

# **The Forgotten People**

**A report on a survey of  
pavement dwellers  
in Pune**

**Shelter Associates  
1997**

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## KUMAR'S STORY

Kumar's family belongs to the *Sonar* community. Traditionally they were goldsmiths and jewellers, but now they deal mainly with repairing and selling kitchen vessels and utensils. In Pune, they are known as the *Bhandiwala Samaj*. This community has been in Pune for many years, and continues to stay together, living in groups in various settlements. When his family first moved to Pune, Kumar's family joined other Sonar people in a settlement in Ramtekdi. But this place was too far from Mandai, the market where their work is based, so they started to look for a place closer to the market, where other Sonar people were living. After five years in Pune, Kumar's parents found a place in a slum in Swargate, which was ideal. Not only was it closer to the market, but the settlement was tucked away in a relatively hidden location, which gave them a feeling of security from eviction. Nonetheless, the settlement was demolished five years later. The Sonar community from this settlement dispersed into other Sonar settlements, which is how Kumar and his family came to Shivaji Nagar.

At that time, an activist-lawyer was settling a number of people on a piece of land opposite the city courts. He named the settlement Astitva Nagar. Kumar's people approached him and were given a plot to live on. This activist was also campaigning for a permanent settlement for these people. Everyone got together for demonstrations, but the authorities weren't interested, so the excitement died down and people just got on with their everyday lives.

On 4th November 1996 these hutments were demolished by the PMC. Kumar had heard that the court wanted the land for car parking. The people of Astitva Nagar moved to the pavements alongside the courts. A few months later there was a big function at the court. An important dignitary noticed Astitva Nagar, and said that the people there were 'dirty' and should be moved. It was a violent demolition. People were pulled out of their houses, their possessions were destroyed and they were told to leave the city.

They didn't leave, they just moved back to their old piece of land. But this time, they settled at the back of the land, where there was a slight depression, so they'd be hidden from view and hopefully safer from eviction. But that didn't work, because this part of the land belonged to the railway authorities, who noticed them and wanted them off the land. Their homes were demolished again. They moved back to the original Astitva Nagar, the more prominent location adjacent to the railway-owned land and opposite the courts. This land was still empty, since the court had yet to build the car park.

Kumar's hut was demolished three times in eight months. His community continues to stay on the land, but are still not free from the threat of eviction. The court is still planning to build a car park. They get repeated threats of eviction from the authorities, and they feel very insecure and frightened of another eviction. Both Kumar and his wife possess Photo Identity Cards proving their residence in the city before 1.1.95. This should mean that they cannot be evicted without being given alternative land.

Kumar is 28 and married to Shakuntala who is 25. Kumar moved to Pune from Belgaum in Karnataka 16 years ago. His father was trained to be a goldsmith and jeweller, but over the last two decades, mass-produced jewellery has become widely available, putting them out of work in their village. His parents started to wander from village to village selling the jewellery they had made, but after time they couldn't make enough money doing that either. It wasn't just Kumar's family who faced this problem at this time; others in the Sonar community were faced with the same crisis.

Some Sonar families had already moved to various cities to look for other work. Some people from surrounding villages had migrated to Pune and found work there. So, when the time came for Kumar's family to move out, they opted for Pune. Kumar was just 12 at that time. They met up with others from their community, who had had little success selling jewellery in the city. As Kumar was just a little boy at that time, he's not sure exactly when and how the Sonars became Bhandiwalas. All he could tell us was that since their people had always worked with metals, they opted for another trade which dealt with metal. He said 'Gold and silver are all metals and so are the german [local term for aluminium], brass and copper of vessels'. They were also familiar with weights and measures, so their decision to work with vessels made sense. This is the work that most of the Sonar people still do in Pune.

We asked him what their work involved. He told us that they have fixed *bastis* where they go to collect broken vessels. They sell these old pots and pans to *bhandi* shops in Mandai market area, and buy new ones from the same shops. They sell the new ones in the same *bastis*, on part exchange for more old vessels. From this work they are able to make a small profit. Kumar makes about RS. 100/ day. His wife continues the community's tradition of making rings, which she sells to supplement the household income.

## JAMIL'S STORY

Jamil and his wife, Shakila, and their son came from Latur [in Maharashtra] to Pune in 1995. They moved in with Shakila's mother who was living in a slum near Juna Bazaar. But her house was too small for so many people, so Jamil and his family had to move out. The only place they found was on the pavement nearby. They joined a pavement settlement where people evicted from a consolidated slum at Mangalwar Peth had been living since their houses were demolished three years earlier to make way for a road-widening scheme.

A few months later, more people moved to this settlement. Amongst them were Jamil's brother-in-law and his family, as well as his sister-in-law who had run away from her abusive husband.

By this time the Juna Bazaar settlement was clearly divided into two groups. The Mangalwar Peth slum people perceived the new migrants as a threat. The former have lived in Pune for several years and have Ration Cards and other documents. They firmly believe that their stay on the pavement is temporary and that someone is going to resettle them on alternate land. They feel the newcomers compromise their position because they are recent migrants who have no documents, fixed jobs, etc. The newcomers are aware of the hostility of the rest of the settlement, which further isolates them even within their settlement. This increases their vulnerability because they feel that even people in their own settlement want them out, let alone the rest of the city.

For these reasons, Jamil urgently wants to obtain Ration Cards for his family. He feels that this would somehow legitimise their position and make them less vulnerable. But he's never had a Ration Card. Shakila's name is registered on her mother's Ration Card, and she has no idea how to obtain a new one. They are very scared of the Ration Card officials because to him, contact with any official would make him very "visible" to the authorities. In addition to that, they are intimidated at the thought of entering the office itself and by the paperwork he assumes he will have to do or resort to bribing, which he cannot afford.

Jamil has a severe health problem and can only work under medication, which means his job opportunities are very limited. He works intermittently as a ragpicker, and has to spend a lot of his earnings on medicines. Shakila stays at home to look after their son.

At the moment they feel very despairing. They were forced to leave Latur because of the earthquake. Nor everybody migrated just because there was an earthquake. But Jamil and his family were very poor in Latur. They had no money to recover from the damage caused by the earthquake and re-settle there again. Jamil said that leaving Latur was all they could think of as a solution. They chose to come to Pune because of Shakila's mother, but she has no room for them. Living on the pavement they face daily hostility from others in their settlement. They feel they should move out, but they don't know how.

The irony is that Jamil feels that a document such as a ration card will give him security to stay in the city, while Kumar and his family have all these documents and still have no security.

## BACKGROUND

Pavement dwellers in Pune are amongst the poorest of the city's population. They are poor in comparison to the rest of the urban population, and prior to migration their families were also the poorest in their native villages. Most came from the drought-prone areas of Maharashtra, where they were landless and worked as agricultural labourers. Frequent droughts almost completely stopped their employment in the villages and they were forced to move out of their native places to look for alternative ways of earning money. People from these areas have been migrating to big cities like Mumbai and Pune for a long time. The pavement dwellers have limited skills, and so have little or no access to the better paying jobs, even within the 'informal' sector. They earn just enough to pay for food. They cannot even enter the slum housing market and have the most basic forms of shelter.

They find places to live on the pavements of the city. Pune's pavement dwellers are not as prominent as the pavement dwellers of Mumbai, because the number of people living on pavements in Pune is still relatively small. Most pavement settlements are concentrated in the areas between Pune Station and Khadki Station. The settlements are small in size, the largest comprising of 50 homes (see Table 1 below).

Compared to the quantum of the urban poor in Pune, the current proportion of people living in pavement settlements is very small, but these people are some of the poorest in Pune. Pavement dwelling is a relatively new phenomenon, which we fear may increase over time. It is partly for this reason that we feel it is important to attempt to understand who these people are, and why they are living on the pavements.

This report is based entirely on primary data from detailed interviews carried out by Shelter Associates and women's slum collectives during 1997.

### Note (2000):

The situation has altered since this research was carried out, since this is a study of a population which is forced to move their settlements frequently within the city in response to the insecurity of their accommodation and threat of eviction. Several of the settlements we visited at that time no longer exist in the same form. Astitva Nagar has become more consolidated and could now be defined as a 'slum' rather than a pavement settlement. Others have grown or shrunk or disappeared altogether. The Vitthalwadi settlement has been cleared for a road-widening scheme.

This report is can therefore be seen as a snapshot of the situation of pavement settlements in Pune in 1997-98. **This snapshot remains valid in that the current situation of pavement dwellers is no different in essence; the data presented here portrays how one group of poor women and men live in the city of Pune.**

This study forms part of our on-going research into how different groups of poor people live in Pune, which attempts to understand and demonstrate the significance of the urban poor as city builders and to demonstrate the heterogeneity amongst the so-called 'poor' in cities.

## THE SETTLEMENTS

SETTLEMENT NAME	LOCATION	LANDOWNER	NO. OF HOUSE-HOLDS	POPULATION
Astitva Nagar	Opposite Shivajinagar Court	Private	29	114
Juna Bazaar	Mangalwar Peth, near the Juna Bazaar	PMC	7	32
Kamgar Putla Godown	Alongside Shivajinagar Court	PMC / Courts	58	214
Khadki Railway Line	Along the Khadki Railway Station	Central Railway	27	101
Maldhakka	From Pune Railway Station to Maldhakka	PMC and Central Railway	45	178
PMT Stop	On Congress Bhavan Road by the PMT bus Stop	PMC	29	111
Sangam	Under the Sangam Bridge	Central Railway	6	23
Saswad Road	Hadapsar	PMC	44	200
Vitthalwadi	Sinhagad Road	PMC and Maharashtra State Electricity Board	44	194
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>289</b>	<b>1167</b>

TABLE 1: LIST OF SURVEYED SETTLEMENTS

## SETTLEMENT FEATURES

Some settlements comprise of a certain group of people. For example, the people of Astitva Nagar are mainly “bhandiwalas” (vessel traders). These bhandiwalas have a very strong feeling of community within them. They move together in groups and ideally, would all like to live together in one settlement. The settlement at the Maldhakka footpaths are made up of groups of people who “look” or “appear” different from normal people. A number of them are handicapped, mainly polio victims, and have lost one or more limbs because of the disease. Some are handicapped from birth, deaf or mentally retarded. A few couples are transvestites. Then there are a number of people who live along the Sassoon Hospital footpath. These people have been to Sassoon for treatment, but have had to leave because of lack of space or, when no further treatment could be given. These are individuals who have no other place to go to, mostly rejected from their families. They are mainly lepers, burn victims and accident victims. Some live near the hospital morgue, and the smells from the morgue are so strong, that some of these people are perpetually nauseated. A number of them continue to live on this particular pavement because they are given one cooked meal a day by local charities plus snacks by other charities. This takes care of a very basic need, as many of them have very limited means of earning.

The people of Kamgar Putla Godown and PMT stop spend all their time outside their houses. The houses of Kamgar Putla Godown are against the wall of the court. They have built simple “lean-to” plastic sheet tents against that wall. The PMT houses are rounded tents as they have no wall to build against. These tents are made of cloth and bamboo. The houses in both these settlements are used mainly to keep their possessions together rather than as a place to live.. On the pavement opposite to the settlement is a large peepul tree. At any time in the morning or afternoon, a group of women can be seen there. They are from the PMT settlement. They spend most of their time there, eating, chatting, cutting vegetables, taking naps etc.. The Kamgar Putla Godown women also spend their time in small groups outside their houses, under the trees over there.

Some common characteristics of the pavement settlements are outlined in the following sections.

## **Location**

All the settlements surveyed are located along the sides of roads, in lines along pavements. The people do everything on the pavement, cooking, eating, sleeping, sitting and chatting. They are vulnerable to the danger of traffic passing right by their houses. And their vulnerability extends to countless health hazards: exhaust fumes; sun exposure in summer; stray dogs, dumped garbage; flooding during the rains; burst drains resulting in a sudden flood of filthy sewage water. After just two hours of rain the houses are full of water, which means there is no place even to sit, or to sleep. Their children are most at risk, because they are less aware of the dangers of the environment around their homes. They run out on to the main roads, and play in the garbage or sewage water.

On top of all this, these settlements are under a constant threat of eviction, to make way for road-widening schemes, or usually because they are in the way or are unsightly. Everyone living in them has experienced many evictions and threats of demolition, which have left the people feeling insecure and traumatised.

## **Housing**

People live in very basic dwellings, which can hardly be described as 'houses'. Dwelling types fell broadly into four categories:

- makeshift tents made of plastic sacking and gunny sacks, supported by wooden poles, and held together with rope, usually about 6' wide and 10' to 12' long. At the ridge of the tent the height is about 5'.
- lean-to shelters, similar to the above, but constructed against an existing wall, and also made of sacking, poles and rope, ranging from 6' X 6' to 6' X 10' in size, with a height of about 3'.
- kutcha houses constructed of mud/ bricks and patra (tin sheets). The average size is about 8' X 10', with a height of 6' at the highest point. There were just a few houses in this category, located along the Khadki Railway Line.
- No actual structure at all: At night screens are erected using saris held up by posts; either there is no roof cover, or another piece of cloth is used as a roof.

## **Access to Basic Amenities**

There are no toilets, water taps, drains or electricity in any of these settlements. People living in settlements near the railway stations use station facilities. In other settlements, people have to walk for up to 20 minutes to reach the nearest available toilet and water tap, which they may not be entitled to use, so they have to beg, pay or fight to use them.

Food is cooked on open fires by the roadside. People use kerosene lamps to light their homes, or just manage with the light from the street-lamps.

## Impressions of a Volunteer

### 19 June 1997, Interview with Hasina

We have come to meet Hasina.... We enter her hut, which is considerably larger and higher than Sunita's [another woman in Maldhakka] one. While we sit down ... Hasina takes up the preparation of food, an activity which she obviously interrupted when she heard that we had come. On the single flame of the kerosene stove, daal is simmering in a pot. Chopped chili and onions are on a plate, and bunches of fresh coriander jut out from a bag. We are surprised to see her cooking. Are they not receiving free food today? Yes, they are, but Hasina never goes there to fetch her lunch. She finds it demeaning to beg, she says. She feels that the donors actually contempt the poor, and this attitude offends her sense of dignity. Furthermore, going for free meals would not suit her status, she adds. She is very respected among the other dwellers, and her powerful position does not allow her to accept these gifts. ...

I take a closer look at the interior of her hut. It is more spacious than the other tents I have seen so far, but the mode of construction is the same. There is an old but seemingly intact bicycle leaned against one of the walls. On a clothesline a shabby pair of trousers and a sari are hung up for drying. A large wooden box stands in one corner, and next to it, jute sacks and plastic bags are piled up. In the other corner, there are pots, plates and a huge water vessel. From time to time, Hasina raises and fetches water from there, either for cooking or for washing the dishes. She does not use soap, maybe this would use up too much water. I detect that there are many empty glass bottles all over the hut.

My suspicions are confirmed when Hasina starts telling us about her husband. He is an alcoholic and as a result, almost constantly sick. Thus, he regularly takes medicine. I spot an empty sachet of "vick's action 500+". According to Hasina, her husband has been taking these tablets for 10 years while gradually increasing the dose. Right now, he swallows 17 pills a day. I wonder for how long he might go on like this. Apparently, he has felt really ill one week ago, and since then, he has not been working and has stopped eating.

She fishes out two paper bags. They contain more drugs, red capsules called "Lederle" and "Powergesic", Diclofenac sodium, Paracetamol & Chlormezanone tablets. Just the sound of their names makes you feel sick, I guess. Hasina takes them. For her body aches so much in the morning that she cannot get up unless she takes these painkillers. I am surprised to hear that, since Hasina looks very strong and vital to me. I would never have assumed that she depends on medicine to get on with her daily routine. But her story teaches me that you cannot draw conclusions from how a person looks like. Her story - provided it is true, of course, but I cannot see any reason why it should not be accurate in its basic contents - is a story of suffering.

Hasina was born in a slum in Bombay. When she was very small, her mother died and her father took a new wife. The stepmother treated the girl very badly, and Hasina wanted to run away. Yet then her father got very ill. He had worked in a flour mill, and all the dust had ruined his lungs. The family decided to move to Satara where they owned some land. In Satara, they married their daughter off. Since the day she followed her husband to Latur shortly after their marriage, Hasina has never seen her parents. She does not know whether they are dead or alive, she says, and she is obviously not interested in finding out about their destiny.

Her new husband was considerably older than herself, but apart from that, she did not know much about him. Yet she was soon to find out more about his past: Freshly arrived in Latur, she got confronted with two grown-up men: her husband's sons. To her horror, Hasina had to detect that her husband had already another wife in Latur.

Hasina was shocked and felt terribly defeated. She never imagined that. But what could she do? Her first thought was to commit suicide, but on the other hand she desired to live and go ahead. Abandoning her husband was another theoretical option, but it would have been impossible in practice, she says. A run-away wife is socially unacceptable. Thus, in order to have some kind of security in life and to survive, Hasina had to give in and accept the terrible situation. For unfortunately, she remarks, her husband would never leave her. Spontaneously, I wish she had run away from him, for what was about to break in about her did not provide her with any of the security and stability she might have hoped to gain.

All the land and the belongings her husband used to use belonged officially to his first wife. Thus, when this woman decided to sell off her property, Hasina, her husband and the meanwhile born two children were left with nothing. Yet besides this lack of material basis, Hasina did never have a secure physical or psychical hold either. Her husband turned out to be a tyrant. Hasina used to be very beautiful (I think she still is extremely good-looking as compared to the other pavement dwellers), and her husband could not put up with this. He was extremely jealous, and so he used to beat her up and break her bones and scratch her face for almost no reason.

He has succeeded in what he attempted, Hasina says. Can you see my face, all the scars? Now I am not beautiful anymore, and thus he has stopped beating me up. For the last four years, he has not touched me



anymore. But when her son was 6 months old, he had tortured Hasina so severely that she swallowed sleeping pills to bring her life to an end.

While she is telling us all this, she is making chapattis. Routinely, her hands knead and form the dough. I wished she could have shaped her life like this. Yet her marriage was a turning point towards the negative side in her life. Her self-conscious husband came and limited her scope tremendously. But although he might have broken her bones, he did not break her soul. For Hasina is strong, she does not look like a victim. According to her, this one suicide attempt was the only time when she almost gave up. However, she managed to get up again and to go on fighting. I do it for my children, she says. What I am reflects upon them. I want to give them strength. If I give up, I break their lives, too.

Her children were also the reason why Hasina decided to come to Pune in 1993, ca. 3 months before the earthquake. By that time, her daughter was ca. 12 years old and her son 6. The girl was extremely beautiful, very tall and mature for her age. Therefore, Hasina was scared. She feared that something might happen to her child. And since the family had become increasingly isolated in Latur after they were left with literally nothing, Hasina decided to move to Pune in order to get her daughter married off. She had heard from others about this city.

What strange relationship she and her husband have, I think. For it was obviously her who took the initiative to leave Latur. I can imagine that she has always run the family, alongside this unpredictable alcoholic. Although this man was unable to manage his life, she had to suffer from his violent attacks and physically subdue herself to him until her beauty was ruined and he got too sick to torture her anymore. However, I do not doubt a single second that she has been the actual head of the family. I wonder how her husband might look like. At the same time I realise that I should try to not get completely absorbed by what Hasina tells us. There might be other viewpoints and other episodes of the story. But somehow this woman fascinates me. The firm and calm but nevertheless emotional way she speaks and her strong and still beautiful physical appearance distinguish her from other pavement dwellers.

I know I do not fit into this environment, Hasina says. But according to her, there is nothing she can do about it. All the medicine and the alcohol use up a fortune. The family had come to this footpath when they first arrived in 1993. But Hasina feared for her daughter's integrity. She had to spend all day inside the tent until finally, her mother found a rental house in a slum. She had to borrow money to pay the required deposit of Rs. 1000 and the Rs. 450 rent in exchange for a right to stay for one year. In this period, she got her daughter married off at the age of 13. She carefully selected the groom, she says. By now, her daughter is 16 or 17 and lives with her husband and their one year old child in Nagar, where the man sells stationary. They live in a slum, not on a footpath.

Yet Hasina, her husband and their son had to come back to the pavement as they could not afford to pay the rent for another year in the slum. The boy is now 10 years old and goes to the corporation school close to the station. His mother wants him to receive formal education because she hopes it will be of use for him in the future. Hasina herself is illiterate, she can only sign her name.

Right now, she is the only earning member of the family. She has always worked and thereby paid off the entire loan, she points out. Before her husband got too sick, he used to pull hand carts at the station and make a little every day, too. Now, the three of them have to live on Hasina's earnings. She has different sources of income. First, she supplies a nearby teashop with water for which she receives Rs. 15 per day. Then, she is employed to carry loads, but since she feels too weak for this work, she hires others to do the job for her. Apparently, she pays them Rs. 10 to 20 and keeps the rest for herself.

She stops speaking and concentrates on wrapping up the now ready chapattis, the daal and the vegetables. Whether this is all Hasina earns? We do not think so, and even Hasina herself has dropped some vague hints regarding 'other things' she does. I think of what Sunita's friend told us the previous day. We carefully try to get some relevant information from Hasina. What about newcomers? Do they seek permission from her?

Yes, that's right, she replies. She is an acknowledged leader, and consequently people come and ask whether they can stay before settling down. And when they are helpless and have no other place to go - why should I say no? Hasina adds. We do not ask her directly whether she takes money for that, according to yesterday's information, she charges them Rs. 25. I wonder how Hasina achieved and maintains her powerful position. Are there other women/men competing with her? Or are there various outstanding persons around whom different groups of people gather? What kind of support enjoys Hasina? Are people loyal to her out of sympathy or rather out of fear?

Who knows, their attitude might be ambivalent. On the one hand, Hasina told us that people came to her for advice and comfort. Yet on the other hand, they seem to be scared of her. Nobody dares to coarsen her when she goes to the guard's bungalow to use the toilet or to fetch water, she tells us. I remember my first meeting with her. Whenever Shobha asked for a person's name or the number of years a family had spent here, the people would eyecheck with Hasina before answering. And sometimes Hasina would reply for them.

Meanwhile, I know that many of her answers from then were wrong. She has been here for only four years, and not for 16 years as she told us that time. She also came much later than many other dwellers, though her previous information had led us to assume the opposite. Whether she deliberately “lied” (and why should she tell us curious ‘strangers’ the truth when she sees us the very first time?) whether she partly believed in what she was saying or whether she got the timescale wrong.... who knows, but we saw that nobody interrupted or contradicted her that time. What kind of respect is it that people pay her?

In my view, it is unlikely that Hasina’s attempt to get her neighbours ration cards has increased her popularity. As if to confirm this impression, Hasina becomes increasingly defensive and aggressive as she tells us about this issue. Together with some social workers she has charged Rs. 125 per person in advance. (Rs. 125 between the three or for each of them? Apparently, only the three of them go to the Commission, and so far, they have not achieved anything). But then I remember how people have told me that many people feel they get things done only if they pay.

I think we have to come back many times more to find answers to the many questions we have. Although we should be careful regarding Hasina’s credibility, I cannot help but being extremely impressed and touched by Hasina’s personality. It has been a pleasure to talk to her (or being translated what she told us), but I feel extremely exhausted after hearing about all her suffering. Anyway, we have to leave right now. For the food is ready and Hasina is going to take it to the station where she will meet her son and her husband. After lunch, she will go to the Sassoon Hospital and see whether she gets her husband attended.

**Written by Konstanze Frischen (Germany).**

# SURVEY RESULTS

## DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

### Population Profile

The survey covered a total of 274 households, putting the average (mean) household size at 4 people. Most households are composed of nuclear families.

The total population surveyed was 1092 pavement dwellers, of whom 526 were females (48.2%) and 566 were males (51.8%).

The main gender disparity is in the Under 15 age group, with 54.6% males and 45.4% females of the total population under 15 years. Interestingly, the sex ratio of the 15-55 years age group is equal. This may be because whole families are living on the pavements. There is little evidence that men have moved alone to the city for work, leaving their families behind in their native village. It is important to note here that this age range includes not only couples, but their older children also. It is possible, for example, that a woman and her son would fall into the 15-54 years range, while her husband would be included in the 55+ age group.

In the total adult population (Over 15 years), there are slightly more women than men. 43 households (5.7%) were headed by women, of whom 19 are widowed, 8 abandoned and 3 decided to leave their husbands because of violence. Some widows had been thrown out of their homes because their in-laws had considered them to be inauspicious. The abandoned women are those whose husbands have taken another wife. The women who left their husbands were severely physically abused. One such woman took a stick and broke both her husband's legs before she left.

44.6% of the total population falls into the Under 15 age group, and 48.6% into the working age group of 15 to 55 years. A mere 6.8% of the population was aged over 55 years, indicating that the vast majority of households are headed by first generation migrants to the city.

### Religion

Table 2 shows the religious groupings of the pavement dwellers surveyed.

RELIGION	PERCENTAGE
Hindu	64%
Buddhist	27%
Muslim	6%
Christian	3%

**TABLE 2: RELIGION**

### Language

The mother tongues of the pavement dwellers are shown in Table 3. From this it can be seen that most respondents gave Marathi as their mother tongue (58%). The other main languages represented were Hindi (13%), and also Telugu (17%), which is spoken by the Waghri and Wadari communities. Also interesting to note is the 6% who cited Suryajaganath. This is spoken by members of the Sonar community, now known as Bhandiwalas. These people come from all parts of southern Maharashtra and Karnataka, and this dialect is a hybrid of Marathi, Hindi, Kannad and numerous other dialects spoken in these regions.

MOTHER TONGUE	PERCENTAGE
Marathi	58%
Telgu	17%
Hindi	13%
Suryajaganath	6%
Gujarati	4%
Marwari	1%
Tamil	1%

**TABLE 3: LANGUAGE**

## Caste

Apart from eight Marathas, all the Hindus belonged to the so-called 'scheduled castes/ tribes and backward castes', like Mang, Wadari, Gosawi, Koli, Mali, Bhangi, Sonar, Lohar, Dabgar, etc.

These castes were traditionally not landowners in the villages. After the abolition of caste-based village systems, some of these people worked for the landowners as agricultural labourers and others tried to practice their traditional trades. But the combination of modernisation and droughts meant that they could no longer earn a livelihood in the villages, which forced them to migrate to the city (see later section on Migration History). In the villages they had no assets and belonged to the poorest sector of the population. Even after coming to the city, this has not changed.

## Education

In the under 15 years age group (children), only 30.5% of boys and 29.4% of girls are attending or have attended school, i.e. there is no significant disparity according to sex in this age group. This low percentage shows that it is not considered important to educate children, in contrast to the slums in which we work, where almost every child attends school.

For the adults (Over 15 years) just 30.3% of men and 9.8% of women consider themselves as literate, i.e. they can sign their names.

## ECONOMIC PROFILE

### Number of earners

A total of 479 wage earners were surveyed, which forms 43.9% of the total survey population. This is a higher workforce participation rate than the national average of 30.2 % (1991 Census Data cited in Tata, 1996-7).

Women comprise 39.2% of wage earners and men 60.8%, as compared to the national average of 28.5% women and 71.5% men (1991 Census Data cited in Tata, 1996-7). The average (mean) number of wage earners per household is 1.8.

There were 30 children (under 15 year it is probable that there is a considerable amount of hidden child labour, in particular, children assisting their parents' work, working at home, as well as looking after younger children in the family).

### Occupational Profile

The occupational groupings of the pavement dwellers are presented in Tables 4 (Males) and 5 (Females). The most frequent occupation among the male population was unskilled manual work (38%), which includes all forms of 'bigari' and coolie work, and all unskilled construction work. The second largest male occupational category is street vending (21%). This is petty vending of fruit/vegetables, street food and small consumer items. Some communities of pavement dwellers are very specialised within this category, for example selling vessels, jewellery, dholaks, etc.

MALE OCCUPATIONS	%		FEMALE OCCUPATIONS	%
unskilled manual work	38		ragpicking	31
street vendors	21		unskilled manual work	29
skilled manual work	10		street vendors	14
ragpickers	10		begging	11
menial service jobs	8		domestic maid	7
Class 4 government / private equivalent	6		menial service employment	3
begging	5		Class 4 government / private equivalent	3
artisans/ artists	2		artisans/ artists	2

**TABLE 4: MALE OCCUPATIONS**

**TABLE 5: FEMALE OCCUPATIONS**

There is little access to skilled work, a category which includes painting, welding, driving, etc. Only 10% of men and no women were doing work in this category.

The occupational pattern for the female population is seen in Table 5. Again, unskilled manual work (mainly auxiliary construction labour) accounts for a major proportion of occupations at 29%. But the largest category of female labour is ragpicking at 31%. Although some males worked as ragpickers (10%), a far higher percentage of women do this work. This can be attributed to the nature of the work. Ragpicking is work which can be based near the home, which makes it a rational way of earning for many women running households, as well as a possible job for elderly women who can no longer do other work. It is also likely that many female ragpickers are working to supplement income

in a household where a male is the main earner. In some cases, ragpicking was carried out by whole households together.

At 14% of all female earners, street vending is another significant occupation. These vendors usually sit by the side of the road with their goods arranged on a small piece of cloth, unlike the male vendors who tend to move around the whole city to sell their wares.

7% of female earners were employed as domestic servants, a category in which there were no men.

7% of all earners gave their occupation as begging. Beggars form 11% of all female and 5% of all male earners. Many of these people are severely handicapped and therefore find begging to be the best, if not the only, way of supporting themselves or contributing to household income. The beggars do not beg randomly, but had all taken a logical decision about where to place themselves. Beggars living in Maldhakka and Khadki Railway Line beg in or near the stations, which are lucrative areas. One beggar moved to the Khadki settlement to be near the station.

Most of the earning children worked in menial service or vending jobs (shoe-shining, selling small items, helpers at tea-stalls, hotel boys, etc.). Many of these were working with a parent. Others worked with their families as beggars, or as in the case of one community, singing for money.

A small number of individuals (16) had a subsidiary occupation. These were mainly ragpickers supplementing their income by begging, or others with no guarantee of regular work, such as unskilled construction workers, who occasionally went ragpicking to make ends meet.

It is important to note that a mere 6% of men and 3% of women hold formal sector Class 4 or equivalent jobs. This means that (discounting beggars) 88% of the surveyed population, is working in the informal sector of the economy.

Within the 'informal sector' they do the most insecure, back-breaking, and sometimes degrading jobs. These people appear to have filled a significant niche in the urban economy. They survive by carrying out the least paying jobs in the city, such as supplying water to tea-sellers, bigari work, ragpicking and even working as assistants to ragpickers. As an extreme example, one resident of the Khadki Railway line settlement is paid to remove the remains of people who have been run over by trains. He gets Rs. 10 per body. The pavement ragpickers are not part of any of the city's ragpickers' associations. They work in marginal areas so as not to infringe territories marked by organised ragpickers, or they pick over garbage that another ragpicker has already discarded.

## **Income levels**

The average (mean) per capita monthly income is RS. 468.

3% earn below Rs. 100 per capita/ month. Many of these families are dependent on their relatives and friends for survival. This is a very small percentage showing that most pavement dwellers work. However they usually earn very low incomes: 52% earn below RS. 400 per capita/ month. 30% earn between RS. 401 and RS. 600 per capita/ month. Just 15% earn above RS. 601. The vast majority (82%) earns between RS. 101 - RS. 600 per capita/ month.

Although this gives a broad picture of the income distribution, there are certain distortions in the pattern which will be dealt with in the following section.

## Comparison of income and occupational patterns in different settlements

When we made a more detailed analysis of the economic data of six settlements, we found that there were significant disparities in incomes *between* settlements, rather than *within* settlements. The income levels of three relatively better off pavements settlements, Vitthalwadi, Khadki Railway Line and Saswad Road and three relatively worse off settlements Maldhakka, PMT Stop and Kamgar Putla Godown, are presented in the table below:

PER CAPITA MONTHLY INCOME	BETTER-OFF SETTLEMENTS	WORSE-OFF SETTLEMENTS	ALL SETTLEMENTS
less than RS 300	13 %	58 %	36 %
RS 300 to RS 700	76 %	36 %	53 %
more than RS 700	11 %	6 %	9 %

**TABLE 6: COMPARISON OF INCOMES BETWEEN VARIOUS SETTLEMENT TYPES**

Initially we related this disparity to occupation. Table 7 below shows the occupation pattern for the three 'worse off' and three 'better off' settlements.

	BETTER-OFF SETTLEMENTS		WORSE-OFF SETTLEMENTS	
OCCUPATIONS	MALE	FEMALE	MALE	FEMALE
Unskilled Manual	61%	60%	21%	5%
Skilled Manual	12%	none	6%	none
Menial Service	none	1%	12%	5%
Ragpicking	5%	22%	19%	38%
Street Vending	10%	1%	22%	19%
Perm. Job Holders	9%	5%	2%	1%
Begging	1%	1%	11%	21%

**TABLE 7: OCCUPATION PATTERN DIFFERENCES IN TWO SETTLEMENT TYPES**

This table shows that the majority of people in the better-off settlements do unskilled manual work, unlike in the worse-off settlements. In Pune, to get unskilled manual work means that the people have to walk to a particular pick-up point in the city in the early morning and wait for labour contractors to give them work for the day. There is no guarantee of getting work. The work, if they get it, is physically very demanding and pays between RS. 25 to RS. 60 per day, depending on the kind of work and the gender of the labourer (women are always paid less). Most get work for 20 days a month on average.

In the worse-off settlements, the biggest occupation category is ragpicking, which is a more casual type of work than unskilled manual work. Ragpickers in the pavement settlements can choose their own hours and work in the vicinity of the home. Earnings are in proportion to the amount collected, so people collect as much as they require for the day's expenses. Street vendors, the second largest group in the worse off settlements, operate on a similar basis. Again, beggars "work" for as long as it takes to earn a day's expenses.

## MIGRATION HISTORY

This was a major focus of the study, in order to gain insights into why the people surveyed are living on the pavements.

Before looking in detail at the migration histories of the pavement dwellers it is essential to note that 10% of household heads were born in Pune city, and had therefore *not* migrated to the city.

### Native Places

Table 8 shows the location of native places of in-migrants.

NATIVE PLACE	PERCENTAGE
Maharashtra Total	80
<i>Including:</i>	
<i>Pune and Surrounding Districts</i>	61
<i>Other Districts</i>	19
Southern States	11
Northern States	9

**TABLE 8: NATIVE PLACES**

The majority (61%) came from Pune District and other districts adjoining Pune (Raigad, Mumbai, Ahmednagar, Sholapur, Satara). The second largest group (19%) came from other districts within Maharashtra (Amravati, Osmanabad, Nagpur, Kolhapur, Latur, Ratnagiri, Sangli, Aurangabad).

Just 20% of the in-migrants to Pune came from outside Maharashtra. Of the households who came from Southern States, half had their native place in neighbouring Karnataka, from where Pune is the first major city reached on a journey towards Mumbai. A further nine were Wadari, brought from Andhra Pradesh as construction workers. The others came from Tamil Nadu and Kerala.

9% of households migrated from Northern States, namely Gujarat, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Punjab. It might be expected that rural-urban migrants from these states would settle in Mumbai, being geographically closer. In fact, two respondents from each of Rajasthan and Gujarat, had first settled in Mumbai and later moved on the Pune for family or work related reasons. A few others belong to a tribe of singers who traditionally wander from place to place for work. The six households whose native place was in the Punjab or UP had come to Pune by chance, and settled here after finding work.

Most of the in-migrants came from villages in districts which can be considered as economically very backward, underdeveloped, or vulnerable to natural disasters (droughts, floods, earthquakes). These include Sholapur, Latur, Aurangabad, Ahmednagar, etc. Economically backward, drought-prone areas are the ones from where the maximum migration takes place. It is rural poverty, rather than a dream of riches in an urban setting, that drives people to leave their homes.



## **Pre-Migration assets and occupations**

### **Assets**

To help us try and understand why the pavement dwellers had left their native villages to seek work in the city, we undertook a detailed survey of assets owned and occupations carried out before migration. This study was carried out in four settlements totalling 129 households: Astitva Nagar, Khadki Railway Line, PMT Stop, Vitthalwadi. It is important to note here that some households were unable to give full answers, either because the household heads were born in Pune, or because they migrated at a very young age.

The vast majority of people surveyed were very poor in their native villages. Only 14% (19 households) of respondents had previously owned land. Of these, 70% owned 4 acres or less in their native place, meaning that they were very marginal farmers.

In Pune, of the 19 households who previously owned land, 5 have sold/ leased the land, 3 lost it to relatives and 2 abandoned it when they left. Only 9 households responded that other family members continue to farm the land.

Only 11% of the respondents lived in pucca houses in their villages, which were either sold or are still used by family members. 62% lived in huts in their native villages, which they demolished or abandoned when they left their villages.

This indicates that most of the pavement dwellers have no remaining family, assets, homes or land in their native villages to which they could return.

### **Occupations**

The largest category of pre-migration occupations was field labourers and other unskilled manual work (43% Most of these were landless labourers working on other people's land. 8.4% farmed their own land, and 5.3% worked as artisans, making statues, jewellery etc. The remaining categories show very small percentages working in permanent jobs, skilled manual work and vending. 35% were unable to give an answer, because they could not remember.

## **Why did they leave their native villages?**

Almost half (46%) of all households were people who were unable to earn an adequate income in the village. Most of these were landless labourers, who were not guaranteed regular work, and who earned little for the work they did. For many, the final push came in the form of series of droughts, which meant a huge reduction in agricultural productivity and a corresponding fall in employment for the labourers.

Only 4% of households retain a link back to their villages, owning land which family members or relatives were still cultivating.

Others had moved to the city when their traditional roles in village life have been made redundant. For example, people who traditionally carried water to houses in the village lost their livelihood after a water tap was installed, several artisans also left when their products had been pushed out of the local market by mass produced competition. These people first looked for other types of work in their villages, usually as labourers, and later moved to Pune.

15% of the households came to the city because their relatives were already here.

19% of households left their native place for family reasons. These include marriage, being thrown out of the family, choosing to leave home after a dispute, etc.. Several people cited some type of family trauma as the main push. For example, after the death of a close family member in an accident, some families chose to move away to start a new life in the city.

## **Why did they come to Pune?**

46% chose Pune as their migration destination because it was the nearest metropolitan city. 36% followed because their friends and family were already in Pune. Just 4% came to the city by chance, and decided to stay on and find work. 1% wander between Pune and Mumbai for work. (10% were born in Pune and 3% gave no reason).

## **Why are they living on the pavements?**

41% were unable to move into slum housing. Some of these households had previously lived in a slum, and were evicted either by the Municipality, or because they could no longer pay rent. Others had to leave because they had out-stayed the hospitality extended by friends and family when they first moved to Pune, or because their family outgrew the slum house.

The second most common reason for staying on the pavement was that their friends and family also lived there (29%). Clearly this does not tell the whole story. Although it is probable that new migrants to the city will join people they know, thus forming communities within the settlements, this does not explain why people should continue to live on the pavements after several years in the city. The 'friends and family' were probably also denied access to slum housing. When one community lives together on a piece of land, they will move together or not at all. A community provides a support network to poor people which reduces their feelings of vulnerability and isolation in the city .

11% cited family disputes, and 2% an unaccepted lifestyle, as reasons for staying on the pavement. The latter includes people who are severely handicapped, transvestites, and couples who had married across religious barriers. Here it is essential to reiterate the fact that poverty is the underlying reason why anyone lives on the pavement. If the residents of apartments and bungalows in Koregaon Park and Deccan Gymkhana behave wildly against the expectations of their families, they do not end up sleeping under gunny sacks on the pavement.

Significantly, only 5% said they stayed on the pavement because it was near their place of work. Most of these lived at Khadki and had work related to the railway. This low figure of 5% dispels a common myth that pavement dwellers live in pavement settlements because they are close to their work, and choose not to live in slums for this reason.

It is also interesting to note that only 2% stayed on the pavement because they belong to a poor class of wandering artisans or traders requiring a temporary base in the city.

10% were born on the pavement, and continue to live there.

## **How long have they lived in Pune?**

Of the total population surveyed, 80% had lived in the city for over 5 years. On average, the in-migrants had lived in the city for 14.6 years. Interestingly, 58% of the in-migrants have lived in Pune for 6-20 years.

This clearly shows that the pavement dwellers population is a long term feature of Pune's urban fabric. They are not recent opportunist migrants who have come to the city to make a quick buck. On the contrary, a steady population flow over the last two decades has resulted in a significant number of people who live in extremely poor conditions. Although the vast majority of pavement dwellers has been making a contribution to Pune's economy over many years, they have been denied access to the fundamental benefits taken for granted by much of the urban population.

The fact that 12% have arrived in Pune during the last 5 years indicates that people are still moving into the city to seek a livelihood, and that the pavement population will continue to increase. This means that there is still some sort of employment to be found in the city, i.e. that the city still requires people to work in the lowest level jobs

## **Intra-city migration**

49% of households continue to live in the first settlement they came to in Pune. A further 35% have only moved once since coming to Pune. A very small proportion (5%) of households has made more than three moves within the city.

54% of households have lived in their current settlement for over 5 years, of whom 26% have been in their current settlement for over 10 years.

However, this does not indicate that they are not susceptible to evictions and demolition. One settlement has been demolished four times over the last ten months, but the people simply rebuild their houses on the same spot.

## SUMMARY OF SURVEY RESULTS

### GENERAL

- ◆ Pavement dwellers are among the poorest and most vulnerable of Pune's poor
- ◆ The population of pavement dwellers in Pune is still relatively small

### DEMOGRAPHIC

- ◆ The population is young (93% is under 55 years)
- ◆ Most pavement dwellers belong to the Scheduled Castes, Tribes and Other Backward Classes.

### ECONOMIC

- ◆ 44% of the total pavement population work for a living in the city
- ◆ 95% work in the informal sector, in the most back-breaking, poorly paid and sometimes degrading jobs (unskilled manual work, ragpicking, petty vending, etc.).
- ◆ Only 10% of men and no women are skilled manual workers
- ◆ Only 6% of men and 3% of women hold permanent jobs in the 'formal' sector
- ◆ 57% of main household earners have to walk for more than 20 minutes, or travel by bus to reach their work places

### MIGRATION

- ◆ 90% of household heads are first-generation migrants to the city and 10% were born in Pune
- ◆ 88% have lived in Pune for over 5 years, 58% for between 6 and 20 years, and 19% for more than two decades
- ◆ The vast majority had very few assets in their native villages; 86% were landless
- ◆ They have had to leave their villages due to lack of work
- ◆ Most had tried a new job or trade at least once in an attempt to earn in the village before taking the decision to move to the city
- ◆ 80% came from rural Maharashtra
- ◆ Many came from drought-prone areas like Solapur and Latur

### REASONS FOR STAYING ON THE PAVEMENT

- ◆ Very poor new migrants to Pune are likely to end up living on the pavements because the pressure on land in Pune has become so great that even slum housing is now too expensive for the poorest
- ◆ Many of these people stay in pavement settlements with their family and community, which provides a support network
- ◆ 98% of pavement dwellers are not wandering artisans/ transient labourers who move from city to city, but permanent residents of Pune

### EVICCTIONS

- ◆ The people live under a constant threat of eviction
- ◆ Some settlements have been repeatedly demolished, but the people simply rebuild at the same location, because they have nowhere else to go

## CONCLUSION

Pavement settlements are generally seen as a problem, but for the pavement dwellers themselves, it is the only shelter solution they can afford. Their low wages mean that they cannot even afford slum housing, so have created a housing system with a minimum of overheads.

The pavement dwellers are contributing to the city economy. They have a higher than average participation rate in the workforce because more people in the families need to work to make ends meet. They do the lowest-paying jobs.

In return, they get very little from the city. They consider themselves to be lucky if they are ignored and allowed to stay put. A common opinion is that they should 'go back to their villages'. But going back to their villages is not a viable solution, as they have no place to return to. Most pavement dwellers have been forced out of their villages because of poverty. They had few or no assets in the villages. They have made a new life for themselves in Pune and retain no link back to their native places.

The problem is not the people themselves, but the fact that they have no choice but to live on the pavements. They do not even choose to stay in a particular location because it is close to their workplace, but stay wherever they can.

This report has aimed to document the circumstances of some of the poorest women and men living in Pune. We hope that this report will increase the visibility of this group of people, who have for too long been forgotten by the rest of the city.

## REFERENCES

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## GLOSSARY

basti - settlement, in this context a slum settlement

bhandi - vessels

bhandiwalla - vessel dealer

bigari - casual manual worker

Deccan Gymkhana - expensive residential district in Pune where upper-class Maharashtrians live

dholak - wooden drum

gunny sacking - large jute bags used for bulk grain storage

Koregaon Park - expensive and cosmopolitan residential district in Pune

kutchra - used to describe a house which is made of improvised materials, such as plastic sheets, galvanised iron sheets, planks of wood, mud, etc..

Latur - inland Maharashtra district which was hit by a severe earthquake in 1993

nala - narrow drainage channel which flows into the river

patra - galvanised iron sheets

pucca – used to describe a house which is made of permanent building materials

Sonar - Community who traditionally work as jewellers

Wadari - Community originally from Andhra Pradesh who mainly do unskilled construction work

Waghri - Community originally from Andhra Pradesh who traditionally sing and beg for a living