

Homelessness, Contestations and Subjectivities

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Abstract: The publications by the Census of India in 1991, 2001 and 2011 showed an increment in the population of homeless in India, including Delhi. This paper seeks to bring forth the causalities behind homelessness with special reference a group of populations, who were living under a flyover in the open and two institutional spaces in Delhi. The paper further seeks to understand how locating identity, nature of the population, and duration of stay add to the subjectivity in understanding and formulating approaches towards homelessness.

This study utilised a mixed-method approach. Data were collected from 108 households, including 22 single-person households, concentrated in two clusters. An overwhelming majority of the participants of these households migrated (98.1%) to urban streets or open spaces and shelter services to resolve their life situation. Data were collected through ethnographic method, interview schedule, and genealogy method. The result revealed that the phenomena of homelessness include an adaptive process for many in the study population. The findings also call for broadening up of the understanding of homelessness within a policy framework. The research also highlights the need to explore homelessness from a caste perspective at a larger level and to extend it further to a domain of intersection of caste, poverty, and homelessness.

Key words : Migration, Homelessness, Ethnic enclave, Adaptation, Delhi.