

SOME EXPERIENCES AND CASE STUDY

Visiting different night shelters in these days was altogether a very different experience , even while being in since last several years I never had such an experience . “Homelessness” is not the result of one but many factors”, this statement as said by Sanjay Sir in the orientation program is true as far as I realized in these days. As like rainbow have many colors so do the life of these people living in shelter homes. Giving quilts during winters and hand fans during summers may help these people to fight with the changing weather and seasons but will not empower them to fight with their destiny.

Meeting people in different shelters and listening to their stories helped me out to see different shades of grey. Their stories may sometimes seem as hallucination to us or sometimes they are believed to be day dreamers. But the reality and pain they are suffering inside is far from our imagination.

I was worried about the management and how to improve that but I really salute the staffs who are managing the shelters. These people had to listen to all the abuses of the residents. But on the other hand the situation and mental state of the residents must be kept in mind by the management.

It is not only poverty which is leading to homelessness. There are many faces of homelessness: poverty, mental illness, depression, destitution, frequent quarrels among family members, domestic violence , lack of family support, old age, drug addiction, alcoholism, failure on the part of the government to provide resettlement (as in case of Punjabi academy in Motia khan)

While some see their future outside the shelter homes others have no idea where to go or their future dreams are full of dark and dust beyond which they are unable to look out.

The very name “Shelter Home” does not seem giving feeling of home. They don’t own their home but the word “Adhikaar” in Ashraya Adhikaar Abhiyaan gives some power in the form of “right”. But these shelters are leading the life of people towards darkness or sunshine need to be analyzed in depth. Given free shelter and food may be good as a welfare scheme but it may also lead to growth of dependency and may reduce self consciousness to earn and become self dependent.

Case Study: Case study of one woman from the shelter home at Regarpura. It is a case study of women from a shelter home under Aashraya which was earlier under Indo Global Social Service Society (IGSSS) and since 16 dec 2014 it came under Ashraya Adhikar Abhiyaan, code no- 18.

According to the supervisor’s the food in this shelter comes from Saisandhya. On some days pulses and rice while on some day’s chapatti and vegetables are cooked. Usually children in the shelter didn’t like the food , generally when repeatedly the same food is made.

Fictitious name of woman: **Amritvarsha**

I am doing case of one of the women (Amritvarsha) from the shelter homes. When I was interacting with the other people in the shelter home, and I came in contact with Amritvarsha and started conversation

with her then she started conversation in English with me. I was surprised to see her reading an English (The Hindu) newspaper. She seemed to be in her 30's. She belongs to Bengal (Kolkata). She is in the shelter home since last 2 years , earlier she was at Banglasahib shelter then she was shifted to Regarpura shelter due to some issues and constant quarrels between her and other residents putting up there. According to her she did her some schooling from Delhi and then she went back to Kolkata and completed the remaining schooling from there. She had a M.A degree in Sanskrit from Calcutta University. She also did some computer course which she was not able to complete from Ramakrishna Mission in Bengal. She told about how the Ramakrishna Mission works in Bengal (Kolkata) where hostel and free education is provided to the children unlike in Delhi's Ramakrishna Mission. She was very open to the volunteer and shared many things about her family. She told that her father's has a "tole" (kind of Ashram) where students used to come to take lessons on Sanskrit , only Sanskrit and there was no culture of fees rather there existed "Guru - Shishya "kind of relationship She also learned some Sanskrit lessons from Omkaar Nath Ashram , Bengal.

Amritvarsha's all property is taken over by her uncle (father's brother) after her parent's death. There is no support from her maternal side as her nani(mother's mother) transferred all her property on the name of her mother and not on the name of her mamu (mother's brother). Because of these reasons her mamu (maternal uncle) is no more in contact with her. In talking with her she always showed a desire to work. Her brother also puts up in another night shelter (near New Delhi railway station). Her brother tried to do a job but wherever he worked he failed to get the proper remuneration according to the work done. He got 500rs instead of 8000rs. She was very critical about the entrepreneurs in Delhi who recruit people and don't pay them according to the work done. She said even the Bengali people who are running businesses in Delhi also show the same non supportive attitude while people in Bengal are not like that. Nowadays her brother is working in Ashokvihar and also works in marriages to see arrangement and all other things in marriage ceremonies. She didn't like that her brother should do such jobs which are not meant for educated people. Her brother is suffering from pain due to which he is unable to do his work from some days. Supervisor and Amritvarsha, both told that Amritvarsha's brother usually comes in day time to meet her sister and also gives some money to her. She also talked about the children in the shelter home and their misbehaving attitude and bad language used by them. She told about herself when she was a child and there were many people working at her home as helpers, but they used to respect the helpers never used bad language for them.

Amritvarsha always mentions big names of Tata's , Birla's etc in her talks for giving certain examples of people and companies which have grown over a period of time .She also told about her cousin sister who resides in Mumbai , who calls her sometimes but the client didn't want to talk to her. So she switched off her phone. In later conversations when the volunteer asked her about her sister and other relatives who may help her in this hard time. She said that she don't want to take anybody's help, she wants to sustain on her own. She also said that when somebody possesses money they have friends, relatives and all want to be in touch with such people but when people didn't have money nobody wants to be in contact with them. She also said that when she will be ready to marry someone according to the choice of her relatives (any old rich man) then all will come around her.

Amritvarsha left Kolkata because she was in danger of being threatened or murdered by her relatives for the property issue. She wants to open an N.G.O (Ashram like her Father used to run for the Sanskrit education, where students will learn Sanskrit and will do higher studies in Sanskrit. She also wants to open up small enterprise with the help of government funding, where she wants to recruit people from the shelter homes, who want to work. She said that she had applied for loan for this kind of work. But it was difficult to understand what exactly she wants to do and how she will be able to do all she dream of doing while being in this shelter home with lack of access to the resources. She always talked about doing welfare work and she said that she feels bad that she eats food given in that shelter without working and she never demands food for second time whatever is given once she eats that much. She thanks god for the shelter and food given to her but at the same time she is very upset with her life's situation and condition and she said now she don't want to talk about god and didn't want to demand anything from God. People having many resources and wealth don't think in such positive way to contribute towards the society, this women while facing extremes of life is still hopeful to bring changes in the life of many people.

Amritvarsha also shared one incidence when a guy came to see her for marriage. The guy was an advocate in Delhi High court but he demanded dowry because of which women said no for marriage. She wanted to marry a person who is pure by heart and who does not want to see the financial status of the girl to marry rather her heart. Woman liked another guy who was not from her cast, as the person was very good by nature but women father denied that marriage due to caste differences. She is still unmarried. She said she does not want to be a partner of any man rather she wanted to remain independent and she still likes that guy (from other caste) , she said she respects that person as he didn't demanded anything in dowry just the girl.

Woman scolded me for coming late in the evening to visit her, she was very caring and said that being independent is good for a girl but being in Delhi where day by day some or the other news of violence against women comes, girls need to protect themselves.

OBSERVATION AND ANALYSIS:

I always see her sitting on her bed whenever I visited that shelter. She used to take her food while sitting in bed only, like other people, only children takes their food sitting nearby television so, they take food while sitting together but don't share plates or food. I asked her whether she goes/moves outside the shelter; she replied that she rarely moves out of the shelter as she has no work, so there is no purpose of moving out. She asked me which chocolate I wanted to eat on the last day of visit.

People reflected what they have imbibed throughout their lives and these kinds of gestures are unexpected from people facing so many hardships. Tears came in her eyes once she was telling her life's story, about her relatives. But still she is a strong woman.

Amritvarsha was interested in commerce studies as well and want to learn. She asked the volunteer to bring one balance sheet for her by which she will find out assets and liabilities. She is very interested in doing work related to commerce and Sanskrit.

She also helps the children in the shelter with their studies whenever they ask for help but she didn't teach them on regular basis as the children are not interested in studying daily.

Sometimes her talks were not understood as she starts from somewhere and end the point at somewhere; this may be due to several factors like the environment around her, depression due to no opportunity for livelihood and no family for emotional support. But the supervisors told that she is good and has no psychological problem. But still some experts in this field may have better views. She seemed to be less interactive with the other members; she interacts closely with few members.

Amritvarsha told that once a person blamed her for stealing his sleepers at Banglasahib shelter due to which she had a fight with him. She said that she gas nit learnt to steal and can live at minimum fulfillment of needs but will never steal. While she was telling this incident, pain and grief could be felt, that she was very upset with what all happened. In Our day to day life we also blame people without thinking that how would it will affect them and their lives. Generally, people at the margins (small farmers, at home, maids) are the one who are blamed for all wrongs. So, we must think and find out the reality. She once told that the clothes she was wearing and one more pair of similar kind were given by a couple in Banglasahib shelter.

When I asked her permission for a photograph then she denied and seems to be conscious about her clothes and wearing. So, I told her that there is no problem and I didn't click her picture.

Some points of focus:

1. Amrivarsha need some counseling for boosting her confidence and motivation. Once a psychiatrist should also visit her to find out if some problem is there as I was unable to find out it exactly.
2. Some kind of training may help her in getting a job.
3. She also needs to go out of shelter for sometime to see outside life which may bring positive changes in her.
4. She is educated so she can and she wants to do a job, if some help is provided to her in getting a work.
5. Taking food while sitting together in groups can help in building solidarity among the residents of the shelter. This will also help in building of good relationship towards each other .among the residents.
6. One a man was found urinating on the front wall of the shelter home, while on one day shit was found in front of the gate. The shelter homes are in such a condition that if an outsider looks at the building he/she may assume that nobody puts inside it. This situation need to alter and the condition of shelter homes need to be improved. Anything needs to be cleaned from inside and outside as well. Most of the shelters are in the same situation.
7. She asked me that if I want to note down something about her then I can note it in my diary. This shows that she understood our purpose of visit to the shelter after I told her the reason behind our visits.

8. Amritvarsha's brother is also educated and can do some work, he is presently doing work but getting paid according to the work done so, he need help in that. If both, the brother & sister will get job then they will be able to manage their lives and there will be no need of them to put up in shelter home.
9. I tried asking Amritvarsha that how did she came to the shelter home but she didn't replied this question, may be didn't want to share this information or she didn't remember. Even the supervisor's at the shelter simply told that she came from Banglasahib shelter but did she went to Banglasahib shelter was not known. So, this kind of information must be kept in record by the supervisor's.
10. There is lack of coherence among the residents of shelter homes, as one old woman asked me to fill her bank slip for depositing some money but she didn't asked Amritvarsha to do that work , although the old woman knew that Amritvarsha can also do that still she didn't asked her to do this. At Punjabi Academy shelter also when the volunteer's went to visit then there a quarrel started between the residents on the issue that all were not informed that some came to visit them , although their point was right that whatever is happening in the shelter , all should be informed regarding that but it was not such a big issue on which people should start fighting so some group activities in terms of celebration of festivals , should be organized , may be at a small scale but it will bring improvement in terms of positive feeling among each other.
11. Some people resort to begging, as homemakers, working within the shelter etc but still there is no source of permanent livelihood opportunity. Generally, older women had to go for begging as they are unable to work. Some women are also saving their money in banks but what about the saved money; they don't know what to do with it, especially older women. A self help group can be a good medium to start a small scale enterprise and some help can be taken from the government.

Case Study 2:

It is a case study of women from a shelter home under Aashraya which was earlier under Indo Global Social Service Society (IGSSS) and since 16 dec 2014 it came under Ashraya Adhikar Abhiyan, code no-18.

Fictitious name of woman Geeta , Her daughter's name Shruti. Sons name Amit and Saurabh

There were around 10 women in that shelter. Out of which three women put up with their children. I am doing case study from one of those three women and her children. I took up his case because I interacted with the Shruti on the very first day of my visit she was watching television while sitting on the floor and was very confident while interacting with me even when I was just a stranger to her, her boldness and her story seemed very strange for me and so I wanted to know more about her so I interacted with her mother. Ms. Geeta told me that she was putting up there since last 5 years. She is having three children; two sons and one daughter. Ms. Geeta told that she was disrupted by the conditions at her home so she ran away from their and it took her 3 days to reach Delhi with her children from Lucknow. She was crying at the metro station with her children and was praying to god

that someone may help her and give shelter because she was worried about her two sons and her pregnant daughter, then suddenly one of the supervisors of IGSSS came and took her to the shelter and since then she is putting up in this shelter. She said that the supervisor was like god for her at that time. Now, she also works in one the houses as a helper and earns around rupees 1000. She told that her parents used to live in Bihar but due to flood in Bihar before 12 to 13 years she lost contact with them and that was also one of the reasons that her husband used to beat her and in-laws misbehaved with her as there was nobody from her family to support her. As according to the Ms. Geeta her daughter (Shruti) got pregnant at the age of 10. But a 10 year old girl cannot become pregnant due to some biological reasons. She told that her husband's brother raped her daughter because of which she got pregnant. She told that still case is going on against her brother in law. According to her, very soon that person got bail. She wants justice for her child Shruti. She shared her past experiences in life that her husband used to beat her up with bricks and stick. She also told that her children were also beaten up badly by their father and her mother in law was not at all supportive. She told that her husband didn't like her and he ran away with some other girl, whom he liked from the village. When I met her both sons who seemed to be of around 6 to 8 years old, One of them goes to school but the other didn't as told by the supervisor's of the shelter. These two children (Amit and Saurabh) of that woman were very naughty and use abusive language frequently and also beats other children and her sister as well. Those two boys create nuisance for other especially for the old women there. Amit and Saurabh use to put on the fans in winter as seen by me and while playing they hurt one old woman who was crying after got hurt, and that old lady started beating herself with her sleepers. The other inmates of shelter home were also very distraught of those children. Their mother didn't scold them as just she used to say that as they were beaten up in childhood that's why they are like that and "she use to say that "mai to khud bimaar hun kya karu danti hun mante hi nahi hain . The lady told that she is also disrupted with her sons as they don't listen to her. "The supervisors of the shelter home told that the lady took her sons and left them at home for some time when children were not allowed in the shelter homes. But after the family shelter home concept started by Ashraya Adhikaar they were again brought by her. I interacted with her daughter on the first day of my visit. Her daughter told that she didn't like her father and she also filed a case against her father also, she told that she didn't like the food in shelter home she said that her mother used to work in some well off family and she used to bring food from their so she is habitual of that food so it's hard to eat such food. The woman's daughter also said to the volunteer that she has become very weak and gets ill very frequently. Woman's daughter (Shruti) also told that she wants to learn everything and wants to study, she knows stitching and now she would be learning beautician courses and other things too. But, she cannot practice stitching as nobody gives anything to stitch and there is no scope while being in shelter home. Woman's daughter also said to the volunteer that äap to bade ghar ke ho aapko to achcha khana milata hogा mujhe aaplogo k ghar jaisa hi khana achcha lagta hai", When I advised her eat some fruit daily like apple etc to overcome weakness she told that her brother's will not let her eat fruits if she brings fruit, they will play with it and throw that away.

It is the irony of being at the edge that even when someone possesses skills there is no scope for getting work. The woman's daughter (Shruti) is still seem to be very young she needs to study and volunteer also suggested that she should focus and studies and then should try to work as according to her interest.

The supervisor also told that the woman's daughter used to go out of shelter for going to temple and she used to remain absent from the shelter for 3-3 days and later on she became pregnant again on second time and her daughter accepted that it was due to her own mistake. Then the supervisor's advised the daughter and her mother not to abort the child and bear it and they will later on give that child to someone who wants to adopt the child but the daughter wanted abortion and so she aborted the child.

The Woman also told that she remains ill and she has all marks due to beating given by her husband. She is in the hope of getting a home from Ashraya Adhikaar, in which she can live with her children and can marry her daughter and wants to get better treatment for her daughter as her daughter has problem in her legs, while sleeping her legs swells .Now, both the lady and the her daughter are getting treatment from doctor with the help of Ashraya Adhikaar Abhiyaan.

Observation and Analysis:

When I first saw her (Ms. Geeta) on the first day of my visit she was sitting alone. When she was sharing her life's experiences tears were coming out of her eyes, it could be analyzed that she had gone through lot of sufferings and pain in life. She used to put her hand on her forehead, maybe she was upset thinking about her destiny. Through looking in her eyes it could be predicted that she want to share a lot and say a lot of things. The lady seemed to be physically weak it may be because of all mental, psychological pressures, pain and also the kind of food she consumes. When I went to visit the shelter on the second day the lady and her daughter were taking their medicines. With very less nutritive food and less homely environment consuming medicines without proper diet might further affect their health. Woman told that she had a blood pressure problem and always suffers from headache. These are signs of weakness and tension. Through her conversation it could be find out that she was very worried about her daughter's future, her health and marriage even more than the her two sons future. Once I asked Ms.Geeta that how many years ago she got married she told that it has been around ten years and when Shruti's age was asked she told that she is 15 years old; it's hard to believe, it can only be ;possible in one case if Ms. Geeta gave birth to Shruti before marriage. Whether M.s Geeta was telling lie to me or there was some other issue or she didn't want to disclose. I could not understand but there must be a reason behind that She sleeps on the floor as there was less space on the beds provided on which the other things were kept. She was a very caring mother and tries to fulfill all the demands of her children (as her son demanded for a toy scooter and she bought that for him, on with which the child was playing), even after that her sons demands some or the other new toys daily and these constant demands are not fulfilled by her due to lack of money because of which children cries all the time and creates problems for their mother. Most of the time women's daughter was seen lying on her bed; she might have some major problem or weakness because of which she was always on bed or due to lack of space in the shelter home. While I was interacting with the other women in the shelter the two sons of that client were making loud noises, used abusive words for other and were beating the other children. But when I tried to talk to them calmly they listened carefully and attentively. If these children are given proper care, love and attention, send to school on daily basis they can improve, in terms of behavior and learning.

As told by the supervisors and the woman (Ms. Geeta) herself many times police also came due to the violence and misbehavior done by the children. Once , they tried to hurt the supervisor with the bricks in their hand when the supervisor couldn't handle them she called up the police , the police asked the children to say sorry while accepting the mistake and to take promise not to repeat it . But, this is not the inherent problem with the children rather their environment has affected them. Those two kids were also not letting the volunteer's to interact with the other members and also tried to hurt the volunteer's as well with the stick in their hands but the volunteer tried to handle them with patience but at times they don't listen and it's hard to make them understand something.

On one hand we can say that children should be kept with their parents for their better development but here their development is worsening so they can be or rather I suggest they should be shifted to children's shelter where they can grow well and can learn better thing with the other children . As they create problems for the other members in the shelter particularly for old women and their mother is unable to handle them, even they harm their sister as well.

The whole family one mother, daughter and two sons are in the shelter home not because of lack of resources or home but as the result of the domestic violence. Patriarchy is still persistent in our societies and violence against women by the males and the in-laws is not a new issue. Even after the formation of various laws for the protection of women against violence, large number of women is suffering from this violence. Children are the responsibility of both the parents, but here, in this case, the woman had to take care of the children alone.

Since 5 years this family is putting up in this shelter, but they lack their future vision. Women's daughter was had some hope in her eyes and she is confident enough to take decisions but still she needs lot of guidance and focus on her studies.

Some kind of work need to be started up for the women in the shelter as it may help them in getting some kind of engagement as well as they can earn some money which may boost their confidence and can fill in hopes in their eyes. If they people will be engaged in some king of activities then their mind will also develop and they will feel that their lives are of great worth and they can see their bright future outside shelter homes. Some kind of stitching classes, papad making, and some handloom related work or some recycling unit can be set up for such people. Facilities to look after the children attendance in schools , some activities for children in children specific shelter homes like drawing competitions, games etc which may help in diverting minds of children from learning bad habits.

Although the supervisor's are doing great work while managing the shelter's but at times they get frustrated with the conditions of the shelter so proper training at times need to be given to the people supervising the shelters to build skills for dealing with individuals.

POINTS OF FOCUS:

1. A proper maintenance of the record of the people living in the shelter must be maintained.
Sometimes in the register's same person's name is written on two places on two different days with different age, how a person can be a year older or younger in a day. One computer must be

there to maintain records with photographs must be there to avoid mistake and to avail and maintain history of the people living in the shelters.

2. At some shelters the geysers were not repaired. The old people need hot water in the severe winters. So these kinds of management issues are there which need attention.
3. Some kind of livelihood skill training need to be provided to the people in shelter home, specially the focus should be on the children because they can learn and then earn for themselves in future when they will become adults.
4. In some shelters are many people while in some there is lot of space so, people need to be shifted as where there are lot many people residing sanitation issues arise and where there are less number of people putting up the residents don't think about going out of the shelter in future.
5. There need to be one counselor for every shelter to counsel people and to build their confidence, and specially people with some kind of depression, psychological problems due to tension and worries needs attention. There may be issues relate to finance for the recruitment of the counselor's but these counselor's, if appointed can help people in building their future outside the shelter homes .
6. The women who does the cleaning work , cooking work in the shelter's sometimes suffer, as the other members order them and misbehaves with them saying "do that work that is your work ". So, all these kind of work need to be done by the all members who are able to do work on rotation basis. This will help in saving of money given for the cleaning work and there would also be no "free riders". It's in human nature to become lethargic if food and shelter is given free so if they will have to work for themselves then they will also keep the things in place and will also maintain things on their own.
7. Old people should be placed in one shelter as they can share their feelings better with other's of same age. In this case if possible both old males and females should be put in one shelter.
8. There must be a security guard in the women shelter's as its main gate remains closed due to security reasons. People should not feel like as if they are in some kind of jail.
9. The location of shelter homes at various places does not provide good environment. Especially the location of children's shelter home should be at places where the area just outside the shelters should not be giving negative feelings or way towards bad things.
10. At some shelters people who are earning well and can afford rent accommodation, even those who were living on the rental basis are now putting up in shelter homes. There is urgent need to find out who really needs shelter and who does not.
11. There is little effort to help people from coming out of alcoholism and drug addiction. This may not be in the ambit of the work of the night shelter's but still to take out people from this vicious circle such people need to be sent to rehabilitation centers.
12. People who are ready for the changes in their lives , educated people and those who want to work and earn and want to move out from the shelter need to be identified and can be put up separately.
13. Government should start a small enterprise (like toy making factory) for such people, who are in shelter homes and want to work.

14. There is lack of sense of belongingness in the residents of shelter homes, such feeling of belongingness, if generated then it will help in the maintaining cleanliness of the shelters. There must be some time limit for which shelter should be provided and in that time some kind of skill development training must be given for generating livelihood to the person, after that the person can earn.
15. The inner walls of the shelter homes (especially of children) should be colorful; it has a psychological impact on the minds of people. Some small plants in the pots must be grown and placed around shelter homes, and the residents of the shelter must be given responsibility to water them and maintain them, this kind of engagement (especially for the old people) will help in giving satisfaction that they are doing some kind of work.
16. The supervisor of the shelter homes must be one among from the residents of the shelter (but they should manage different shelter, not the one in which he/she is putting up. There must be transfer or reshuffle of the supervisor's after a year or so to avoid mismanagement.
17. Water and sanitation facilities are there in the shelter homes but their maintenance is not at all up to the mark. Just providing shelters should not be the aim rather we should focus and the ultimate goals of the development of these people. Proper human conditions must be there, at some shelters one must be thinking twice before entering, searching people on the roads and putting them in the shelter homes in only one aspect but what is after that?? The focus should be more on that. The focus should not be not on the number of people in the shelter homes rather on the quality of services provided to them and the effort made for their development.
18. People with commitment for services and possessing proper training must be the one supervising the shelters.

Case studies By: Rakhi Sharma (Volunteer ID 12849) & Km. Neetu (Volunteer ID-12872)