

Happiness is easy :)

## Meeting Mukesh.

*JANUARY 21, 2015 BY SOUND OF HAPPINES*

Tucked in my warm quilt and seemingly hygienic bed I thank my stars for a few things. I thank God , that I am not a delinquent, for not having lice in bed, for not being kicked and robbed in the middle of the night and mostly for being rich enough to write this blog.

Why this sudden bout of gratitude you may ask?

Well, this was my fourth visit to a night shelter. Shelter # 179, managed by Ram krishna mission. The trust is doing great service to the homeless. I thank them.

It was my second interview, this time with a gentleman named Mukesh, aged 48, thin built and a timid demeanour. He had just been offered a free dinner by his friend. Shankar, another inmate in the shelter.No work for two days.

Mukesh is a daily wage earner. He works as a waiter, came to New Delhi in 98' after a fatal turn of event in his life. He lost his entire family in a car crash.Recollecting the sight of dead bodies he confessed how he could never recover from traumatic stress.Why did he visit the dreaded Mongolpuri night shelter.? I asked him...

All his friends including Shankar were there, friends..Real ones, not the virtual one's on facebook and whatsapp. They drank and slept together, they shared pain the

world was oblivious to. In Delhi he was enslaved by a contractor for the loan he took but got enough for some country liquor and a meal.

Dont you feel cold with just a sweater?

He showed me his dusty maroon blazer... I think that was his only armour in this weather.

10 feet away another inmate was abusing someone in his sleep and pissing his pants. I guess by now all were immune to the stench, including me.

Poverty is an unmistakable reality, its not a stench you could avoid with a kerchief, its an epidemic let loose on our society. Many Mukesh's will perish in their daily struggle for survival as I type this. Death hurts, 14 yr old Babloo died recently for want of medical care , the inmates miss him.

Mukesh wants a decent burial, not an electric cremation. He want's a semblance of pride atleast in death. OmWhat pulled him to Delhi is what draws millions daily, some foolish hope and lots of innocence. They leave their homes, children and happiness to churn in the grind of city life. Unlike us they dont have an address, phone number or an email account. They cant afford one. Some will die of tuberculosis, some with dengue. The government officials promise them identity cards but what they need is dignity.

There are nearly 620 million Indians living on subsistence levels or lower.

Next time you haggle over with the hawker for 5 rs or scream at the cycle rickshaw wallah ask yourself ... Could you live in his shoes, even for a moment. Where will the pride of your wallet take you. What are you really worried about, is it worth it?..

Will we let humanity go extinct.? Will Mukesh die unsung..?