here. His working hours are from morning 9'0 clock till 12 in night. 'Lulla', 'Langda', 'Chor', 'uchakka', 'Smakia' and other choicest abuses are showered on him daily. Even Delhi police at times threw his stuff on road and he had to collect his belongings on his hands since he can't use his legs. 'Haramzade, you must be a sinner in your past life that is why you are like this' I heard this for him 'n' no of times while sitting and observing him on road near Anand Vihar ISBT by all kind of people. Lallan is very vocal when it comes the question of his rights as a citizen. 'Arun Bhai.....har pal yaha sangarsh hi sangarsh hai'..... I got this reponse when I asked him what challenges do he face as a homeless. He said that his money gets stealed so many times, police comes and harass them in Night Shelter. One security personnel visited them during republic day and after showering mother and sister abuses said that you all are thief and thugs. With tears in his eyes, he said to me that we are poor and destitute but that does not mean that i am a thief. 'Yadav Jaat apna sar utha ke jeeti hai' arun bhai. What I like most in this man is his smile, he always keep smiling and this optimism is his driving force. He visits brothels to satisfy his physical needs and drinks alcohol. I asked him why he consumes so much alcohol, he said 'isko peene ke baad apmaan ka zehreela ghoont peena aasan ho jata hai'. Lallan's aspirations in life are very simple, he just wants to lead good life. The main issue which I observed in NS214 is that he really find it difficult to use the toilets being provided in the porta cabin. The infrastructure in the night shelters is not differently abled friendly. Not just Lallan but all inmates unanimously agree that police is not friendly towards them. No beat constable visits the shelter regularly. Many drug addicts who create ruckus have been supported by the local police personnel. I myself witnessed one such brawl and i immediately called 100. PCR arrived on the scene and people of Anand Vihar Chowki shouted on us that why you called 100? The matter will now go up, you should have settled things here. Inmates in shelter said that had we called the chowki no one would have turned as their no. is dead most of time and they take hafta from the goons who create ruckus in shelters. I even called DUSIB helpline and said that no police CT visits the night shelter regularly, they said they will visit according to their convenience. I was shocked to listen this from the DUSIB helpline. Being on the periphery of Delhi, this night shelter has been neglected in terms of welfare services. Most of homeless here don't have their ID cards(including lallan to),by this they can't avail the services being provided by the government like social security, financial inclusion etc. There are 2 windows in the porta cabin of Anand Vihar Night Shelter (NS214), which remain closed all the time. I asked lallan why is it so? He said if we open them there is possibility of someone creeping in out of it. Also lallan said that why there is no gate in the night shelter facility??? The government wants to save the cost of gate and manpower, the ill security provision is the main reason why homeless people avoids using night shelter. The homeless people in NS214 were satisfied by the medical services being provided by the HRC. Even, lallan said this in his words that there is lack of interdepartmental coordination on the issue of homelessness.

The suggestions which Lallan, homeless people of NS214 and I as a researcher have to make is that:

- Camps for making ID's, for opening bank accounts should be organised on regular intervals.
- Small lockers proportional to the sanctioned strength of night shelter should be constructed in each shelter. Infrastructure(toilets and sanitation) should be disabled friendly
- There should be active involvement of all the stake holders and proper sensitisation should done of the people regularly who are working on grassroots.
- The head of DUSIB should make regular surprise visits to night shelters.
- There should be regular sessions on HIV, TB and other diseases in night shelters.
- Security point needs to be taken care of, lets make our night shelter safe for homeless people who are the spine of our city.
- There should be a deaddiction centre where the addicted homeless can be taken care off. Efforts should be made to enhance their skills and vocational taining.
- It should be made mandatory that all the calls related to homeless will be directed on 100 only.
- CCTV monitoring should be in each shelter of DUSIB.
- Emphasis should be on proper pest control of night shelter, many of with I interaced were bitten by rats.
- A well known face should be roped to publicise the cause of Night Shelters, It will help in getting that mass appeal.
- DUSIB should tie with NACO and have condom vending facilities in the shelters.
- There must be a counsellor for each shelter. DUSIB and other stakeholders needs to change their orientation towards the issue of homelessness.

Brief Profile of the Researcher :

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