

Chapter – 8: Urban Livelihoods

Working on the Street

- A girl – visited a city – her cousin lives there
- They left house early – turned around corner – lots of activity
- Vegetable seller – arranging vegetables on cart – next to it – beautiful cart – selling flowers
- They purchased few roses – observed someone selling newspaper – lots of crowd – everyone wants to read news
- Lots of buses – auto-rickshaws – school children
- Nearby – under tree – cobbler setting up his tools – next to him – barber – set up his work – customer – ready for early morning shave
- Somewhere else – woman – selling all kinds of plastic wares
- Another man – selling – vegetables on cycle trolley – house to house
- They came to a place – cycle rickshaws – waiting for customers – took one to the market – 2 km down the road
- **Bachchu Manjhi – A Cycle-Rickshaw Puller**
 - He comes from a village in Bihar – worked as a mason
 - He doesn't own land – wife and 3 children – live in village – his income – not enough to feed
 - He came to city – bought a used cycle rickshaw – paid in installments
 - He visits bus stop – every morning – wait for customers – work till 8:30 in the evening
 - He rides – upto 6 km – Rs. 10-30 per trip
 - When he is ill – no work – no income
 - He stays with friends – rented rooms – earn upto Rs. 200-300 per day – spend Rs. 100-150 on food and rent – rest – saved for family
 - He visits family – twice or thrice a year
 - His income – enough for survival – wife also works as agricultural labourer
- Like Bachchu Manjhi – many others – work on street
- Survey of Ahmedabad City – 12 % workers – working on street – sell or repair things
- These people – work on their own – organize their work – how much to buy – where to set up shops
- The shops – temporary structures – sometimes some scraps of paper or canvas sheet
- They may use their own carts – OR – plastic sheet spread over pavement
- There shops – can be dismantled by police – certain parts of city – these hawkers – not allowed
- Vendors – prepare things at home – sell them to people in the city
- Urban areas – almost 1 crore street vendors
- Until recently – street vending – obstruction to traffic – BUT – recently – many organisations – got it recognized as general benefit and their right to livelihood
- Government – thinking – modify rules – street vendors – have place to work – does not obstruct traffic
- Someone suggested – creating hawker zones – mobile vendors – allowed to move freely
- Committees – make decisions – hawkers – part of it

In the Market

- They reached the market – shops were about to open – place already crowded – festival season

- Lots of shops – selling lots of items – sweets, toys, clothes, footwear, utensils, electronic goods, etc – dentist’s clinic at the end
- They had dentist’s appointment – went there 1st – should not miss
- They waited for some time in a room – dentist called the cousin inside – examined her – asked her to come back another day – fill up cavity
- She was scared – thought it will be painful – also upset – she let her tooth go bad
- From there – they went to garment showroom – 3 floors – each floor – different types of clothing – they went to 3rd floor – clothes for girls – kept there

Harpreet and Vandana – Businesspersons

- Harpreet –
 - Father and uncle – worked in small shop – during festival and on Sundays – mother and herself helped them – started working there after college
- Vandana –
 - They opened the showroom some time ago – she is a dress designer
 - Now a days – people prefer readymade clothes – it’s the trend now – need attractive displays
- For the showroom – buy from different places – Mumbai, Ahmedabad, Ludhiana, Tripur – some from – Noida, Gurgaon, Delhi – some even from foreign countries
- Several things – run the showroom properly – advertise in newspapers, cinema theatres, T.V., radio, etc
- Currently, their building is rented – planning to buy it
- Their market – became main market – business has been good – they have been able to buy car, book a flat
- Like Harpreet and Vandana – many other shop owners – small or large shops – sell different things
- Most – manage their own business – not employed by anyone – BUT – employee many others
- These shops – permanent – licensed by Municipal Corporation – decides – when the market is closed
- Above market – closed on Wednesday
- This market – also contains – small offices and shops – provide different services – banks, couriers, etc

In the Factory-Workshop Area

- They wanted zari work on one of their dresses
- Cousin said – she knows Nirmala – works in garment factory – her neighbors do zari work
- They took a bus for factory area – bus was crowded – every stop – many more people got on the bus
- They sat in a corner – won’t get squashed
- Bus entered – factory area – everyone got down – they also got off at a crossing
- Lots of people – gathered at the crossing – waiting for someone or something
- Cousin explained – it was ‘labour chowk’ – all the people – daily wage labourers – worked as helpers to masons
- They perform – manual works – digging at construction sites, loading and unloading trucks in the market, etc
- They entered – factory area – lots of small workshops – one section – lots of people – working on sewing machines – stitching clothes
- Stitched clothes – stock piled in one corner of the room

- They located Nirmala – happy to meet them – promised to get the zari work done
- Nirmala – tailor – export garment unit – makes clothes for people in foreign countries – USA, UK, Germany, Netherlands
- These workers – work very long hours – December to April – 9 a.m. to 10 p.m.
- Works for 6 days a week – sometimes on Sundays too
- Paid Rs. 280 for eight hours – Rs. 100 extra for working late
- By June – work is over – factory reduces staff – Nirmala also laid off
- About 3-4 months – no work for workers like Nirmala
- These workers – employed on casual basis – employed when needed – when employer gets large orders
- Nirmala's job – not permanent – cannot complain about work conditions or pay – asked to leave
- Not job security or protection – even work long hours
- Cloth mill units – work on day and night shifts – one worker works on one machine for 12 hours – replaced by another for next 12 hours

In the Office Area

- Aunt (cousin's mother) – Sudha – works as Marketing Manager – asked to reach her office by 5:30 p.m.
- They thought -getting late – took a rickshaw – managed to reach there on time
- Office area – lots of tall building – lots of people – some headed to car park – other to the buses
- Aunt – marketing manager in factory – manufacture biscuits – factory outside city
- She manages 50 salespersons – travel to different parts – visit shopkeepers – take orders and collect payments
- She divided city into 6 regions – each weekday – meets salespersons from each region
- She collects reports from them – plans sales in the city – might travel to different places
- She receives regular salary – permanent worker – can expect to continue her job
- Other benefits –
 - Savings for old age – part of her salary kept with government – earn interest on these savings – when she retires – get this money – survive on it
 - She also gets holidays – Sundays and national holidays – some days as annual leave
 - Medical facilities – company pays upto some amount for medical facilities – medical leave if sick – so salary cut
- Many workers – work in offices, factories, government departments – regular and permanent employees
- They attend same office – receive regular salary – does not asked to leave if not much work
- End of the day – got into Aunt's car – exhausted – thought – how interesting – different people – different work – do not know each other – even then – they work in sync