

A report on the Status of Pardhis in Mumbai City



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Preface

At the Centre for Criminology and Justice, we have been engaging with issues of denial of basic rights of citizens and social exclusion of marginalised populations and finding pathways to their social re-entry through our teaching, research, field education and field action. An active partnership with social work students attached to the Centre has been central to this approach. It is through their initiative and courage that new areas have opened up in terms of understanding of phenomena, social work methodologies and practice arenas.

Field work placement of students in complex situations and settings has been a critical pedagogical tool to achieve this objective. Some examples of these placements include women's and children's institutions, beggars' homes, prisons, police stations, courts, legal aid systems, and human rights and women's commissions. These have brought new learnings, helped bridge gaps in knowledge, explored the role of the trained social worker and led to the establishment of field action projects, which in turn have led to changes at the field and policy levels.

In 2009, while planning the field work placements for second year students, two of our students requested that they be placed with DNT communities for their field work. We saw this as an opportunity to start our engagement with the issue. We approached the *Ghar Bachao Ghar Banao Andolan (GBGBA)*, a people's organization working with slum dwellers on the right to housing and they agreed to the idea of placing students with them to work with communities which were inhabited by the DNTs. We placed the two students, Vikas Jadhav and Mayank Sinha with GBGBA to work in a community which largely consisted of Pardhi families.

As their faculty advisor, I got an opportunity to understand the complexities of the lives of people from a socially excluded community living in a mega city. They lived in an unauthorised slum which was frequently demolished; did not possess any citizenship documents due to their nomadic past; and lived in abysmally inhuman conditions – with very poor access to water, electricity, sanitation, health and education facilities, virtually as non-citizens. Add to this, they were prone to police action from time to time owing to the fact that they belonged to an 'ex-criminal tribe'. Most of them were engaged in construction work, digging of trenches or laying of

underground cable wires, or making and selling of *gajaras*¹ or lemon-chilli garlands². Some of them were engaged in selling toys or plastic items or begging at traffic signals. One also heard of the odd case of a youth involved in illegal activities like stealing of iron rods from the railway yard or petty thefts, for which the entire community was stigmatised by the police, as alleged by the community members. It was difficult to believe that in a city like Mumbai, there existed pockets where many of the child births happened at home instead of a hospital, where infant and maternal mortality rates were shockingly high and where most children dropped out of school before they reached the secondary level. Possessing a ration card was an achievement and a symbol of power in the community. Yet people went about their lives as if this was normal. As one engaged with the community, it became clear that they were rather self-contained with rigid social controls and were not very welcoming of outsiders.

It was obviously not easy to start work with them in the given situation, but Mayank and Vikas gingerly went along, and bit by bit, things started falling into place. They did a small study of the living conditions of the Pardhi community as part of their field work and organised a public hearing in collaboration with GBGBA at St. Xavier's College. The study and the public hearing was well received and it got good press coverage too, which enthused them to move ahead. In the meantime, Paankhi Agrawal, a student of M.A. in Development Studies who has completed her M.A. dissertation on the DNT issue (and had collected data from the same community where Mayank and Vikas were placed for field work), met us and expressed keenness to get involved in the work. This led to a joint meeting with all three students along with Simpreet Singh from GBGBA, who had been a source of strength to them right through the year. By the end of the meeting, we concluded that there was a need to continue the work we had started on a full-time basis. We felt that we were onto something new and challenging.

With the support of the Dean, School of Social Work and the Director, TISS, two Fellowships were granted to Mayank and Paankhi in June 2010. It was decided that they would do a scoping study of DNTs in Mumbai city, in the context of the growing phenomenon of rural-urban migration of DNTs, owing to their increasing impoverishment, the growing instances of atrocities committed against them in the rural areas, and their social isolation and invisibilisation

¹ Stringing together of flowers for hair decoration of women, which is a cultural practice in India

² Which is hung outside entrance of house or front of four wheelers and meant to ward off ill-omen

process in the cities. The two Fellows did painstaking work during the whole year. They established contact with the DNT communities living in Mumbai through snowballing, built rapport with them by building bridges with their community leaders and documented the life situation of the communities in as much detail as was possible given the human resource limitations and the resistance they faced in getting entry into the lives of the respondents.

Along with the study, the Fellows also intervened in situations wherever possible or when they felt compelled to act, like when they mobilised the community during or after a demolition, arranged for legal aid for youth who were arrested in a case of theft, or held sessions in the community on the procedure to make ration cards or caste certificates. These interventions paved the way towards possible areas of intervention. By the time the data collection process came to a close and the process of data analysis had begun, the idea of starting a field action project to work with these 'urban nomads' had taken shape.

This is probably the first study in the country which documents the situation of DNTs living in urban areas, and is therefore an important contribution to knowledge building around the issue. It provides some very useful insights about the situation of communities living on the margins and a few pointers in terms of policy change required to build more inclusive cities. We feel satisfied that the work leading to this report has played an important part in starting work with the DNT community in Mumbai under a new field action project of the CCJ, which we have named TANDA (Towards Advocacy, Networking and Developmental Action).

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Chapter I

Introduction

This report has been submitted in partial fulfilment of the fellowship granted to us by the School of Social Work, Tata Institute of Social Sciences from July 2010 to June 2011 to study settlements, livelihood and daily struggles of the members of denotified communities (henceforth DNCs) who have migrated to Mumbai city. The denotified tribe that has been the focus of this study is that of Pardhis, a group that is categorised as a scheduled tribe in Maharashtra.

Owing to a dearth of government data and research studies on the urban existence of Pardhis, one of the principal aims of this study was to render visibility to the issue. For this, the enumeration of Pardhis settled in the city and a general survey of their basic socio-economic profile were undertaken along with qualitative studies of their lived experience of urban poverty, exigencies of the informal labour market and state surveillance and legibility exercises. This report is also, in many ways, an extract of our insights gained in course of our engagement with Pardhis which involved collective deliberation and engagement in

addressing the various problems faced by them.

While the findings presented herewith are related to a single denotified community, the study can be useful for gauging the situation and process of stigmatisation and harassment (albeit more covert and less violent than their rural counterparts) of the denotified tribes who migrate to urban areas and for developing a more nuanced understanding of the operation of structural forces that impede economic and social mobility for the urban poor.

Denotified communities

Denotified communities comprise of those social groups who were branded as “criminal tribes” by the British government in India with the passage of Criminal Tribes Act (CTA) in 1871 and then “denotified” by the Indian government in 1952 with the repeal of the CTA.

The 1871 CTA and its later amendments notified more than 120 communities as

“criminal tribes”¹, implying that these communities were criminal by birth and practiced crime as a profession. The Act gave the colonial government the power to brand, penalise, segregate and forcibly sedentarise hitherto nomadic communities. The ostensible purpose of the Act was to maintain law and order, but it proved to be an effective means of converting hundreds of itinerant communities into wage workers who were scarcely better off than slaves (Radhakrishna 2001). Over time, the colonial intervention into the lives of the notified communities led to a radical transformation of their economies and had traumatic cultural consequences.

After the repeal of the CTA in independent India, various state governments started releasing state specific lists of denotified tribes. Some of the DNCs have been included in the state lists as denotified tribes, some as scheduled castes or scheduled tribes and others as other backward classes (OBCs). Thus, there is no uniformity across

¹ The use of term “tribes” in the Act is misleading since the list of criminal tribes included communities from *jati* society and from different religions with little resemblance to the official characterisation of “tribes.” Thus, we prefer to use the category of “communities” rather than “tribes” to denote the social groups listed in the CTA.

the country with respect to the official classification of DNCs.²

The official recognitions have been marginally successful in correcting the historical injustices inflicted upon the community. Continuation of the colonial mindset and deep-seated prejudice has contributed to the perpetration of atrocities against these people by the police and their mischaracterization by “mainstream” society. This in turn has given rise to a conspicuously unique mindset within the stigmatized communities that is characterized by generalized suspicion towards outsiders and a sense of repulsion towards their own people and history, indicating the internalization of the societal prejudice towards their people.

Over the years, the DNCs have been exposed to the dynamic processes underlying development – a shift from agrarian economy to an industrial one, mechanization, large scale development of

² To understand the specific problems of the denotified and nomadic communities, the Commission on Nomadic, Semi-nomadic Tribes and De-notified Tribes under the Chairmanship of Mr. Balkrishna Renke was set up by the Government of India in 2005. The report of the Commission was submitted to the Gol in 2007. It is under the review of the Union Cabinet and no specific outcomes have emerged so far. According to the estimate of the Commission, the population of denotified, nomadic and semi-nomadic tribes in India is not less than 11 crores (Rathod & Bhasara 2008).

infrastructure, commercialization, urbanization, growth in communication and transportation, and enhanced spatial and social mobility. This has adversely impacted their traditional livelihoods. Degradation and privatization of natural resources has restricted their access to hitherto common property resources. As a result, they have begun to shift towards alternate occupations. Many of them have migrated to urban areas, thereby exposing themselves to various location-specific factors of poverty such as proximity to a metropolitan area, the presence of agglomeration economies, the quality of the transportation infrastructure and the cost of living. However, there is a dearth of government data and research studies on the life and livelihoods of DNCs settled in urban areas. This has led to a rendering of invisibility in official data to the presence of these communities in urban spaces, which in turn has prevented a meaningful resolution of the specific problems faced by them.

A Brief Anthropological Profile of Pardhis

The word “Pardhi” which is derived from the Marathi term “paradh” indicates a livelihood activity –hunting. Colonial accounts of Pardhis describe them as

wanderers and hunters (Russell and Hiralal 1997: 358) indicating the nomadic lifestyle of the group. It is not a homogeneous category and encompasses many groups named differently on the basis of their occupation or their lifestyle. Some of the more well known ones include *Chittar-Pardhis* (antelope-hunters), *Gay-Pardhis* (who ride cows), *Gaon-Pardhis* (who live at the periphery of the village), *Bhil* Pardhis or *Shikaris* (who use firearms), *Langoti* Pardhis (who are dressed only in a loin cloth to cover their nakedness), *Phase* Pardhis (noose hunters) and *Pal* Pardhis (who live in tents), *Haran-shikari* (hunters of antelopes) and *Adavichanchar* (literally, ‘wanderers in the forest’).

The two distinct endogamous groups within the Pardhi fold are the Raj Pardhis and Mahadeo Pardhis.³ The Raj Pardhis, also called as *Mevadis*, trace their original homeland to the Mewar region which is

³ The distinction is commonly made between Raj Pardhis and Phase Pardhis (Sangave 1967 and Thade Commission 1960). But we have chosen to refer to the second dominant endogamous group as Mahadeo Pardhis on the basis of the nomenclature used by a majority of Pardhi participants themselves. The Mahadeo Pardhis owe territorial allegiance to the Kutch region of Gujarat and their language is markedly different from that of Raj Pardhis. Almost all the Pardhis we have come across in Mumbai are Mahadeo Pardhis.

surrounded by the Vindhya and Satpura ranges (Sangave 1967: 67). The Mahadeo Pardhis out-migrated from Mewar region in Rajasthan much before the Raj Pardhis and settled down in different regions across present day central India, Gujarat, Maharashtra and Karnataka.

Although Pardhis have come to be categorised as a “tribe” through the processes of enumeration, colonial accounts list them as a “low caste” (Russell and Hiralal 1997: 358). It is highly probable that they were treated as a caste in traditional rural Hindu society, and assigned the lower-most position in the social hierarchy. Besides engaging with the caste system (if not co-opted by it), Pardhis also bore economic links with the village society. While hunting and food gathering were their principal means of survival, Pardhis provided specialized services and goods to society, thereby engaging in reciprocity (before introduction of monetised economy) and later, in exchange with the wider society.⁴

⁴ Different occupational groups among Pardhis would provide different goods and services to society. The hunters would sell surplus game, honey and medicinal forest herbs to villagers (ibid: 360, Sangave 1967: 69, Singh 1994: 990). Takankars, an occupational group of Pardhis from Maharashtra, would roughen the stones of the household grinding

But in all probability, Pardhis were not full-fledged members of the village milieu. They either engaged in nomadism or were settled at the periphery of rural areas in clusters of households bound by kinship relations. While supplementing the village economy, they remained outside the *balutedari* and *jajmani* systems that sustained self-sufficiency of the village and reflected its social order (Bokil 2002:148). Markers of cultural and social distinctiveness of Pardhis from the local hindu caste societies include their unique language which is a unique mix of Gujarati and Hindi, a unique pantheon of totemic deities, with each totemic clan representing an exogamous group and sharing a unique cognomen, and prevalence of *nyaya panchayat* (council of justice) whose membership is accorded by birth in the community.

Inclusion of the Pardhi tribe in the CTA

A major component of the colonial construct of Pardhis as a social category was the emphasis on the widespread prevalence of criminal activities among its members. The

mills, moving from one village to another (Russell and Hiralal 1997: 360). Some groups would be employed by farmers in a village to keep vigil over their crops and keep grazing animals out of their farms. This was a subsidiary occupation for which they received the payment in kind (ibid: 369).

suspicion of the settled communities towards nomadic groups which were not well-integrated into the patterns of life of village society was supplemented by colonial accounts that carried detailed descriptions of the modus operandi of acts of thefts committed by Pardhis and the skill they exhibited therewith, which added to the effect of creating a general atmosphere of suspicion and fear in society towards them (Enthoven 1975, Russell and Hiralal 1997).

The prejudiced perception of mainstream caste society and that of colonial administrators towards Pardhis came to be institutionalised through their notification as criminal tribes under the Criminal Tribes Act 1871 and its various amendments. By 1952, Pardhis had been notified as a criminal tribe in the states of Bombay, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Bhopal. With this, the Pardhi identity depreciated into a stigmatised category as its bearers came to be regarded as “criminals by birth”.

Under the aegis of CTA, Pardhis were segregated and forcibly sedentarised in agricultural and industrial settlements. In the Bombay Presidency, Pardhis constituted the single largest ethnic collectivity in settlements and free colonies between 1933 and 1947 nearly without exception (Agrawal

2010). The settlers residing in different settlements established across Bombay Presidency - at Solapur, Bijapur, Bagalkot, Gadag, Hubli, Khanapur, Belgaum, Baramati, Ambernath, Jalgaon, Dohad, Ahmedabad, Dhulia, etc. – were made available as labourers for spinning and weaving mills, railway workshops and factories as well as in road making, metal breaking, lumbering and cultivation. These settlements were more or less like prisons where they would be detained for indefinite periods and subjected to rigorous work conditions.

Identity and Existence of Pardhis in Postcolonial India

After the repeal of the CTA, Pardhis came to be recognised as one of the most depressed sections of society requiring special Constitutional safeguards. In the states of Chhattisgarh (select districts), Madhya Pradesh (select districts), Gujarat, Maharashtra and Karnataka, Pardhis have been recognised as a scheduled tribe (ST). In some districts of Madhya Pradesh, Pardhis are included in the scheduled caste (SC) list. In Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra, some of the Pardhi sub-groups are categorised as

Other Backward Classes (OBCs). The assignment of differently named sub-groups of Pardhis to different administrative categories of backward classes has been a source of much anthropological confusion.

The government devised targeted programmes for economic rehabilitation of Pardhis, most of which were primarily oriented towards weaning them from crime (Sangave 1967). But it showed little commitment to alleviate the problems of landlessness and ownership of unremunerative landholdings among Pardhis settled in the rural areas. Softer measures of economic rehabilitation such as provision of education and skills training and alternative employment opportunities were undertaken. That these policies failed to generate desirable outcomes was clearly established in 1975-76, when Pardhis were included in the list of “primitive tribal groups” representing the “poorest of poor amongst the STs” (Radhakrishna 2009: 13).

Over the years, Pardhis have been rendered vulnerable to structural changes in the economy - shift from agrarian economy to an industrial one, mechanization and large scale development of infrastructure and commercialization. With changing territorial

and economic landscapes and the introduction of legislations and policies that have curtailed their access to forest and wildlife resources, their traditional patterns of livelihood have been displaced. In many cases, this has not been accompanied by transition to alternative means of livelihood in the traditional locales of their settlement in rural areas. As a result, many families have migrated to urban areas, a process that has involved not merely physical relocation, but also changes in economic and socio-cultural organisation.

Pardhis in Mumbai

According to Thade Commission (instituted by the Maharashtra state government to draw a list of Denotified and Nomadic tribes) report (1960), the population of Pardhis in Bombay city was estimated to be 500. In 2001 census, it was recorded as 1630 and 2083 for Mumbai city and Mumbai Suburban region respectively. A preliminary mapping exercise conducted in 2007 by a research institute, Xavier’s Institute of Social Research (XISR), pitches the number of Pardhis in the city at around 9600.⁵ These

⁵ This assessment is also an underestimation of the population of Pardhis in Mumbai since enumeration did not take place in some parts of Mumbai suburbs.

discrepancies between data are, in all likelihood, linked to severe underestimation of the Pardhi population in the city, rendering invisibility in official data to their presence in urban space.

There is also a dearth of government data and research studies on the life and livelihood of Pardhis settled in Mumbai. The available evidence presents a bleak picture of the conditions of their urban existence - engagement in poorly remunerative informal sector as casual labourers or in own-account self-employment, frugality and unpredictability of State support signified by acute lack of access to civic amenities and irregularities of ration supply (Jadhav and Sinha 2010; Agrawal 2010).⁶

While studies that inquire into the experience and agency of the Pardhis occupying an urban space are conspicuous by their near-absence, the Pardhi identity

⁶ The report 'Urban Nomads - The Innocent Criminals: A Study Report on The Status of Denotified Tribes (Pardhis) in the City of Mumbai' authored by Jadhav and Sinha (2010) was prepared as part of the reading material to be distributed in the public hearing organised on the issues of Pardhis in Mumbai on January 2, 2010. The report remains unpublished and was shared via email. The other source is Paankhi Agrawal. 2010. 'Economic Life of a Tribe in an Urban Setting: A Study of Pardhis in Mumbai'. M.A. Dissertation (unpublished). Mumbai : T.I.S.S.

has received greater space in mass media than any group-specific cultural identity of tribal or denotified communities. A review of 21 news reports in English national dailies (that carry a mention of Pardhis in context of affairs of Mumbai city) showed that 80 per cent of the reports project thieving and robbing by murder as a normal and recurring feature of the livelihood seeking efforts among Pardhis and highlight the historicity of illegalities associated with the Pardhi fold (Agrawal 2010). By depicting crime as an expression of the collective mind among Pardhis, rather than as an act of an individual or a gang of individuals, the mass media effectively implicates the Pardhi identity and contributes to reinstating popular prejudice against them.

Thus, Pardhis in Mumbai city have been placed at the bottom of both economic and social hierarchies. The distributive arrangements resulting from wider economic and political processes are such that they have systematically denied them the opportunities and resources to combat their state of historically constituted economic subordination. At the same time, misrepresentations within the dominant culture have damaged their group identity.

This has led to consolidation of negative anticipations of their social identity among other sections of urban populace, thereby perpetuating conditions for status subordination of Pardhis.

The Present Study

Given the lack of data on the socio-economic conditions of DNCs that have migrated and settled in cities, our primary concern was to build a corpus of information on their settlements and material conditions. As students of TISS we had been engaged in different capacities with understanding the problems faced by DNCs and working with them in selected settlements. But the one year fellowship granted by TISS allowed us to envisage a more extensive study and intensive work among the DNCs living in Mumbai. Though originally the plan was to conduct a comparative study of different DNCs living in Mumbai, due to practical constraints we chose to focus on an in-depth study of Pardhis with whom we had developed a sense of familiarity and solidarity through earlier work.

The following were the main objectives of the research component of our fellowship:

1. Identifying the enclaves of Pardhis in Mumbai city and enumerating their population.
2. Understanding the problems of Pardhis related to housing, livelihood, education, possession of official identity documents and stigmatization and harassment by police.
3. Analysing the structures - symbolic, material, political, legal - that influence the everyday life of Pardhis in the city and how these structures influence their actions and agency.

Methodology and process followed in the preparation of the report

The choice of methods used in this study has evolved through a process of engagement with the Pardhi community. The first part of this process included identifying the various enclaves of Pardhis in the Mumbai city region and establishing rapport with the people. We were greatly assisted in this task by the social workers and activists who had either been working among Pardhis or among the urban poor living in the

settlements where Pardhi enclaves were located. Moreover, Pardhi informants from one enclave introduced us to Pardhis in another enclave. We soon realised that the latter is a more desirable way of getting entry into an enclave since it helped lower the suspicion among Pardhis living there towards us. Towards the end of December 2010, we had located and visited 35 Pardhi enclaves.

In order to enumerate the population of Pardhis in the city and collect basic information about Pardhi households, a general social survey was conducted across all Pardhi households that we could locate in the city using a structured schedule (See Annexure IV). Through the survey, we collected information on the basic socio-economic profile of the households (ancestral village and sub-caste of its members, size and gender-age composition of the household and the main source of livelihood). Information was also sought on the citizenship documents that each household possessed. This information was collected to aid a larger campaign by TISS students and activists to engage in process of helping denotified communities to secure possession of important documents such as ration card, voting cards and caste

certificates which enable them to legitimise claims over several public goods and services. The survey was conducted from October 2010 - January 2011 in 31 Pardhi enclaves (see Annexure III for the list and a brief profile of the communities) and for the sake of convenience, it was restricted to Mumbai City region.

To understand the nature of specific problems that Pardhis faced in context of their urban existence, such as insecure housing status, uncertainties of informal sector work, poor educational status and harassment by police, we used methods such as informal interviews, case studies and focus group discussions in enclaves where we had built a considerable amount of rapport with the people. We also held interviews with the neighbours of Pardhis, local leaders and social workers working with the members of Pardhi enclave and activists from within the Pardhi community to secure insights about the Pardhi community. There was no fixed period for holding these unstructured interviews and they were conducted throughout the period of the fellowship.

Considerable insights into the life and ways of Pardhis were also derived from our

engagement with the community in the process of working with them either for getting official documents made, opening bank accounts, interfacing with the State authorities in cases of demolitions and evictions, trying to organise self-help groups, etc. This approach is essentially based on the paradigm of praxis. Our source of knowledge was, to a great extent, practice directed towards acting upon disempowering conditions faced by Pardhis in order to change or transform them. Besides identifying the problems and issues faced by the community that suffers from economic and status subordination and beyond addressing the immediate problems faced by Pardhis in context of their everyday life, there were two reasons for such informed intervention on our part. First, such a process facilitates a sense of fellowship between the researchers and participating members of the community. Legitimising our presence among DNCs was very difficult when we entered these communities as mere passive researchers. But a participatory process of research practical engagement with problems faced at the grassroots level opened the possibility of prolonging the continuation of work with the community beyond the period of data collection. Second, it brought us closer to

being accepted by the communities with whom we engaged over months, placing us in otherwise guarded positions from where we could access deeper layers of signification of their actions and constrains.

Terms and Concepts

Some of the key terms used in the study have been defined below:

Casual wage labour: A person who was casually engaged in others' farm or non-farm enterprises (both household and non-household) and, in return, received wages according to the terms of the daily or periodic work contract, was a casual wage labour (Government of India 2007: 11).

Community: A community has a distinctive social boundary. According to Robert Redfield (1955) the distinctiveness is apparent to the outsider and is expressed in the group consciousness of the people of the community. Thus, a community possesses a high level of social cohesiveness.

Household: A group of persons who commonly live together and would take their meals from a common kitchen unless the

exigencies of work prevented any of them from doing so (1971 Census).

Informal Sector: There are various axes of judging the formality and informality of work. For the purpose of this study, informal sector is conceptualised as consisting of:

1) Enterprises engaged in the production of goods and services with the primary objectives of generating employment and incomes to the persons concerned. These enterprises generally operate on a small scale, with low level of technological complexity and organisation.

2) Labour relations based mostly on casual employment, kinship or personal social relations rather than contractual arrangements and thus outside the purview of regulation by state.

Enclave: a cluster of dwelling structures of the Pardhi households crowded together in a way that they can be made physically and socially distinguished from their neighbours who belong to other communities.

Citizenship documents: Official papers issued by the State to the citizen that ascribe or recognise her personal or social identity

and which are often attached to various entitlements that can be rightfully demanded by the citizen.

Mumbai city region: Part of Mumbai metropolitan region extending from Colaba in the south, to Mulund and Dahisar in the north, and Mankhurd in the east.

Chapterisation

This report is organised as follows: Chapter I introduces the report. Chapter II deals with the reasons for migration of Pardhis to the city. Chapter III focuses on the poor housing conditions among Pardhis and the problems faced by them in legitimizing their claims to public housing. Chapter IV deals with routines and risks associated with different types of employment (casual and self-employment) and the general problems faced by the Pardhi labourer. Chapter V describes poor educational status among Pardhis and the more serious problem of inter-generational illiteracy. An attempt has also been made to delineate the reasons for the poor enrolment and high dropout rates among Pardhi children. Chapter VI is concerned with the poor possession rate of official documents such as ration card, voting card, birth certificates, caste

certificates, census enumeration slips, pan cards, and bank account passbooks which depict the poor status of formalization of citizenship among the Pardhis. Chapter VII deals with the arbitrary process of criminalization of the community and the

experience of stigma by Pardhis. Chapter VIII highlights crucial issues regarding life and livelihood of Pardhis that have emerged in course of the study and outlines possible strategies of intervention to address these concerns.

Chapter II

Migration to Mumbai

According to Thade Commission (instituted by the Maharashtra state government to draw a list of Denotified and Nomadic tribes) report (1960), the population of Pardhis in Bombay city was estimated to be 500. In 2001 census, it was recorded as 1630 and 2083 for Mumbai city and Mumbai Suburban region respectively.

In our study, we have been able to enumerate 5189 Pardhis across 1018 households settled in 31 Pardhi enclaves across the city. Since we have not been able to cover some enclaves under our enumeration exercise, it is clear that the Pardhi population is much larger.⁷ Note that the fluid population of Pardhis, that is, those who are temporary migrants to the city staying for less than six months in case of every visit, is also considerable.⁸

⁷ A preliminary mapping exercise conducted in 2007 by a research institute, Xavier's Institute of Social Research (XISR), pitches the number of Pardhis in the city at around 9600.

⁸ In almost every Pardhi enclave in the city at any given point in time we have found many Pardhi families playing host to their relatives from the village who have temporarily migrated to the city in search for work.

Most Pardhis settled in Mumbai have migrated from villages and districts of Maharashtra and others have come from Karnataka. Some are new migrants to the city while some are the succeeding generations of the persons who had migrated to the city in the latter half of 20th century. In case of the latter individuals, there is a strong identification with the city so much so that when asked about their *muluk*, they promptly replied that for them *muluk* is the city of Mumbai. Thus, many families share as much, if not greater, a territorial affiliation with the city as they do with their 'native village'.

Muluk is a very significant word in the vocabulary of Pardhis.⁹ In a broader sense, *muluk* may refer to a place to which a person traces her immediate ancestral roots to. In our study the *muluk* that we have recorded corresponds to the ancestral village where the families trace a considerable part of their lineage and visit them for the traditional ritual of *joharna*, a defining

⁹ We gradually discovered that this word has resonance among different regional groups.

socio-religious activity of Pardhis.¹⁰ The purpose of adopting this definition of muluk was to understand the spatial trend of migration of Pardhis and to elicit information about the possible reasons for migration to the city by the first generation migrants of the families. The survey does not indicate the period of migration of the family or its generational depth in the city.

Table 2.1 conveys distribution of Pardhi families according to their muluk or native place. 86 per cent of the Pardhi families settled in Mumbai trace their muluk to other districts in Maharashtra, of which the most important are Solapur, Osmanabad and Parbhani. Around sixty-six per cent of the families come from Solapur, around 12 per cent from Osmanabad¹¹ and 7.45 per cent

Table 2.1: Distribution of Pardhi households according to their native place

Native Place	Percentage to total households
Osmanabad	11.60
Solapur	65.95
Bijapur	11.40
Pune	0.50
Parbhani	7.45
Nashik	0.09
Beed	0.29
Punjab	0.19
Mumbai	0.09
Gulbarga	2.05
Nanded	0.39

from Parbhani. Less than 2 per cent trace their native village to Pune, Nanded, Nasik and Beed.

In terms of families, 13.45 per cent trace their muluk to Karnataka state. Most of these families come from the district of Bijapur and some from Gulbarga. Both the districts share borders with Maharashtra (Marathwada and Western Maharashtra region especially Solapur district). These borders are socially porous since the ethnic and linguistic composition of the villages and towns near these borders in both the states have several commonalities.

¹⁰ When asked to name their muluk, many respondents simply answered, "Mumbai". They were wary of us using the data to brand them as outsiders to the city. It took us considerable cajoling and explaining to put their doubts to rest. Yet some respondents persisted in naming Mumbai as their muluk, less due to any insecurity but rather because they were born and brought up in Mumbai and strongly identified with the city as their homeland. Only in one case where the respondent was adamant that his muluk be recorded as Mumbai, we have done so. But in other cases, the families have shared details of their place of origin or the place of their usual residence before migrating to the city.

¹¹ Osmanabad was split into districts of osmanabad and Latur in 1982. It is probable that while some of the Pardhis have mentioned Osmanabad as their muluk, their villages lie in the jurisdiction of Latur district.

Two families have migrated from Punjab.

Reasons for migration to the city

While we have discussed below the various reasons for migration among Pardhis, it has to be noted that in most cases a combination of factors contributes to the decision of Pardhi households to migrate to the city.

Assetlessness, illiteracy and occupational immobility in rural Maharashtra

Going by the content of the narratives provided by Pardhis of their social history, their migration to the city can be traced to persistent and pervasive conditions of poverty (in context of their rural residence and work) among them - landlessness, poorly remunerative agricultural labour and high incidence of illiteracy.

One of the key factors associated with rate of migration is the level of poverty, though there has been an intense debate about the level of mobility among the poor. A reading of the 1999-2000 round of the National Social Survey shows that individuals from SCs and STs, those with little or no

education and those with a lower monthly per capita expenditure, are less likely to migrate to urban areas. On the other hand, a number of village studies have shown that the migration rate is higher among the social groups that persist at the margins of economic and human development. Moreover, the dominant view among the Indian scholars is that distress migration is a dominant strategy of survival among the poor who are caught in worsening situation of dry-land agriculture created by drought and crop failure (Deshingkar 2010).

Traditionally, many denotified communities and nomadic tribes have been landless sections of the population. Some DNT families who had worked for considerable amount of time on the agricultural settlements were granted land *pattas* by the colonial government, thereby acquiring legal titles to landholdings. Nevertheless, landlessness was a pervasive phenomenon among these groups. After independence one of the main tasks before the government was to economically rehabilitate the settled sections of this population as well as to encourage settlement of hitherto itinerant members. In some cases the government did try to establish housing colonies of these groups (Vilas Sangave 1967). However,

there were no concerted efforts to redistribute productive resources, including land, in favour of these groups. Various reports and studies have substantiated the fact of persistence of landlessness over decades among the Pardhi population of the state and the dominance of agricultural labour as the livelihood activity among them.

- As per the Thade Commission Report (1960), only around 20 per cent of Pardhis in Maharashtra possessed landholdings. But the report does not provide additional information on the size and quality of the landholding and the access to necessary inputs, including water and fertilisers. Thus, in all probability more than eighty per cent of the Pardhi population did not possess productive landholdings at the time of the study by the Thade Commission.

- In 1981 Census, three-fourths of the population among Pardhis who were recorded as workers were agricultural labourers (Singh 1997).

- A recent preliminary study (Rathod and Bhasara 2009) conducted on the socio-economic status of denotified tribes in Tuljapur city in Maharashtra states that only

1.21 per cent of Pardhi families in Tuljapur possess land.

It can be seen that there has been little improvement in the occupational status among the Pardhis over the years. Besides landlessness, a major reason for the persistently poor occupational status is poor educational development of the community settled in rural areas. According to the Bhasara and Rathod study, the literacy rate of the Pardhis in Tuljapur block is estimated to be 6.65 %.

Thus, large scale dependence on wage-earning, poor asset-holding and lack of development of human resources are features of life and livelihood among Pardhis in rural areas. Thus, they have been traditionally vulnerable to economic distress caused by lopsided development policy and economic shocks.

Drought of the early seventies

One of the most important reasons mentioned by respondents for the early wave of migration of Pardhis to the city is the 1972 drought of Maharashtra. People distinctively recall this period as “dushkal” (or famine) conveying the condition of extreme scarcity of food grains and means

of survival during this period in the drought affected areas of Maharashtra. Many of the Pardhis who trace their *muluk* to Solapur, Osmanabad and Beed, among the worst hit districts, have narrated to us stories of distress migration of their grandparents to “Bombay” during this period.

Box 2.1: A Note on Maharashtra Drought of 1972-73

The adverse impact of the drought on Pardhis that led to mass migration to other regions has to be understood in terms of both the condition of assetlessness among Pardhis and the development policy of the state. The Maharashtra drought of 1971-72 has to be seen in context of the contradictions in the growth policy of the state government that concentrated upon industrial growth of Bombay and the sugar industry in the turfs of the political barons and neglected irrigation facilities vital for the overall development of the rural economy. The peasants in Maharashtra, and by extension, a large number of agricultural labourers, were subjected to the vagaries of monsoon. The subnormality of monsoon in 1971-21 led to extensive damage of crops, drinking water shortage, shortage of fodder which affected the cattle population in nearly 20 districts of the state (Wolf Ladejinsky 1973). Over

25,000 villages were reportedly hit by drought conditions and agricultural operations were severely hit. As a result, a large number of agricultural labourers, cultivators and rural artisans could not avail of work, thereby increasing poverty and food-insecurity among the rural population. It led to an exodus of the local population towards urban areas, including Bombay, as refugees (ibid: 394).

Regional underdevelopment

The conditions of poverty that influence migration as a coping mechanism among the Pardhis have a regional dimension.

Of all the Pardhi families who trace their *muluk* to towns and villages in Maharashtra, 99 per cent have migrated from Solapur, Osmanabad and Parbhani districts of Maharashtra. Osmanabad and Parbhani are located in the Marathwada region which has been, for over a long time, the most underdeveloped region of the state in terms of agricultural and industrial growth as well as in terms of human resources, i.e. education, health, employment (K. Seeta Prabhu and P.C. Sarkar 1992) . Even if district-wise data is taken into consideration,

Osmanabad and Parbhani are counted amongst the least developed districts in the state (ibid). In all likelihood, the conditions of backwardness that characterise the countryside and towns in these districts are indicators of the economic distress of the Pardhi families and are likely to have contributed to their decision to migrate in want of better economic opportunities.

Unlike Osmanabad and Parbhani, Solapur is a relatively developed district of Maharashtra. It is well-known for its cotton mills and power looms. One may trace the trend of migration of Pardhis from Solapur to Mumbai to the need for better employment rather than a result of distress migration. But there are many reasons that betray such a supposition.

Solapur's agricultural sector lags far behind the average performance of agricultural sector in Maharashtra (ibid). Since many decades the agricultural wages in Solapur have been declined. Work for agricultural labourers is available mainly on the sugar cane plantations owned by the political and economic elite of the state and alternative non-agricultural employment opportunities for labourers in rural areas are few. Some of the Pardhis have worked in the textile mills

of Solapur district. But due to the shutting down of many mills over the years, they have been rendered unemployed.

Thus, lack of regular employment and poor wage rate and working conditions are push factors that lead to migration among Pardhis from the traditional milieu despite their strong social and religious attachment to their muluk.

Migration due to stigma

It is difficult to ascertain the incidence of migration taking place due to practices of discrimination and persecution faced by Pardhis on account of their stigmatised identity as a "criminal tribe". Very few families have given stigmatisation as "the" reason for their migration.

However, most respondents regard villages as the site of extreme prejudice and discrimination from which they have escaped through their act of migration. Extreme mistreatment by police and higher caste persons in villages is routine. Those families that live in "tandas" or temporary camps of nomadic groups are usually not permitted to stay within the village. Even those Pardhis who live in large settlements

dominated by their community are subjected to constant surveillance and interrogation by the police. Stigmatisation has graver consequences for the security of Pardhi families who are poor and landless.

Thus, escape from extreme form of prejudice faced by Pardhis is one of the reasons for many households to migrate to the city, which is seen by them as a socio-spatial complex that allows for greater anonymity and better rule of law.

Pull Factors of Migration

Aside from distress-based migration among Pardhis, migration for the purpose of availing better social and economic opportunities in the city also contributes to rural-urban migration.

Migration is common among the landless families who face poor remunerative wage work in rural areas for whom the city offers better employment opportunities. It has to be noted that the nature of economic activity they undertake in the city is not drastically different from their work in rural areas, for instance, Pardhis working as casual labourers in the city used to engage in manual labour for their livelihood in the

muluk. But in city, as many Pardhis argue, the wage rates are better. Moreover, there is more regularity in the availability of work as compared to rural areas where, besides the harvesting season, finding work becomes very difficult for the Pardhi labourer. For self-employed families, in a city as densely and highly populated as Mumbai, there is considerable demand for their products almost throughout the year.

Of course one can question whether there is any change in the real wages of the people since the cost of living is higher in the city. This fact also deters many Pardhi families from migrating permanently to the city and who come to Mumbai only during the agricultural off-season to seek work.

Better education and aspirations to rise in occupational hierarchy have hardly found mention as reasons for migrating to the city.

Conclusion

Migration to Mumbai is influenced by several push and pull factors. Asstlessness, lack of occupational mobility, conditions of poverty perpetrated by regional underdevelopment and experience of routine harassment by police

and villagers pushes Pardhi families out of their home community in the muluk and to the city. Aspirational factors such as search for better employment also play an important role in influencing decisions to migrate.

For the newly arrived migrants, the already existing kinship and community network in the city lowers the cost of initial adjustment to the urban life and initiates them into a livelihood activity.

But migration does not bring about a significant change in the occupational hierarchy of Pardhis. Their settlement in the city is associated with other economic and social costs that will be discussed in the coming chapters.

Chapter III

Settlement and Housing

Pardhis are conspicuous signifiers of urban destitution visible in the darkest crevices of the city- on the pavement, beside the traffic signal, under the flyover and in overflowing and dilapidated slum settlements. Homelessness is a persistent and inter-generational problem among Pardhis. Very few families have been rehabilitated under the housing schemes of the government. The fact that the large population of Pardhis and DNTs in urban areas remain invisible in policies drafted for tribes and denotified tribes has also contributed to the sustained neglect of their housing needs and entitlements.

The location and arrangement settlements of Pardhis in the city also have a social dimension. Pardhis tend to reside in enclaves which are clusters of Pardhi families constructed in close proximity to each other and existing either independently or in larger slums amidst the hutments of other slum dwellers. Proximity to one's kinship provides a kind of security – physical, financial and emotional – to the Pardhi families who are otherwise

perpetually exposed to vagaries of law and order institutions and the exigencies of the informal market.

Legal Status of the Enclaves

As seen in table 2.1, 26 per cent of the total of Pardhi enclaves covered in the city is situated in regularised slum settlements. Note that, as discussed in section four of the introduction chapter, it is common to find several Pardhi households residing under the tutelage of their relatives living in notified slums. For instance, in transit camp Patra chawl at Mankhurd, only around 70 families had been given temporary residence rights till their final rehabilitation. But over a period of three years, the number of Pardhi households in the camp had almost doubled.¹²

¹² In cases like that of Patra Chawl, we have enumerated all Pardhi households who live for the greater part of the year in the settlement; these households include the original families who have been shifted in the settlement by the government and those who have been staying the settlement for more than six months either with their relatives in the settlement or on rent.

Table 3.1: Distribution of Pardhis enclaves, families and population in terms of the legal status of the settlements

Legal status of settlement	Number of enclaves	Number of families	Population
Notified	8 (26%)	220 (22%)	1273 (25%)
Non-Notified	23 (74%)	798 (78%)	3916 (75%)
Total	31	1018	5189

As can be seen from the table 3.1, 74 per cent of Pardhi families are located in non-regularised settlements. It is also the case that three-fourth of the Pardhi population suffers from housing insecurity and is subjected to persistent threat of demolition and eviction. On an average, the number of Pardhi families and the Pardhi population inhabiting a non-notified settlement is higher as compared to a notified settlement. This indicates a strong tendency among Pardhis to crowd together for purpose of communal settlement when facing housing insecurity in the city.

Types of the Enclaves

Pardhis in Mumbai are distributed among a wide range of built environments, each

linked to different vulnerabilities. Table 3.2 depicts the distribution of Pardhi enclaves across different categories of built environments in the city.

Table 3.2: Distribution of Pardhi Enclaves and Families by Different Types of Built Environment

Built Environment	Number of enclaves	Number of families
On Footpath	14 (45%)	604 (55%)
Beach	2 (7%)	36 (3.5%)
Under Flyover	1 (3%)	48 (4%)
Railway tracks	1 (3%)	5 (0.5%)
In non-notified slums	5 (16%)	153 (15%)
Public housing	4 (13%)	160 (16%)
Regularised slums	4 (13%)	60 (6%)
Total	31	1018

Enclaves located on the footpath, beach and railway tracks live not only amidst a state of shelter insecurity due to their non-regularized status, but also in a state of perpetual

transience; the dwelling structures in these enclaves either do not exist or are erected as temporary shelters only for the night in public places. A little more than 50 per cent of Pardhis enclaves are located in such conditions of homelessness. Around 63 per cent of Pardhi households are located in such settlements.

The five enclaves of Pardhis located in non-notified slums are crowded with *katcha* dwelling structures made up of bamboos and plastic sheets. These shelters can be said to be a little more stable than the squatter settlements of the pavements but are as unsafe and insecure in face of possibilities of eviction and demolition.

22 per cent of Pardhi families live in secured shelters either in regularized slums or in low income public housing. Public housing includes *pucca* structures built by the government for permanent residence of the beneficiaries or for as transitional housing and those houses, *pucca* and *semi-pucca*, constructed by the families with some financial aid from the government.

What is worrisome is that there is little inter-generational mobility out of housing poverty among Pardhis. Many homeless Pardhis are not first generation persons or workers who

seasonally migrate to Mumbai for work. In fact, a lot of them have been staying in Mumbai for a long time. Some kind of socio-economic mobility is represented in the movement from pavements to settlement of Pardhis in non-notified slums. But in general, there are very few instances of inter-generational mobility from illegal to regularized claims to residential spaces in the city.

Box 3.1: Exclusionary Impact of Slum Rehabilitation Policy

The poor housing conditions among Pardhis is endemic of a more general problem faced by the urban poor who are trying to stake a claim to a legitimate space and legal title of occupancy. One of the biggest roadblocks in expansion of public housing in Mumbai is the January 1, 1995 cut-off date for slum regularization.

As per the slum rehabilitation policy in Mumbai, only those who can provide documentary proof that they have been living in their current dwelling structures before January 1, 1995 are considered to be legal residents of the city. This policy effectively labels a large slum population of Mumbai as “encroachers”, refutes their claim for public provisioning of basic civic amenities and subjects their dwelling structures to

demolition.

Few Pardhis who have lived in the city from before January 1995 have proof of residence of a particular dwelling structure. There are several reasons for this.

- the dominant occupation among the Pardhis in the city has been manual labour in construction industry as a result of which the families keep moving from one worksite to another within the city.

-Those families who have tried to settle down in one place with the intention of having a permanent accommodation have faced demolitions and evictions that once again turn them into migrants within the city.

- due to low level of literacy and non-awareness of the legibility/documentary practices of the state with regard to formalizing citizenship, most Pardhi families do not have basic identity documents that would established over the years their proof of residence in a particular slum. It is mainly among the second and third generation Pardhi settlers in the city that acquisition of official identity documents has come to be seen as an urgent need.

Access to Civic Amenities

The households living in non-notified settlements are deprived of basic public

services. Accessing potable water outside the distribution channel of the state involves either buying water or begging for water.¹³

In case of non-notified settlements in Mumbai city, access to drinking water is usually secured from nearby commercial units through begging or making informal payments in exchange for accessing the source of water. Cost of accessing water is greater in the suburban areas, especially in eastern suburbs such as Mankhurd. In these areas, begging for water is commonly supplemented by purchase of water at the rate of around Rs. 20/- to Rs. 30/- for a can of 10 litres. Residents in notified slums in Mumbai suburbs also purchase water from time to time, especially during the summer season when the water cuts are frequent and for longer periods of time.

Pardhis, like most other urban poor, acutely face the problem of poor sanitation. The use of public toilets is highly irregular mainly due to the cost of availing their services. The fee may range from Rs. 2 to Rs. 5 per person

¹³ Some may find begging too strong a word for a coping mechanism which involves requesting access to water from hotels, houses, shops. But such requests are interlaced with the attempts to highlight the deprivation among the Pardhis and appeal to the sympathy of the givers. It is not uncommon for the Pardhis to themselves talk of their condition as that of beggars when it comes to asking for water from better-off others.

for using the lavatory and from Rs. 10 to Rs. 20 for using the bathroom. There is an even higher range of payments for washing clothes. Moreover, the use of public toilets is restricted more or less to adults and children take to open defecation. The expenditure on accessing sanitation services takes a toll on family finances. As a result, these services come to be treated as being dispensable.

Non-notified settlements are deprived of legal supply of electricity. The settlements located on pavements and under flyovers live without electricity. Some of the bigger Pardhi non-notified settlements located within larger slum settlements access electricity through illegal connections. The lack of access to electricity impacts the education of the children as well as impairs self-employed families engaged in making and selling flower garlands and cheap toys to work in the evening.

Considering that around 70 per cent of Pardhi families resident in Mumbai stay in non-notified settlements which are deprived of basic civic amenities and are too poor to pay market price for accessing the basic services, some of them use extra-legal ways to secure these goods, for example, getting

illegal electricity connections. In absence of cheap sanitation facilities, many of them take to open air defecation, even though most Pardhis have expressed a strong preference for using enclosed toilets. It is rarely recognized that these practices that are generally characterized by middle class and elite population of the city as “uncivil” are conditioned by the paucity of availability of cheap public services and the poverty of the homeless population. These lifestyles are thus conditioned by the maldistribution of resources in the city.

Precariousness of life

Homelessness and settlement in irregularised settlements is characterised not only by poor access to civic amenities but also insecurity to life and physical well-being.

The pavement dwellers face persistent threat of being mowed down in ongoing traffic. There have been cases of vehicle accidents in which the children of pavement dwellers who happened to wander on the roads have lost their lives. Security of the children in such families is also severely compromised. During our period of study, we came across two cases of kidnapping of infants of Pardhis families living on the pavement.

Several more cases have been narrated to us by the Pardhi informants.

Food security of the homeless families, especially those that are staying pavements is affected by the persistent threat of demolition and eviction. Though many families source foodgrains from the ration shops, they are often unable to cook food themselves due to vigilance by the police who often disallow them from using public spaces for cooking food. Many homeless families thus, prefer to sell their procured quota and buying cheap food from the roadside or begging for food. This also reduces the nutritive value of their meals.¹⁴

Settlements that are located besides open sewers and those in cramped and crowded slums are exposed to the hazards of water pollution and solid wastes, making them the first victims of communicable diseases. The health hazards of such pollution are more severe in the monsoons.

Disruption of Livelihood and Education due to Demolitions

¹⁴ The cheapest and therefore the commonest meal among many urban poor in Mumbai is the *vada pav* which is made of white flour buns and deep fried potato patties sandwiched in the bun. This dish is high in calorie content but very poor in nutritive value.

For the homeless poor who are officially described as “encroachers”, demolition of their houses and eviction from occupied spaces of residence is part of their lived reality in the city. Every demolition and eviction brings about violent disruption of their everyday life. Usually after the demolitions the Pardhi families build back their hutments at the same site or near to the original site. But since these disruptions can take place anytime without timely indication and at irregular intervals, there is persistence of the threat of eviction. This prolonged period of uncertainty leads to a strain on household economy. The demolition may be accompanied by confiscation of utensils, school bags, vessels with foodgrains stored in them, etc; things that usually cannot be recovered back. Due to internalisation of the unpredictability of state violence, at any indication of demolition, many able and willing workers stay back to protect their possessions, thereby losing out on a number of wage earning opportunities. There is a withdrawal of women from the workforce and the children from the schools for the same purpose.

Problems in Rehabilitation Projects

Out of the eight Pardhi enclaves located in notified settlements, seven comprise of families living in government-aided housing projects. These notified settlements are part of the rehabilitation projects of the government undertaken to relocate the urban population dispossessed due to infrastructure expansion. A noteworthy feature of these resettlement projects is that they have been constructed in the suburbs which have caused relocation of the Pardhis residing previously in south Mumbai to the suburban areas in the north of the city.

While shifting from non-notified settlement to a notified settlement represents a welcome landmark in the lives of Pardhis, many have complained that the relocation has adversely affected their work patterns and livelihood options. In our interactions with members of Patra chawl, a transit camp and Lallu Bhai compound, a rehabilitation colony, a recurrent complaint has been that establishing work after the relocation has been difficult. Considering that there are informal checkpoints (like goons who are the deal makers in the concerned area and other self-employed families who have already demarcated their areas of business) that guard entry into the established selling points in the suburbs, many have

complained that they find it difficult to relocate their business to the suburbs. Many of the families who were into selling various goods by the roadside at established places in south Mumbai continue to travel everyday to these places for work. This effectively increases their transportation costs and leads to greater physical exertion. Some of the families have given their rooms on rent or to relatives and have gone back to squatting, not out of greed for new rooms, but because they prefer living closer to their work site.

Most of the relocation projects are getting saturated by the growing population of their residents. A worry of most Pardhi families is the overcrowding in their flats as newer generations grow up and start own families. There is no provision in-housing policy of the state that considers the housing entitlements of the younger generations. Also, asset and income accumulation over the generations is not sufficient enough for the younger generations to purchase land or dwelling structures at market rates or to rent a decent accommodation in the city.¹⁵

¹⁵This point was stressed upon by a Pardhi informant from Mulund enclave which is over 30 years old and where the younger generations continue to live in the public housing allotted to their fathers and grandfathers.

Adequate and *pucca* housing is the most urgent demand of the Pardhis staying in non-notified settlements as well as of those younger generations that are staying in the overcrowded rehabilitation sites.

They have developed a sense of urgency on getting various official documents ready to

avail of public housing schemes. They have also come together with other communities to participate in struggles related to housing rights of the urban poor, though some of these mobilizations are lead by unscrupulous civil society actors (the political participation of Pardhis with different civic society organisation has been discussed in greater detail in chapter seven).

Chapter IV

Work and Employment

Casual labour and self-employment are the dominant income-earning activities among the Pardhis in Mumbai. Each of these employment avenues is associated with different skills and risks and represents a certain mode of adjustment to the exigencies of work in the informal sector of urban economy. Besides the above economic activities, many Pardhi families also engage in begging to support their survival in the city.

Livelihood organisation and economic activity are closely intertwined with the social organisation among the Pardhis. Social institutions of family, kinship and caste play an important role in influencing the nature of work and labour force participation. At the same time, the strategies of adjustment to modern economy have contributed to changes in the social structures and relations within the community.

Types of Livelihood Activity

Out of the 1018 households covered in the survey, 411 households (40.5 per cent) are

reportedly engaged in multiple livelihood activities.

Tables 4.1 and 4.2 depict the distribution of Pardhi families in terms of their engagement in different types of livelihood activity. The data is disaggregated to account for different levels of engagement- primary and secondary. Primary engagement refers to participation in that livelihood activity that fetches maximum earnings for the household, irrespective of the time and effort put in the activity, while secondary engagement means participation in those activities that provide subsidiary economic support to the household.

Table 4.1: Distribution of Pardhi households according to their primary occupation

Nature of Job	Frequency	Percentage to total households
Self-employment	411	40.5
Salaried	7	0.5
Casual work	585	57.5
Begging	15	1.5
Total	1018	100

Table 4.2: Distribution of Pardhi households according to their secondary occupation

Nature of Job	Frequency	Percentage to total households
Self-employment	197	19
Salaried	3	0.5
Casual work	195	19
Non	599	59
Begging	21	2
Causal & Begging	3	0.5
Total	1018	100

Casual Wage Labour

Casual wage labour constitutes an economic activity for majority of households. In other words, nearly 6 out of every 10 households are engaged in manual labour on casual and informal terms. For 58.5 per cent of households, the wages earned through casual labour are the primary source of income while for 19 per cent it is a secondary income source.

Most of the casual labourers are engaged in the construction industry as daily wage or piece wage workers. They get work on the sites of infrastructure projects that involve construction of buildings, roads and laying down of underground water pipes or optical fibre cables. They also engage in civic

works undertaken by the municipal government, such as gutter desiltation (in which Pardhis manually unclog the drainage system), repair of roads, etc. Some Pardhis are employed as drivers for transportation of goods and people; none of them own the vehicle but access it on rent or are paid piece wages.

As members of the labouring poor in Mumbai largely in the informal sector and as a relatively unskilled workforce, Pardhis have to face the various exigencies of the informal sector that prevent occupational mobility and add to the insecurity and precariousness of their material existence. Some of these problems include:

1. Meagre Wages: One of the main problems associated with the informal sector is the absurdly low level of remuneration. According to the declaration of Maharashtra government for Zone 1 region (which includes Mumbai city), an unskilled worker engaged in construction industry is entitled to a daily minimum wage of Rs. 152.78.65. But a Pardhi daily wage labourer earns anywhere between Rs. 100 - Rs. 150 per day for nine hours of work and lesser is earned by the female Pardhi worker. Piece wage work offers better income since the average

earnings of day's labour are around Rs. 180-Rs. 200.¹⁶

Besides low remuneration, there is always an element of uncertainty and irregularity associated with the payment of wages. A delay of one to two months in payment of wages to the labourers by the contractor is not uncommon.

2. Uncertainty and Irregularity of Availability of work: Availability of work is closely tied to the fluctuations in the modern business cycle. From end of January till the beginning of monsoon, the economic activity of the Pardhis is at its annual peak. Most of the Pardhi workers have reported satisfactory level of availability of work in these months. In these months even their relatives from muluk temporarily migrate to the Mumbai and take advantage of steady availability of work and return to their

¹⁶ These quotations were arrived at on the basis of the information supplied by JAN, Patra chawl, LBC members, all located in the Eastern Suburbs. There is a possibility that the averages may differ from other parts of Mumbai depending on the economic conditions in those regions. Moreover, the quotations are at the higher end, since these quotations were taken in the month of February-March when the demand for labour is high as indicated by the adequate availability of work throughout the month. In other months, when the demand is slack one can expect a much lower bracket of wages.

muluk towards end of May to resume cultivation on their farms. In the other months, finding work is difficult and the wages are lower than the remuneration received in the peak season.

Pardhis complain that meagre wages, delays in payment and irregularity of work availability depresses the household budget and leads to a forced deferment of even necessary consumption. That casual labour does not suffice their livelihood requirements is evident from the fact that half of the households who are engaged in casual labour also supplement their family income through own-account self employment such as making and selling garlands or begging. *It is clear that the engagement of Pardhis in multiple market-based economic activities is less attributable to any enterprising sense than to economic distress.*

3. Absence of Medical Care: Pardhis are vulnerable to many work-related injuries due to the strenuous nature of their manual work. Dislocation of joints, headaches and body aches are common. The workers engaged in gutter desiltation are prone to water and vector-borne diseases. Ill health and disease lead to loss of working days and

burden the family budget. Medical expenditure is one of the major reasons for taking loans from non-institutional lending agents at interest rates as high as 36 percent per annum (Agrawal 2010).

4. Displacement by non-human technology:

Many of the operations of manual labourers in the construction industry in the city are being mechanised. This has led to fall in labour demand, hitting job availability among Pardhis severely. For instance, according to labour supervisors from within the Pardhi community, the demand for labourers by the city municipality for gutter desiltation work has reduced over the years due to adoption of machines to unclog the drainage system. The increasing rate of displacement of unskilled labour by machinery underlines the urgency of developing human capabilities through education and skills development among Pardhis to facilitate their adoption to other types of work.

5. Informal working bands and middlemen:

A common feature of work among the Pardhis engaged in the construction industry in the city is that rather than taking up individual contracts directly with their employers, the workers resort to

employment through contractors and middlemen. The labour supervisors or *mukkadums* act as interface between labour contractors and the Pardhi casual labourers. It is the *mukkadum*'s responsibility to seek work and ensure timely release of the amount that has to be distributed among the workers from the *seth*. For the workers the mukkadum is a one-stop reference point for information on availability of work, provision of work and receipt of wages.

A *mukkadum* usually retains 8-10 per cent of the wage received by the worker. Despite the commissions cut by the mukkadums from their wages, the workers prefer participating in work parties rather than seeking work on their own. Due to the unskilled nature of their work and insecure conditions of employment, they have no bargaining power as individuals. The work parties represent, if not in all instances, a collective that on sheer strength of numbers can confidently negotiate with the employer.

However, these informal and loose economic organisations and the agency of the middlemen do not provide much respite to the Pardhi labourer from the conditions of the low productivity, the precarious nature of the employment and poor remuneration.

Self-Employment

40.5 per cent are engaged in self-employment as their primary occupation while for 19 per cent of the households it is their secondary occupation.

Self employment among Pardhis exists in form of own-account self employment, that is, independent engagement in economic enterprises without hiring any labour. It is usually the entire family that collaborates in the functioning of the enterprise- buying the raw material, making the final goods using no or simple hand tools and selling the final goods, for example, *gajras*¹⁷, *limbu-mirchi* hangings¹⁸, simple non-mechanical toys. Or it may also involve buying readymade goods from the wholesale market and selling them at higher rates, e.g. clips, flowers, cosmetics, toys etc.

Some of them sell their wares at large market places such as Dadar or near temples eg. Siddhivinayak. But most of them choose those places where there is lesser

competition from other sellers and transportation costs are minimum, e.g. in local trains and at traffic signals near their residential places. These selling joints have developed as niches for certain set of families and they guard them against the entry of others. Many families travel to Ambarnath and Panvel at the time of religious fairs to sell toys, other wares. Some even go upto Pune, Nasik, Pandarpur and Vapi to sell their wares at the religious sites.

Another form of self-employment among Pardhis is labour supervision. Some of the Pardhis, invariably men, are working as labour supervisors or *mukkadums*.¹⁹

While a considerable number of Pardhi families are engaged in small scale own account enterprises, self-employment does not represent a more viable condition over casual labour. The own-account workers in the informal sector face the following problems:

¹⁷ Flower garlands

¹⁸Literally means lemon and chillies. It is a combination of lemon, green chillies and piece of coal tied in a typical way and usually hung on vehicles and shops and is believed to prevent evil spirits from causing harm to one's livelihood and life.

¹⁹ There is a very thin line between self-employment and wage labour in case of the mukkadum. But in our study we have considered him to be a self-employed person since he enjoys autonomy with respect to decision-making regarding whom to work with, at what rate and with how many workers.

1. *Fear of Confiscation of Wares:* The small scale enterprises of the Pardhis are unregistered. Since most engage in hawking at public places, there is always a threat of their wares being confiscated by the municipal corporation authorities which leads to windfall losses for the families. Some of the Pardhi hawkers have admitted to resorting to extra-economic measures such as bribing policemen and municipality officials in order to make peace with the authorities.

2. *Lack of access to cheap credit:* Our survey revealed that 85 percent of the families have never engaged in formal banking. Own-account workers need cheap credit to make small investments in order to buy raw materials or finished goods from the wholesale market. Since most of the families are assetless, run on a deficit budget and are not assured of adequate savings, they have to borrow from relatives or from the non-institutional sources of credit such as the local *sonar*. In the case of the latter source, the credit is expensive. In the eastern suburbs, the interest rate by the sonar on the borrowings is more than 36 per cent per annum. Moreover, in case of windfall losses incurred due to confiscation, theft or

destruction of their wares, the families may enter into considerable debt.

3. *Financial Non-viability:* Many households have complained that self-employment is gradually becoming an unviable activity, representing a case of forced self-employment among the Pardhis. They attribute this to rising prices of raw material, eg. of flowers to make gajras or rubber and plastic to make playing balls. With little access to cheap credit and better technology, these enterprises do not bear growth potential.

The above claim can be corroborated by the fact that nearly half of the total households engaged in self employment are engaged in other categories of livelihood earning activities such as casual labour and beggary. Even those families that are engaged exclusively in self-employment tend to operate a combination of enterprises. For instance, at Girgaum chowpatty, the Pardhi families make and sell *limbu-mirchi* hangings on weekends but also set stalls of toys or corn on weekdays. Thus, no single enterprise can sustain the household and diversification of enterprises and economic activities is a form of adaptation of the

families to the fluctuations in the product and labour markets.

Beggary

Around 4 per cent of the families have confirmed that they are dependent, rather partially or wholly, on begging for livelihood. However, our observations and informal interactions with the respondents from the community indicate a much higher prevalence of this livelihood activity.

Begging among children and old persons is more common than among middle-aged adult population. The elderly people from the community who are past their age for strenuous manual labour and with little means to build and sustain own account enterprises are economic dependents within the family. But support to them is erratic if not completely absent and this pushes them towards begging in order to sustain themselves.

There is large scale entry of children into begging. They may either be initiated by their guardians in order to supplement the family income or the children may take up begging in order to fulfil some of their wants without cognisance of the parents and in

collaboration with their siblings, cousins or friends.

Salaried Employment

Salaried employment constitutes an imperceptible category with less than one per cent of the households engaged in it either as a primary or secondary occupation. Less than one per cent of the households have a regular wage/ salaried employee as a member. Putting it differently, of 2668 Pardhi adults, there are only 10 persons who claim to have a steady and salaried employment.

Of these 10 Pardhis, six are employed by private agencies as security guards on contract and not as permanent employees. None of the regularly employed Pardhis are engaged in the public sector.

Pervasive Problem of Poor Upgradation of Skills

Considering the low level of literacy among the Pardhis and the difficulties in starting and sustaining profitably own-account enterprises in the city the large scale involvement of Pardhis in the urban informal sector is not surprising. The

disturbing fact is that there has been little upgradation of skills over the many generations that have lived in Mumbai leading to inter-generational occupational immobility. It is not uncommon to find in a Pardhi family, three generations of earning members narrating and comparing their experiences as manual wage labourers in the construction industry of the city.

At the surface of this inertia, it may appear that the problem is the absence of an idea of 'career' among Pardhi labourers which prevents them from seeing the merits of investing time, money and effort in upgradation of skills. But the continuity of the state of poor skills among the Pardhis cannot be dismissed as a case of disinterest or fatalism on part of Pardhis. We have come across many Pardhis who, within a set of structural constraints, have tried to adapt to more innovative ways of earning a livelihood. For instance, the labour supervisors from within the Pardhi community were earlier casual labourers. They used their knowledge of labour market and organisation of production and used it to set up own working bands and become supervisors, whose work does not involve manual labour and gets a better pay than the casual labourers. Some have become drivers

of four and three wheelers by attaching themselves to friends and acquaintances who have taught them driving. At the Gateway of India, one of the foremost tourist sites in Mumbai, one can find Pardhi youth acting as tourist guides. They are fairly conversant in English although, surprisingly, they cannot read or write in any language. Some of the Pardhi youth have learnt to handle the camera and earn their livelihood by taking pictures of the visiting tourists. Thus, there is an entrepreneurial spirit and readiness to learn among the Pardhi youth.

Thus, the problem here is not so much contingent on the choices of the person herself, as much as it is on structural factors. Lack of training facilities, considerable financial investment in training (e.g. learning to drive from an accredited driving school), lack of availability of sufficient credit to finance training and purchase of fixed and floating capital alienates the youth from their own aspirations. They do not perceive that considerable investment in skill development can lead to better position for them in the labour market since the demand for their labour and the price paid for it depend on many other factors besides their skills such as start-up capital for own

ventures or “contacts” that can provide them the much information needed regarding the market. Some of the Pardhis who had learnt to drive could not get employment with the state transport services either because they were inadequately educated or because they could not shell out extra-legal charges demanded by the “brokers” who are the gatekeepers to such jobs.

Thus, it is the acute awareness and experience of these structural constraints in acquiring modern skills and putting them to use for livelihood generation that have developed a sense of futility towards education and skills development among the Pardhis.

Understanding Preferences

Understanding the preferences work and employment among the Pardhis is of utmost importance since any policy of economic rehabilitation is bound to fail if it severely mismatches the preferences of the people.²⁰

²⁰ This was evident in the case study presented by Vilas Sangave (1967) of a rehabilitation project started by Government of Bombay with the help of a group of social workers in 1952 to promote settled agriculture among 30 families of Pardhis and Kanjar Bhats (another denotified tribe) near Kolhapur, a district of Maharashtra. The families were encouraged to cultivate the allotted government land on a co-operative basis. However, despite the persistent efforts by the government, the Pardhis could not take favourably to agriculture. Instead, they revealed

These preferences have to do with the following considerations:

1. *Nature of economic activity, i.e., casual, regular or self employment:* Each of these has different characteristics, requirements and risks. Casual labour may entail lower wages and arduous manual labour. However, the payment is made on a per day or piece rate basis giving the workers a greater choice in terms of choosing when to work. Also the payment is made usually on a day to day or weekly basis and this is a more favourable arrangement for the Pardhi labourers who live on a subsistence budget than the monthly payments of regular employment.

On the other hand, for regular wage employees there is less stress caused by uncertainty of job availability. But the wages of regular employees, for instance as private security guards, may not necessarily

a definite inclination towards carrying out miscellaneous occupations like dairy, poultry-keeping, joining steel pipes fine metal breaking, and employment in textile mills of engineering workshops. One of the main reasons for the failure of the programme was that the planners had not taken sufficient cognisance of the preference for wage labour among the erstwhile itinerant groups since it makes immediate payment obligatory and thus reduces the time gap between the effort and its outcomes, unlike the case with agriculture.

be more than the income of the casual labourer that finds sufficient work in a month. Moreover, like casual labour, regular salaried work among the Pardhis is not accompanied with any social security benefits since they are mainly employed in low-end tasks in the private sector and are easily dispensable.

Self-employment requires credit and a work regime different from that of casual labour. Profit margins are never stable and it sometimes leads to windfall losses due to, for instance, imposition of fine or confiscation of the hawked goods by the city municipality.

2. Type of work: The work options of a casual Pardhi labourer usually include working at gutter desiltation, digging and tempering roads, laying down cable lines, various manual labour at construction sites of buildings, working as waiters at marriage halls; each activity representing a different environment of work. Some Pardhis prefer to take up gutter desiltation work over construction work especially in the summer to beat the heat out of their working hours. On the other hand, most families avoid sewerage work due to the unhealthy and hygienic nature of the work. For the self

employed, it means choosing between which wares to sell since selling flowers that have a short shelf life requires a different work discipline than selling toys that are durable goods.

3. Place of work: Pardhis usually prefer to work in areas close to their enclaves since it saves them considerable time and money in commuting. In general, casual labourers are more mobile than self-employed persons. The Pardhis hawk their goods in markets, traffic signals or on footpath close to their place of residence. It is also not unusual for the place of residence to be decided on the basis of its proximity to the area in which Pardhi families gauge there is an assured market for their goods. Moreover, the proximity of living and working spaces help the parents to keep a watch on their children and on their household assets (in case of a surprise visit from the municipality).

Some families who have been relocated to suburban areas in public housing projects after having lived and worked for several years in South Mumbai continue to travel to their already established work places in South Mumbai. There have also been cases wherein Pardhis have sold or rented out the allotted rooms in the suburban areas because

they were too far from their established workplace. However, most of the respondents staying on pavements and in slums, have informed us of their readiness to adjust to new workplaces and even new forms of employment if they are given information about and access to nearby markets, proper training and financial support.

Role of Social Institutions in economic life of Pardhis

Besides various economic considerations, the Pardhis also weigh different work and employment options on basis of social factors. Kinship is the most potent social institution that penetrates the organization of their economic life helping them to cope with the daily struggles for survival in the following ways:

- Households that share kinship ties tend to share crucial information about labour and product markets. Families who are engaged in casual labour share information regarding availability of work, the different labour supervisors from whom work can be secured, the type of work, etc, with each other. It reduces the cost and effort in acquiring information through independent

means. Those families engaged in self employment share information on the cost of raw materials, demand, expected profits, sites for hawking.

- Kinship is an important source of security while coping with rise in cost of living in the city and everyday fluctuations in the household budget. The incidence of borrowing from and lending small loans to each other is frequent within the Pardhis.

- Working in co-operation with relatives is a common feature of the Pardhi economic organisation. Labouring members of extended families form voluntary and informal working bands, supplying their labour collectively to the labour supervisor. Even when households are involved in own-account enterprises they tend to hawk in the same area. Working with relatives provides a sense of ontological security with the expectation that in case of any work-related problem the members of the family can collectively deal with it. For instance, the work parties on sheer strength of numbers can stand up to and negotiate with the employer. Or, in case of sudden confiscation drives by the BMC, the families hawking together may engage in collectively planned and executed flight response.

Besides the institution of kinship, caste consciousness also plays an important role in the choices regarding work. Pardhis consider themselves to be Rajputs, a *suvarna* caste. The rules of purity and pollution that are associated with Hindu caste system are held in regard if not followed in totality among the Pardhis. These rules shape their perception with regard to different types of work. Pardhis usually avoid taking up work that involves coming in contact with human waste for instance, gutter desiltation, cleaning toilets and sweeping streets. Those who do take it up as a residual option in face of want of better employment options face ridicule and strictures within the community and in extreme cases may be considered as outcastes. Some of the Pardhis who are working in these “polluted” occupations have experienced a deterioration of commensal relations and routine social interaction with their kinsmen. They are even barred from taking part in religious festivals such as *joharna*.²¹ Many have complained that they are treated like

untouchables whenever they visit their *muluk* since their own relatives keep separate tumblers for their use. Thus, economic choices and organisation among the Pardhis is closely connected to social relations and norms, even if not completely embedded in them. Any policy of economic rehabilitation among the Pardhis has to take into account the facilitatory and inhibitory role of kinship and caste institutions vis-a-vis work and employment in modern economy.

²¹In order to participate in *joharna* and other religious events specific to Pardhi community, the Pardhis working in polluted occupations in the city are required to undergo purificatory rituals which involve whipping or lacerating a part of their ear or nose.

Chapter V

Educational Status

Educational status among Pardhis is dismal. In most Pardhis enclaves in Mumbai, it is difficult to find even a single literate person (one who can read and write coherently). What is more worrisome is the persistence of illiteracy over generations. Delineation of some of the possible factors that contribute to the poor state of education among the Pardhis as well as the implications that this holds for their economic and social life is provided in this chapter.

While there have been several studies on the educational status among the urban poor in Mumbai, the data has not been decomposed to reveal the status of education among Pardhis or even among the broader social category of denotified tribes. The secondary data available on the same is derived from the small scale studies of single enclaves. These studies highlight conditions of high incidence of illiteracy and poor enrolment rates among the Pardhis (Mayank Sinha and Vikas Jadhav 2010, Agrawal 2010).

We conducted another enclave-based quantitative study on the educational status of

Pardhis. The enclave selected for the same was Patra Chawl which is a transit camp. Around 120 Pardhi households are settled here. There are two pre-primary educational centres (balwadis/anganwadis) operating in this settlement. Both the government and private schools are within a radius of half a kilometre of the settlement. Thus, there is ease of accessibility to formal education for the children in this enclave.

In Patra Chawl there are 248 children of school going age (5 years-18 years old). Table 5.1 shows gender wise enrolment status of these children.

61 per cent of Pardhi children in the school going age have never been enrolled in schools. The percentage of non-enrolment is higher for girls than for boys.

Contrary to our expectation, the drop-out rate is very low among the Pardhis - only 1 per cent. However, one cannot rule out possibility of suppression of truth regarding enrolment of the children. Moreover, on the basis of regular visits to Patra Chawl and observation of the

community, we found that most of the “currently enrolled” children had not been attending school regularly. Their parents had neither formally withdrawn their names from the school nor were aware of the policy of expulsion of children by school authorities who default regularly on attendance. In any case, these parents considered their children to be enrolled in schools and conveyed the same when asked about the status of enrolment of their children.

Table 5.1: Gender-wise enrolment status of children of school going age in Patra Chawl

Enrolment status	Male	Female	Total
Currently Enrolled*	61 (41 %)	34 (33 %)	95 (38 %)
Never Enrolled	85 (58 %)	66 (65 %)	151 (61 %)
Drop-out	0	2 (2 %)	2 (1 %)
Total	146	102	248

Thus, not only are the school enrolment rates among Pardhi children poor but there is the problem of poor attendance of the enrolled

children to the schools. By the admittance of most Pardhi informants, Pardhi children either are highly irregular in their weekly attendance or do not attend school for many weeks together. In case of families who migrate to outstation areas for work during festivals, even the otherwise regular school going children have to abstain from classes for considerable amount of time.

Overall, we found the educational status among the Pardhis living in Patra Chawl to be highly dismal despite some of the advantages that Pardhi families in Patra Chawl enjoyed - living in a legally secure housing colony and having accessibility to government schools. Education status of Pardhis living in homeless conditions and legally insecure settlements is likely to be poorer.²²

Factors Contributing to Poor educational attainment among Pardhis

Insecurity of Dwellings

The process of educational attainment is most precarious among the non-notified slum

²² In a Pardhi enclave at Jai Amber Nagar which is a larger non-notified slum area, the adult literacy rate is only 13.95 per cent, with female adults faring more poorly. only 16.67 per cent of Pardhi youth are literate (Agrawal 2010: 67)

dwellers whose settlements are prone to frequent and unpredictable demolition drives. In case of Girgaum chowpatty, where we observed the after-effects of slum demolition more closely, we found that many children stopped attending school after the demolition. The act of demolition immediately leads to loss of school-related material, such as uniforms, books and stationery since the authorities generally confiscate the belongings of the family after the destruction of the illegal structures. Moreover, the event of demolition is followed by a prolonged period of disruption of everyday life for the family. Some families migrate to other parts of city on temporary basis to allow “things to cool off,” while others rebuild their structures on or near the same piece of land. In both cases the education of the children is affected. The latter continue to live amidst a general anxiety about the uncertainty of future demolitions and the simultaneous urgency to get back to work. In order to deal with this, Pardhi children stay back to guard the temporary shelters and household belongings and to help the families quickly gather their belongings in case of an unpredictable arrival of municipality van. Thus, demolitions and the period of uncertainty experienced thereafter lead to prolonged absence of Pardhi children from school.

Parental motivation

Local NGOs, social workers and neighbours who engage with Pardhis in different capacities complain that Pardhi parents do not send their children regularly to school.

Parental motivation is very important. School going requires a change of behaviour even on part of parents, such as waking up early, arranging for bath and food for children before they leave, developing a routine of dropping and picking up children from school in case of very young students. These matters are not insignificant from the point of view of parents. They sometimes form the basis of the gap between the will and the efforts of parents to send their children to school.

In both LBC, a rehabilitation colony, and chowpatty, a non-notified settlement, the key informants of the Pardhi community have complained that many parents do not put in a sustained effort to ensure regular attendance of their children in schools. In a milieu where they have to live a daily cycle of investment-production and consumption, education represents an investment of time, energy and money that can have tangible benefits (like employment in a regular job) only after a long gestation period. Some are even skeptic of the positive material outcomes of education.

When asked as to why he didn't send his children to school, a middle aged Pardhi man living on pavement outside Mantralaya remarked, "What is the use? My uncle's children have studied a lot. Some have even studied as much as you. But they do not have jobs." When asked about the reason for the gap between education and employment, he was not clear. But the point here is that these are not uncommon responses. Many do not perceive an easy relationship between education and job and thus, in face of adverse everyday realities and the fact that children can be a source of economic support to the family, they do not stress on education. Such demotivation on part of parents can diminish the children's own motivation to go to school.

This is not to say that Pardhi parents do not recognize the value of education in a modern society. While the material benefit may not be quite evident in the short run, the symbolic value of education is immediately evident to the Pardhis. '*Pada likha toh uska zindagi sudhar jayega*'²³ is a commonly mentioned belief among parents about the life their children can have after getting educated. In many cases, they tell us of their regret at not being able to be even functionally literate such

as being able to read official documents or fill up applications for ration cards, voting card, etc. In course of filling various applications forms with Pardhis, we came across individuals who could sign their names and that too with some difficulty. Their signatures were also not consistent at all points of time. Yet, the fact that they chose pen over their thumb and through their preference reveals their belief in the power of the written word.

Child Labour

Irregular schooling and high dropout rates among Pardhi children are related to high prevalence of child labour among the Pardhis. In case of a self-employed family, the Pardhi child may accompany the parents to sell or guard the wares at the market place. Among the wage-work families wherein both the parents engage in work, children stay back at home to look after their younger siblings and for domestic chores. By the age of 10 to 11 years, the children start accompanying their parents to the worksite and working as labourers themselves. These activities of the children that contribute to family income eat into their time and enthusiasm for schooling.

²³ Translated as: 'If the child studies, he will have a better life.'

Child's Motivation

When we asked young children in *balwadi* at Jai Ambe Nagar if they wanted to go to school, all of them replied or nodded in the affirmative. When we posed the same question to some of the elder children in the same settlement, most of them replied in the negative. Most of these elder children had been enrolled in nearby school at some point of time in the past and had stopped attending it. Many of them pointed out to us that it was not to engage in wage work that they had dropped out of school, but that because they had dropped out due to lack of sufficient motivation to regularly attend school they had to take up paid work or more domestic chores.

A common response we got when we asked the children why they dropped out, was that their friends dropped out. School going is a social adjustment exercise wherein children draw strength from their peers. Peers provide some sort of social security and release from anxiety in an environment like a classroom where the hostilities between the teachers and students or between students may run high. Thus, dropping out may be a collective act rather than an individual case.

There is also a lack of educated and occupationally well-established role models from within the community. The importance of role models (who are themselves Pardhis) in influencing the younger generation's opinion about education was made evident to us when a group of young Pardhi respondents who had collectively dropped out of school raised serious doubts about the possibility of a Pardhi completing his education and of finding a good, respectable job.

Lack of sustained Engagement of Teachers and social workers in the community

One of the ways in which attendance to schools can become more regular among the Pardhi children is through the sustained intervention and engagement of the school teacher or a social worker with the community which may involve visits to the home of the children and encouraging the parents to regularly send their children to school and keeping track of their progress in schooling (see box 5.1).

However, in general, there is very little engagement of the teacher in the lives of the children outside the school premises.²⁴

²⁴ Even within the school premises, the empathetic intervention of school teachers and personalized

Intervention by the social workers and their interaction with parents is rarely sustained over a period of time.

Box 5.1: Salaam Baalak and Girgaum Chowpatty enclave

The importance of participation of teachers and social workers engaged in schooling of the children in the community is evident in case of the Pardhi community at chowpatty. In this enclave the enrolment and the attendance of the children has considerably improved over a period of ten years due to the sustained efforts of persons associated with an NGO, Salaam Baalak in enrolling children to local schools and even finding new schools for children in case of misadjusting problems.

attention to students can go a long way in keeping children in schools. We have come across many Pardhi children who do not go to school regularly simply because they cannot afford to take a bath everyday.

In Gandhi garden enclave, a local political leader had issued passes to school- going children of pavement dwellers in the area for use of public toilets for free. According to one Pardhi respondent from that area, "these passes have contributed more than anything else to the sustained enrolment of our children in school."

Child Marriage

Child marriage is common among Pardhis and is one of the major reasons for dropping out of schools. The girls are generally married off after their menarche and most of the boys also marry before reaching the legally prescribed marriageable age.

It is not only tradition but also insecurities of living in a city that contribute to the persistence of this practice. Many parents perceive the city as a site of dissolution of traditional values and sense of responsibility towards family among the young Pardhis. Thus, to deter illegitimate relations among young Pardhis and to infuse a greater sense of responsibility among them towards family rather than frittering away time with peers, parents prefer to marry off the youth as early as possible.

Not only does marriage at a very young age have an impact on the education of the child, the dropout of children from school and their early entry into the labour force creates a greater probability of their early marriage.

*

Residential Schools versus Day Schools

One of the major debates that is important to consider in context of education of Pardhi children is whether residential schooling is preferable to non-residential schooling. The traditional emphasis of official policy has been on residential schooling of Pardhis that minimises their contact with family and community. This separation policy is influenced by the belief that Pardhi children are socialised into a life of crime by their community. In the pre-independence era when the CTA was still in force and a large population of DNTs was confined to jail-like settlements, it was common to separate the children from the parents and put them in residential schools usually under the care of missionaries. After independence stress was laid on setting up and supporting residential schools for the children of nomadic and denotified tribes.

The dominant view of the people within the Pardhi community towards this separation strategy is not clear. Some of the parents in Mumbai who have their children studying in residential schools perceive the boarding school as a haven for the children, away from the daily troubles of poverty, insecurity, and exposure to illegitimate

opportunity structures. On the other hand, some families oppose sending children to residential schools. According to many parents who take this position, the hostel facilities for the tribal children are poor and unhygienic and the possibility of the exposure of the child to nefarious activities under the influence of hostel peers is high. There is also the fear of vagrancy as there have been several cases of children running away from hostels and not returning to parental homes due to fear of retribution.

What is clear is that the dominant view among Pardhi informants regarding this debate is not in terms of either/or. The readiness of parents to send their children to hostels and their preference for local day schools depends on other crucial factors, such as the state of the hostel facilities and the utility of the child's labour in sustaining the household livelihood.

*

State or Family

Another crucial question related to the interest of the child is whether the child would be better off with the parent or under the direct supervision and care of the state. While the State involvement in the

educational development of the child is part of the evolved policy on state-society relations, the nature and extent of this involvement are more ambiguous matters and needful of a dialogue.

The most violent intervention by the State in this case is the forceful separation of children from their parents. These children are identified as “neglected juveniles” and “in need for care and protection” either found begging, or without any settled home or whose guardians are perceived to be unfit to exercise control over the juvenile. The provisions and guidelines for the same are stated in the Juvenile Justice Act 2000. However, the process of identifying neglected juveniles is sphere for immense contestation. In our interactions with Pardhis whose wards have been subjected to provisions of Juvenile Justice Act, most claim that their children were wrongfully picked up for begging or simply because they lived on the footpath. Some are confused as to why begging (even by children) which has been a part of Pardhi livelihood in their traditional habitats and is necessary for their survival in the city should be considered as an act of crime.

In cases where the parents are not averse to submitting their children to the care of the state, they are highly critical of the nature of ‘care’ provided by it. The remand home where the children are kept under observation after being arrested by officials of the anti-beggary squad is overpopulated and unhygienic. Instances of mental, physical and sexual abuse are not unknown in children’s homes and this fact is not lost on the parents.

We corroborate that the fears of the parents are not unfounded. In our visits to the Umerkhadi (Dongri) Observation Home in the course of studying the relations between the Pardhis and the authorities, we have interacted with the children in the Observation Home and found several complaints of overpopulation and unhygienic conditions. Rather than providing a wholesome caring atmosphere to the children for an interim or an extended period in the spirit of the legislation on juvenile justice, these places have become merely “dumping grounds” of children.²⁵

²⁵ The poor condition of the Dongri Remand home has been investigated by print journalists. See: “Long wait before trial for Dongri home children.” Times of India (Mumbai), Jan 3, 2006; “Dongri children’s home is living hell.” Times of India (Mumbai), Jul 5, 2008.

From the Observation Home, Pardhi children are usually sent to residential shelters and schools in and outside Mumbai. The transfer of children is usually not supported by parents though they sign the consent letter under pressure from the authorities. There are various reasons for the opposition of Pardhi families of their children to transfer of their children in residential schools selected by the remand home authorities.

- They may not be convinced of the security of their children in these schools.
- Some parents have also complained that the schools chosen for their children are located too far from Mumbai and their native village which makes it financially inconvenient for the parents and the relatives to visit them the children at regular intervals.
- Some parents who are highly critical of their own community do not wish their children to reside with other Pardhi children due to the fear that this may reinforce in their children the “disruptive and aggressive tendency” of the Pardhi community. This perception contests the

dominant impression of the authorities and even of several social workers that parents would be more willing to send their children to a hostel where Pardhis dominate in terms of numbers. At the same time, it is also the case that parents are more relieved about the security of their children if the latter are accompanied by children of their immediate relatives or of non-Pardhi with whom they are well-acquainted.

There is a gap of communication and understanding between the parents and the State representatives in the interest of the children, aided by the mutual distrust, illiteracy of the parents and the apathy of officials towards the uniqueness and specificity of each case (See Box 5.2).

The bias against the homeless families, the belief that that they do not provide adequate care to their children and the failure of grasp the spirit of security that a community of Pardhis derives from settlement among one’s own kind makes the official approach highly insensitive. Even if separation is seen as beneficial in case of homeless Pardhi families, there is no reasonable assurance

that state intervention will lead to improvement in the condition of the child.

Box 5.2: Case study of Bittu Kale (name changed)

Bittu Kale, A 13 year old Pardhi girl who had run away with a young man from the community, was brought by her mother to the Dongri remand home for children. The mother was a single parent in charge in four children and lived on the footpath and worked as a daily wage labourer. Unlike most cases of domestic troubles wherein the elder members of the community are requested to intervene, the mother had submitted the daughter to the care of the remand home for a limited period to “teach the child a lesson and put some sense into her head.” The authorities derived that the mother was unable to exercise proper care and control over the juvenile and transferred her to a residential school at the outskirts of the city, without, *allegedly*, informing the mother.

We were contacted by the mother who requested us to help trace Bittu. The probationary officer at the remand home in-charge of this case was apathetic and unhelpful and it was only with the intervention of a Child and Welfare Committee officer that we were informed about the place where the daughter had been admitted. Even after that, it took us more than two weeks to establish contact with that home and considerable negotiation with its authorities to convince them to allow the mother to see her daughter and confirm her well-being.

After such a meeting had been arranged by the social workers associated with the children’s home where Bittu had been admitted, the mother was assured that her daughter had adjusted to the children’s residential school. Yet, she has developed an immense mistrust of the government agencies, as have many poor, illiterate homeless populations who are subjected to the vagaries, uncertainties and prejudice of the juvenile justice system.

Chapter VI

Status of Formalisation of Citizenship

Identity documents form an integral and pervasive aspect of the citizen's experience and perception of the State. Documents such as family identification card or (ration card), voting card, pan card, birth certificate, death certificate and caste certificate convey details of their personal identity. Each card/certificate is linked, directly or indirectly, to various constitutional entitlements that the individuals can claim.

Many of the identity cards are multipurpose. For instance, a voting card is used not only for exercising electoral right but can also be used as proof of personal identity for opening a bank account. Similarly, until recently birth certificates were considered mandatory for admission in government schools. Thus, not having a particular document can lead to inability to avail of a range of services and public goods. Considering the importance of these documents in accessing basic services and asserting their democratic rights, we surveyed the incidence of possession of basic ID documents among the Pardhis in Mumbai. Table 7 shows the rate of possession of different identity documents by Pardhis

families disaggregated by the legal status of the settlements in which the families reside.²⁶

Table 6.1: Possession of basic identity documents by Pardhi families

Identity Document	Number of Households	Percentage
Birth certificate	213	21
Election card/receipt	560	55
Ration card	655	64
Caste certificate	110	11
PAN card	174	17
Bank account passbook	157	15
Census receipt	472	46

1. Birth certificate:

One-fifth of Pardhi families have at least one birth certificate in the name of a household member. In other words, in case of 79 per cent

²⁶ The disaggregation was done to take into account how insecure housing status could be a result of the lack of possession of important official documents dealing with personal and social identity as well as how it also influences the possibilities of acquiring such documents.

of Pardhi families in Mumbai, not a single household member is in possession of his/her birth certificate.

In our survey, we also asked the respondents about the number of members of the household who possess birth certificate in order to account for the rate of individual possession of this document among the Pardhis. Out of a population of 5189, only 432 persons, or eight per cent of Pardhis, possess birth certificate.

The main reasons for poor possession rate of birth certificates among the Pardhis is high incidence of non-institutional delivery among them and lack of awareness of the fact that even children born at home can be issued a birth certificate by the competent government authority. It is only with the growing preference among young parents for institutional deliveries in hospitals or clinics that many of them are getting birth certificates of their children made.

Another problem is that very few Pardhis remember their or their children's date of birth. The BMC demands a precise date of birth for the sake of administrative convenience in searching for birth records. But what Pardhis have are estimates of date of

birth ("born in such and such season, in a year when such and such thing happened, at a time of such and such festival") that usually range from two to three years. As a result, it is difficult for Pardhis to get their birth certificates made at a much later date.

2. Voter ID Card:

Voter ID card is the most important identity card that establishes the citizenship of the individual. It signifies legitimacy of the citizen to participate in the electoral processes at the local and national level. Moreover, it serves as an important identity proof to access a number of public goods and services.

55 per cent of Pardhi households have at least one voting card between all the members. However, if we take individual-wise possession, we find that of the total number of adults in the survey only 39 per cent have voter ID card²⁷, denoting that considerable population of Pardhis in Mumbai has been denied basic political citizenship.

²⁷ This percentage is likely to be a slightly lower estimate of the rate of possession of voter IDs among the Pardhi adults since in our survey we have included youth in the age group of 14-18 as adults while in India the minimum age for voting is 18 years.

3. Ration Card

Ration cards or Family Identity cards (FICs) are of various types and each type is attached with a fixed quantity of food subsidy that can be accessed by the card holder (see Annexure V).

36 per cent of the families do not have any type of ration card. Table 6.2 shows the rate of possession of different types of ration cards among the Pardhi families.

Table 6.2: Rate of Possession of different types of ration cards among Pardhis

Type of Ration Card	Percentage of households
Antyodaya	20.33
APL (Orange)	41.95
BPL	1.87
Annapurna	0.10
APL (White)	0
None	35.76
Total	100

Only 20 per cent of the families have access to Antyodaya support. This is despite the fact that 78 per cent of the Pardhi population lives in non-secured slum or squatter settlements. Moreover, in Maharashtra, Pardhis, who have also been identified as a primitive tribal group,

are entitled to Antyodaya cards. Thus, it is evident that large scale Type I exclusion²⁸ has taken place in case of Pardhis staying in Mumbai.

Most of the families covered under the public distribution system (PDS) have the orange ration card which places them above the poverty line but allows access to subsidised foodgrains, though at triple the price rate of below poverty and antyodaya card holders.

Thus, the fact that majority of Pardhi families either do not have a ration card or have an above poverty line (APL) card despite being eligible for Antyodaya and below poverty line (BPL) cards points directly to the drawbacks of the “targeted” PDS.

The study of the interface of Pardhis with the PDS shows that among the urban poor, the demand for subsidised foodgrains (represented by the number of applications for ration cards) is over and above the actual support extended by the government (represented by the number of ration cards issued). Two important factors contribute to this discrepancy. First, there is widespread corruption in the issuing of ration

²⁸ Type I error refers to exclusion of genuinely poor or deserving households from a programme. Type two error occurs in case of inclusion of non-eligible persons in the programme.

cards. The ration card officers complain that many people lie about their economic status to avail of the BPL or antyodaya cards. The Pardhis argue that rationing office participates equally in the corruption. The media has also reported widely on the prevalence of the issuing of bogus ration cards.²⁹

But the issue of corruption cannot adequately explain the problem of exclusion of large population of eligible households from the PDS programme. The “quota” issue represents a tacit narrowing of the PDS system. Planners refuse to acknowledge the widespread poverty that exists in urban areas. In Mumbai, as in many other cities, fixed quotas of ration cards to be issued for every area have been declared. These quotas are insufficient compared to the population of the urban poor.³⁰ As a result a large proportion of the genuinely poor such as the homeless population of Pardhis have been

²⁹ According a news report in national daily Hindustan Times (‘42 lakh bogus ration cards in Maharashtra’, April 18, 2011) about 6.50 lakh bogus ration cards were cancelled in Mumbai and Thane in a ration card verification drive conducted in 2010.

³⁰ In May 2011 while hearing a plea in which the Delhi government had admitted that many genuinely below poverty line (BPL) families had not been issued ration cards because the quota decided by the Central government was over, the Supreme court criticised the practice of fixing quota of BPL ration cards for highly populated cities like Delhi where the population of poor migrants is high and the rate of in-migration is increasing.

effectively kept out of the outreach of PDS programme.

4. Caste certificate:

It is a document that links one’s personal identity to one’s social identity. Depending on their sub-group, in Maharashtra, Pardhis fall within the category of either scheduled tribe or denotified tribe. None of the members in 89 per cent of Pardhi households have a caste certificate. Only 11 per cent of the total Pardhi population in Mumbai have a caste certificate.

To get caste certificates made is a very stressful and prolonged process, requiring a series of documents to prove that that one is indeed a Pardhi. For instance, to get a ST certificate, an applicant is expected to produce documents such as school leaving certificate of the applicant issued by the head master, caste certificate of a family member, residence certificate issued by competent authority, etc. and these documents themselves are very difficult to procure.

Maharashtra government has issued a government resolution for the Pardhis settled in the village in order to ease the process of issuing caste certificate. However, no such steps have been taken by the state government to facilitate the process of verifying

applications for caste certificates of Pardhis or other tribes staying in urban areas. Most of the Pardhis in Mumbai have never been enrolled in schools or they do not have school leaving certificates. Many are first generation applicants of caste certificates and thus cannot submit as proof caste certificates of close family members. Thus, it is very arduous for a Mumbai-based Pardhi to get a caste certificate made. Some of the Pardhis have used the help of their relatives living in the *muluk* and the goodwill they share with the panchayat members in the village to get caste certificates issued from the gram panchayat of the village.

Besides the above difficulty in acquiring caste certificate, there is also a controversy associated with the type of certificate issued to the Pardhis staying in Mumbai. Some of the Pardhi families have been issued a Vimukta Jati/Nomadic Tribe (VJNT) certificate while some have been issued an ST certificate, though these families belong to the same sub-caste among the Pardhis. This problem is largely associated with the arbitrary administrative classification of the various subgroups within the Pardhi fold.³¹ The salience of these labels is enhanced by the fact that the state government has endowed

³¹ The problems with these administrative classifications of Pardhis into different categories of marginalized groups have been delineated in the introduction chapter of the report.

differently recognised groups with different entitlements. Thus, the administrative classification of Pardhis holds significant implications for their redistribution claims. This demands a more prude and informed approach not only while classifying families into officially recognised categories of socially and economically marginalised population but also while delineating the contours of these categories.

5. PAN card

At the time of survey, in around 17 per cent of Pardhi families at least one person had a Permanent Account Number (PAN) card. At the time of the study we were told by most of the respondents that they had acquired the PAN card in the last two years and many more had approached agents to get their respective pan cards made.

That there is a huge demand for this identity card among the Pardhis came as a surprise to us. PAN is usually required when filing returns of income with the income tax department or in certain financial and economic transactions wherein quoting the PAN is mandatory. But very rarely are any of these functions of PAN card of consequence for the Pardhis.

But the Pardhi respondents informed us of the indirect use of the PAN card. This card can be used as an identity proof for accessing certain services such as opening bank account, applying for driver's licence, etc. It is the easiest document to avail amongst the entire range of the identity documents, especially with the hiring of agents who can get these cards made within two to three months. Unlike other IDs that require submission of a host of documents for verification to the authorities, the PAN card can be made on basis of the ration card (or if the agents are "enterprising" even that requirement may not arise).

6. Bank Passbook

Only 15 per cent of households have a bank account in a household member's name. Having a bank account is usually taken as a sign of inclusion of the individual in the formal banking system. However, in course of data collection it also became clear to us that merely having a passbook of a bank account does not indicate active participation in formal banking. Very few among the account holders operate their accounts or make use of formal banking services. We have not come across a single Pardhi in course of our survey in Mumbai city who has at any point of time taken a loan from a bank. These institutions are usually of help only

to the Pardhi labour supervisors who may receive the lump-sum payment of their labourers directly in their bank account from the hiring contractor.

The respondents who regularly make use of the formal banking services are those who have been mobilised by NGOs that act as an interface between mainstream banks and informal sector actors. However, this particular arrangement was active only in two Pardhi enclaves- Lallu Bhai Compound and Ambujwadi, both of which are large enclaves and situated in densely populated settlements of urban poor.

An important reason for the disinterest shown by Pardhis in opening or operating bank accounts is that they usually live a hand-to-mouth existence and thus save little. Many Pardhis have not opened an account on the basis of a misplaced assumption that if one does not keep depositing money regularly the account will automatically be closed and their savings will be usurped by the government.

Moreover, there is an unpleasant perception of the bank amongst Pardhis. Respondents who have tried to open joint accounts on behalf of their self-help group have found the behaviour of bank officials to be apathetic and unhelpful. Since most Pardhis are illiterate they require assistance in filling up forms for opening the

account which the bank officials may not be obliged to extend.

7. Census 2011 Slips:

For the Pardhis as well as for most urban poor, inclusion in Census is important since the Census slip issued to the enumerated households is an important document that can be used as proof of residence when claiming their housing rights in future struggles.

At the time of our enumeration exercise, 46 per cent of Pardhi households had been enumerated by the officials for Census 2011.³² However, this figure by itself does not reflect the actual percentage of families covered in the Census. Since we conducted our survey (October-December 2010) before the census survey of the homeless population (held in February 2011), we do not have data on the number of homeless population among Pardhis who have been enumerated for Census 2011.³³

³² This includes those families who confirmed that they had been enumerated but were not in possession of the acknowledgment slips.

³³ Fifteen enclaves of Pardhis that were located mainly on footpath or under the flyover were excluded from the first round of 2011 Census enumeration and were to be included at the time of enumeration of the homeless population in Mumbai.

Despite the above shortcoming of our study, the data obtained from Pardhi enclaves located in non-notified but larger slum settlements wherein enumeration took place in the first round shows that many Pardhi families living in these settlements have been excluded from enumeration. At the time of our study, of 356 Pardhi families settled in these slums, 201 families had been enumerated, that is, only 56 per cent had been counted for Census 2011. This exclusion has largely taken place not due to the callousness of the Census officials but largely to their arbitrary decisions of categorising families on basis of their dwelling structures in the homeless population category.³⁴

In the eight notified settlements, 95 per cent of the Pardhi families had been enumerated during the first round of census.

Difficulties faced in acquiring Identity Cards

Pardhis in Mumbai have remained largely a disenfranchised section. Exercising political rights such as voting and accessing some of the

³⁴ Pardhi informants at Ambujwadi, the biggest Pardhi enclave in Mumbai, told us that the Census officials omitted dwelling structures of many Pardhi households from the housing census due to their shabby, *katcha* and dilapidated appearance despite being informed that the families had been staying at the same place for many years.

most basic public goods and services provided by the State is dependent on possession of identity documents. Since most Pardhis do not have these official documents, they stand deprived of basic entitlements associated with citizenship.

The chief problem in securing documents like voting card, ration card, caste certificates is bureaucratisation and red-tapism. A tedious route has to be followed which involves passing through a maze of offices and officials for securing state documents. These processes of documentation of citizenship have opened up an arena of overwhelming complication. The language of the state communicated through the forms, the bureaucratisation of the procedures and the nature of demands placed for acknowledging the legitimacy of their claims make the process of securing documentation very stressful for the poor and illiterate Pardhi.

In case of most ID cards, the applicants are required to produce other official documents either for verification of their personal identity or of their usual place of residence. However, few Pardhis have identity proofs and fewer have any proof of residence, resulting in cumulative difficulties in acquiring different official documents.

It was because of these difficulties that despite having resided for a considerable period within the city, many Pardhis could not secure even basic documents and ID cards such as ration card and voter's ID.

This does not mean that Pardhis do not recognise the importance of these documents. In fact, it would not be an exaggeration to say that Pardhis revere official documents. For them these papers have instrumental importance of legitimising their claims over social welfare services. The sense of urgency with which they try to possess these documents and the complexity of official procedures of obtaining the same have led them to rely on "brokers" from within the community and external agencies. These educated middlemen fill forms, visit offices and assemble documents for verification on behalf of the Pardhi families in exchange for considerable amount of payment. A broker charges anywhere between Rs. 300-600 for a ration card and Rs 500-2000 for getting a voter's ID made.³⁵ It is not unusual to find the agents mobilising funds within a Pardhi enclave to be paid as bribes to the concerned government officials.

³⁵ Quotations on basis of information obtained from Pardhis enclaves at Jai Ambe Nagar, Girgaum Chowpatty, Lamington Road and Wadi Bunder

While the system of brokerage may represent a convenient arrangement for many families, it has its own faults. The most immediate risk is that of being cheated and duped by the middlemen. In one of the enclaves in Eastern suburbs, the community leader of the Pardhis has turned into a broker, extorting large amount of money from those willing to pay and refusing to help those who could not release the requisite payment, thereby establishing a new set of power relations within the community. Such outcomes of brokerage system have led to tensions and antagonism among the Pardhis. The long term impact of such extra-legal processes is that they erode the possibilities of collective struggles contesting the policies and procedures of the official institutions that make it excruciatingly difficult for the urban poor to access public goods and services. Many Pardhis are frustrated with the extortionist tactics of middlemen but few criticize the bureaucratic system and its anti-poor orientation that creates scope for briberisation and brokerage.

Thus, the process of securing documents appears chaotic and subject to arbitrariness and opportunism of officials and middlemen. This system can be considerably corrected by streamlining the process of securing different types of identity documents and instituting an organised forum for helping the illiterate and the poor to make sense of the official rules and norms.

It is important to note that obtaining official documents to legitimise one's demand for public goods and services is largely a symbolic step and means very little if not backed with the actual provision of State assistance. For instance, a family that has a ration-card may be refused its quota of grains and kerosene at the ration shop. Thus, citizenship becomes substantive and meaningful only when formal recognition of rights is backed by a more equitable distribution of resources ensured through the social welfare policy of the State.

Chapter VII

Policing and Criminalisation

Criminality in modern society is largely understood in terms of the perpetrated acts of the individual rather than a supposed characteristic of any social group. What is also acceptable is a study identifying the general conditions under which acts of crime are committed by individuals. However, in case of many denotified and nomadic groups, there is an institutionalised prejudice against entire communities that brands them as criminals. A societal suspicion of the lifestyle of certain communities has over time also been tagged with tacit, and sometimes direct, support of the State. The acontextual reading of the criminal acts and tendency to set primary deviants on the path of secondary deviance has been an outcome of the implicit bias of the State.

Pardhis are one of the most stigmatised groups even within the larger category of NT/DNTs. The attitude of general public towards Pardhis is that of suspicion. The mass media, especially print, has fuelled the popular imagination of the Pardhis as gangs of expert thieves and robbers. The police force, the most visible and ubiquitous order-

enforcing and discipline maintaining apparatus of the state is significantly influenced by such dominant stereotype of Pardhis. Several police officers have mentioned to us that their training manuals continue to characterise Pardhis and other denotified communities as perpetual thieves and bad characters.³⁶

Studying crime among Pardhis

The rate of criminal activities undertaken by Pardhis who are usual residents of the city is difficult to determine because that would require either police statistics about the social identity of criminals or information from the community itself about their involvement in criminal acts. Moreover, one would need information on the crime

³⁶ Another instance that makes evident this bias in the police force is the study undertaken by state Criminal Investigation Department (CID), Pune, on the Phase Pardhi tribe in Maharashtra the objective of which was to find out the extent to which the community has benefited from the state government's welfare schemes and *whether it is still involved in crimes*. The interest of CID in the welfare aspect is an aberration and a secondary objective, if not outrightly a covering disguise, to its concern with tracking the activities and actors within the community.

rate in other communities to make cross-community comparative study in order to ascertain if Pardhis are a distinct social category that engage in criminal activities in more than an average manner. Such studies have been used in the past to either argue that Pardhis have a “tendency towards crime” or to counter-state that Pardhis are as much prone to crime as other social groups, thereby refuting the criminality labels used to brand the community.

While such a comparative study would have been helpful, we realised that it lay beyond the possibilities of our research. Also, since our principle aim was to build a rapport with the community in the first year of fellowship, we could not afford to antagonise them by delving into exact statistics of criminal activity among them. Moreover we ourselves did not want to look at Pardhis through the prism of criminality. The purpose of the research was not to engage in a discourse of criminality that has always been central to the intellectual construction of Pardhi community but to shift the focus towards understanding them as marginalised actors in a revanchist city.

Instead of directing the course of our study, we once again allowed to be led by the data

coming from the field. This chapter is shaped by the stories, documents and tidbits emerging from within the community and from their neighbours, local leaders, social workers and police officials. The focus of our understating has not been so much on ascertaining the rate of crime among the Pardhis as much as on identifying the nature of the crime with which some Pardhis are charged. Our study has also led us to consider the process of social construction of the category of crime and deviance.

The Nature of Crime

The popular imagination about Pardhis is that of organised Pardhi gangs engaged in robbery and theft. But we have found very little evidence of such “organised gangs” of Pardhis. Throughout the course of our interaction with key informants across more than thirty settlements, we have been informed only of three such cases in which some of the members were implicated as having participated in organised robbery.

Instead of gangs, there are cases of group theft in which Pardhis may be involved, but those too are rare instances. By the admittance of most of the key informants, the dominant form of acts of crime among

Pardhis is not large scale robbery, but rather subsistence thieving that may involve isolated cases of pick-pocketing by individuals, selling public or private property such as cable wires, metal spare parts used in construction to the *bhangarwala*.³⁷

Community reactions

There is a general sympathy with subsistence thieving which is seen as a means of meeting shortfalls of income earned through labour. But thieving is not regarded as a substitute for the labour. There are also social pressures to not engage in it since it attracts attention of the police and neighbours and can subject the entire enclave to surveillance, humiliation and prejudice. There is a distinct readiness among the Pardhis to critically reflect on the practices of some of their fellow Pardhi men who engage in regular thefts. But there is also a definite frustration among the members about the way the police detains, humiliates Pardhis with almost an impunity and the about the regularity with which the society brands them with a singular tag of criminals.

³⁷ Hindi word. Literally means keeper of the waste mart.

Criminalisation in everyday life

The bias of the police penetrates in the everyday interactions between the police and the Pardhi community in Mumbai. Of the eighteen Pardhi settlements where freer discussions between the researchers and respondents about the involvement of Pardhis in crime could be held, members of fourteen settlements complained that they routinely face or have faced harassment by the police.³⁸ Pardhis are routinely picked up by the police on account of suspicion and without preliminary investigation that is otherwise required to arrive at reasonable satisfaction to make an arrest. There have been cases of “combing operations” in which police have rounded up adult and teenage members of the Pardhi community at night for making collective inquiries about crimes committed in the area or elsewhere. The interrogation that should take place within the confines of a police lock-up is held in full view of members of other communities living in the settlement.

³⁸ These fourteen settlements include the enclaves at Lallu bhai Compound, Ambujwadi, Gandhi Garden, Andheri Flyover, Khar station, Wadi Bunder, Gateway of India, Lamington Road, Kapaswadi, Goregaon, Kandivali Station, Jai Ambe Nagar, Appapada and Mafatlal Centre.

It is important to distinguish prejudice directed against cultural markers of a social group from that which is directed against the urban poor. Do the routine acts of detainment and interrogation of Pardhis in cases of theft and robbery signify a prejudice towards the poor (as most Pardhis live in destitute and crowded conditions in the city) or do they reveal expression of prejudice by the state agencies against the ethnic group identified as Pardhis?

The Pardhis themselves perceive the routine arrests and interrogation of their fellow ethnics as an outcome of their social identity. According to them, these acts of the police constitute ethnic discrimination since members of other social groups with whom the Pardhis share location of residence and work, and thus a similar class position, are less likely to be picked up with as much frequency in cases of theft.

Three short case studies have been presented below to highlight the prejudice and harassment faced by Pardhis at the hands of the police in course of their everyday life. Cases have been picked up from three different types of Pardhi enclaves - 1) located in a notified settlement, 2) located in a non-notified slum and 3) located on a

pavement. These three case studies have been chosen in order to highlight commonality of experience of stigma across economically differentiated Pardhi enclaves. The names of these enclaves have not been divulged on ethical grounds.

Case 1: Enclave A

Enclave A, a slum rehabilitation project in Mankhurd comprising of multi-storied buildings, is a site of resettlement for around 30-40 Pardhi households, most of whom are concentrated in two buildings. At the time of our data collection, they had completed five to six years of residence in this enclave. Around four years back, the police rounded up only the Pardhi men living in the two buildings and made a collective inquiry about a case of highway robbery. Some of the men were marched to the police station and had their thumbprints taken. While such an incident was not marked by novelty for these men as they had faced similar experiences during the course of their stay on the pavements and in the slums of Mumbai, it did carry a disturbing significance. The Pardhis were disappointed by the fact that after becoming legal occupants of a flat, sending their children to school and earning a livelihood through

honest means, in other words, even after settling into a lifestyle that was viewed with less suspicion by the wider society, they had been subjected to similar act of discrediting which devalued their social identity and status.

Case 2: Enclave B

In the biggest settlement of Pardhis, Enclave B, located in Western Suburbs within a larger slum settlement, there are numerous cases of detainment on account of suspicion, combing operations, custodial beatings and of occasional custodial deaths. As per the accounts narrated by the Pardhis and their neighbours in this settlement, it was clear that the residents of the enclave were regularly subjected to such interventions, often violent, of the police.

Many of the cases under which Pardhi residents of Enclave B have been interrogated or detained are related to organised robberies within the city, at its outskirts or on highways. But, we were told by the key informants within the settlement that while some of the Pardhis have engaged in acts of robbery, there is no system of Pardhi gangs as believed by the police and implied by the media reports. The people

were critical of the practice of indiscriminately branding every Pardhi living in this enclave rather than punishing only those who were actually involved in the criminal acts.

It is only over the years that with some amount of organisation of leadership and negotiation between community leaders and police officials that some peace has been brokered. One of the mechanisms of such arrangement has been the conversion of some individuals as informers to police.

Case 3: Enclave C

A small Pardhi enclave that exists under a flyover living in visible destitution has been the most vocal critic of the police. The men are regularly picked up for interrogation or detained on suspicion at night time. Two men also bore the marks of alleged in-custody beating. Almost all the men have has their fingerprints taken in the nearby police station. At the time of our last visit to this site (in March 2011), we were told that only one person in the last 6 years has been convicted for theft, that too for stealing manhole covers to sell to a local *bhangarwala*. If one compares the rate of interrogation and detainment by the police

and the actual conviction in this case, it may indicate the bias of police in its dealings with this community.

Police informers: Surveillance from the inside

In almost all the Pardhi enclaves, there are designated police informers from within the community. In certain enclaves, being an informer is a precarious job since it may invite the enmity of the Pardhis who are engaged in illegal activities. On the other hand, in some enclaves, the informers have acquired a position of privilege within the community due to their “police connections” and may use this authority to extract benefits from fellow members. In any way, the impact of this arrangement is that the surveilled are now surveilling their own community. While it may serve as a cost effective and more streamlined way of acquiring information about the actual acts of crime, it has had unintended consequences for the informers and for social relations within the community.

Criminalising the poor

Under the Bombay Prevention of Begging Act, 1959, begging is treated as an offence,

allowing arrest and imprisonment of beggars (See Box 7.1 for legal definition of begging). This amounts to criminalisation of beggars. The law presumes that beggary is, in all cases, taken up as a profession. It does not consider the helplessness of the people who beg due to old age, poverty, handicaps.

Box 7.1: Definition of Begging

Under the Bombay Prevention of Begging Act, 1959, begging is defined as

1. Soliciting or receiving alms, in a public place whether or not under any pretence such as singing, dancing, fortune telling, performing or offering any article for sale;
2. Entering on any private premise for the purpose of soliciting or receiving alms;
3. exposing or exhibiting, with the object of obtaining or extorting alms, any sore, wound injury, deformity of diseases whether of a human being or animal;
4. Having no visible means of subsistence and wandering, about or remaining in any public place in such condition or manner, as makes it likely that the person doing so exists by soliciting or receiving alms.
5. Allowing oneself to be used as an exhibit for the purpose of soliciting or receiving alms;

In every Pardhi enclave that we have visited there are several children or adults who have been detained by anti-begging squads at least once. The adults, many of them being very aged, are sent to the beggar's home and the children to the observation home; punishment in the former case and rehabilitation in the latter.

Moreover, the Act also implicitly assumes that the homeless are invariably beggars. Thus, many Pardhis who live on footpaths or under flyovers in the open have complained that they or their family members have been picked up by the police squads under the charge of begging simply because they were homeless and living in public places. One of the key informants and the leader of a fairly large Pardhi enclave in the eastern suburbs even told us that often the Act is used to threaten and discourage the "encroachers" from settling on public or private property.

Thus, due to high incidence of begging and homelessness among the Pardhis living in Mumbai they are prone to be arrested under the Begging Act and treated further as criminals.

Conclusion

Stigmatisation and poverty faced in *muluk* are important reasons for the migration of Pardhis to the city. However, the anonymity and participation in capitalist economy of the city have not erased societal and state prejudice against them. The narratives offered not only by Pardhis but also by police officers point to the persistence of harassment of the community as a result of their social identity. Instead of treating acts of crime committed by few Pardhis as individual acts, the police, media and media consumers criminalise the entire community that is then subjected to both passive and physically violent surveillance by the state.

Since most Pardhi households are poor, assetless and homeless residents of the city, they also face the general prejudice against the urban poor and experience violent uprootment of their everyday lives at the time of demolitions, evictions and arrests by the anti-begging squad teams. In effect, many Pardhis find themselves positioned at the junction of their discredited social identity as Pardhi and class identity as "encroachers," which contributes to a qualitatively different experience of stigma in the urban context.

Chapter VIII

Matters of Concern and Action

The main purpose of this study was to render visibility to the population of denotified and nomadic tribes settled in Mumbai city. While we have focused on Pardhis, the findings will be indicative of the nature of problems faced by members of other NT/DNT groups residing in urban areas.

Urban poverty among the Pardhis is crucially linked to assetlessness, poverty and poor employment conditions in the rural areas. Thus, any policy attempting to address urban poverty cannot exist in isolation from considerations of immiseration in rural areas. Policies directed towards welfare of the NT/DNT population settled in rural areas will have a crucial bearing on the rate and quality of rural-urban migration. But they are unlikely to lead to reverse migration (urban-rural migration) among the NT/DNTs.

In course of our study, we asked Pardhis if they would like to go back to *muluk* if the government provides them housing, land and productive resources to cultivate the

land. Most of them replied in the negative. Going back to agriculture as cultivators or labourers was not an option for most respondents. Moreover, unlike the village, the city offers them ease of transport and choice of several employment opportunities, even if they are not sufficiently remunerative. It is also not easy to discount the pull factors associated with Mumbai city. Even among the Pardhis there is a sense of prestige attached to urban settlement. Almost all Pardhi respondents emphasise on the fact that the stigma faced by them on account of their social identity is not so severe in urban areas, especially since anonymity characterises most social encounters in everyday life. Several of them have been staying in the city since two-three generations and thus, have come to perceive the city as their *muluk*. Thus, **any policy dealing with NT/DNTs should not aim for reverse migration but should rather try to address the specific issues faced by the urban settlers.**

Pardhis acutely experience the increasing revanchist nature of Mumbai city. Rendered

homeless and under the persistent threat of demolition of their *katcha* dwelling structures, they live as the “nowhere people” in the city “drifting around in a nowhere landscape” (Breman 2009: 20). They migrate to escape from rural poverty and conditions of prejudice faced in villages only to face the stigma attached to the homeless poor in the city. Even those families who have been living in the city since decades have not been able to formalise their claims to secure housing due to various reasons - constant movement within the city in order to find work, forced displacement in form of demolitions, lack of possession of identity documents that serve as evidence of residence in a place, etc. Poor housing status has negative repercussions for other aspects of their everyday life such as work, education and leisure.

Thus, the foremost demand posited by Pardhi respondents in our study is public housing at subsidised rates. Considering that homelessness is a characteristic of the residence of Pardhi community in Mumbai and, in all likelihood, of the various NT/DNT groups who have migrated to the city, **specific housing schemes that target this social category need to be introduced. Alternatively, housing schemes for the**

general poor should include these groups as a priority target. Any housing scheme for this group has to be integrated to work areas and patterns of the families and should take into account their strong preference to stay in proximity to households of closely related kin. At the same time, care should be taken that such schemes do not lead to ghettoisation of NT/DNTs.

The ubiquity of police interference with their everyday life is one of the problems that many Pardhi families have complained about. This has much to do with prevailing prejudice among the police against denotified tribes in general. Even today, the manuals used in police training schools incorporate colonial attitudes while presenting information on the implementation of Criminal Tribes Act and on the tribes branded under this Act. This serves to perpetuate the historically cultivated and commonly held prejudice against these communities. Thus, **there is a need to revise the curricula for police training and conduct sensitisation programmes for encouraging a more meaningful understanding of the historicity of stigma attached to denotified groups.**

Collective interrogation and public humiliation of Pardhis by the police on account of their suspicion or for eliciting information about so called “Pardhi gangs” is inexcusable. **The Scheduled Castes and Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989 should be evoked against officials who discriminate against DNCs on the basis of their social identity.**

Another disturbing aspect of law and order policy is the use of the Juvenile Justice Act (JJA) to separate children from parents. In principle the JJA stresses on family restoration. But in case of Pardhis, State practices justified in the name of the Act lead to a traumatic disruption for the household. Children who are caught begging or are presumed to be beggars are sent to children’s homes, often for months. This type of State intervention has disturbing consequences for the psyche of the child. At the time of the study, many Pardhi children who were confined to the children’s home at Dongri in Mumbai were scheduled to be transferred to children’s homes and hostels meant specifically for Pardhi children. One wonders if such caretaker policy of the State does not contribute to the social segregation of Pardhi children. The entire juvenile justice system is poorly disposed towards

Pardhi parents whom it sees as irresponsible citizens (and not just unfit parents). The concerns of parents are not given much consideration when it comes to transferring the children to “fit” institutions. It is not without basis that we say that **the use of the JJA is done to remove the poor and the homeless from the city rather than providing space for empathetic and constructive dialogue that seeks to reconcile concerns of both the State and the parent in the interest of the child.**

The most persistent problems related to education among the Pardhis, that is, illiteracy and poor enrolment and high drop-out rates, have to be dealt with in a multi-pronged manner. **There is a need to link vocational education with formal education in order to draw Pardhis towards mainstream education.** It has been noted that pre-primary education allows both parents and children to adjust to the discipline of schooling a later stage. Thus, **well-functioning balwadis in or near enclaves of denotified tribes are likely to encourage enrolment of children in primary schools.**

The tribal sub-plans hardly make a mention of population of tribals settled in the city.

One of the reasons for this anomaly may be that the category of tribe appears to be anachronistic vis-a-vis the category of the urban. However, it has to be noted that “scheduled tribe” is not only a social and cultural category but also conveys certain economic conditions of communities identified as such - that they are economically weaker sections of our society. Problems caused by adaptation to a modern economy and State are more in case of scheduled tribes that have migrated to the city. It is thus necessary that **tribal sub-plans or any sub-plan for NT/DNTs make provisions for members of these communities who have permanently migrated to the city.**

To avail of any welfare policy formulated for tribals or NT/DNT groups, a member of these groups has to possess a caste certificate. There is a two-fold problem in this case. Firstly, securing caste certificates is difficult for scheduled tribes and denotified communities settled in the city, not least because of the reigning official stereotype that a tribe cannot exist in urban space. Thus, almost all Pardhis who possess caste certificates have got it made from their *muluk* using local contacts with the village *panchayat* members. Considering that a

large population of scheduled tribes and NT/DNTs exists in the city, **regular campaigns to get caste certificates made through single-window clearance can be undertaken in the city itself.**

The second problem has to do with arbitrary classification of different Pardhi sub-groups into scheduled tribes and denotified tribes (or *vimukta jatis*). For instance, a Pardhi who names his sub-group as *Gaon* Pardhi (who reside in the village) or *Pal* Pardhi (who stay in tents in temporary camps) is given a denotified tribe status, while one who claims to be a Phase Pardhi (who are noose hunters) will be issued a scheduled tribe certificate. While sub-categories place the individuals in mutually exclusive administrative categories, the categories do not reflect mutually exclusive social and cultural groups. For instance, many of whom now call themselves as *Gaon* Pardhis because they insist that their parents were not nomadic and had settled in the periphery of villages, admit that the earlier generations of their ancestry were hunters and noose makers. Thus, **most of the administratively separated categories on basis of occupation and lifestyle within the Pardhi fold are overlapping anthropological categories** and by no rationale mandate an

easy classification into scheduled tribe and denotified tribe categories. The arbitrariness of administrative classification holds significant implications for their redistribution claims as well as for political strategies of alliance. Thus, **there is a need for a more uniform scheduling vis-à-vis Pardhis and also in case of other denotified groups.**

Pardhis in Mumbai are no more located on the margins of modern market-oriented economy. They are well-integrated into the mainstream, but in a way that places them at the bottom of economic hierarchy. This indicates that no struggle of the NT/DNTs can be complete without being adjoined to the struggle of the urban and rural poor directed against the neoliberal policies. This means that NT/DNTs hold stakes in different struggles - struggles of the urban poor against the revanchist city, struggles for food security, struggles against imprudent globalisation (the global recession of 2007-2009 dampened the activities of the real estate and telecom activities in the city which adversely affected employment opportunities for Pardhis who are usually employed as construction labourers in these industries), struggles for the rights of informal sector

labourers, struggles against privatisation of social sectors, etc.

But the politics of redistribution and recognition of NT/DNTs have taken a hit due to the several fissures in the leadership of the NT/DNTs. This has given a serious blow to possibilities of coalescence of NT/DNTs around an organisation committed to addressing the specific problems faced by them. The NT/DNTs have neither been transformed into a political force nor have their interests been co-opted by any other political group. As a result, their interests remain underrepresented in the democratic process of the country.

One of the major opportunities to correct the situation of political laxity with regard to problems of NT/DNTs in modern India milestones was presented with the formation of the **Renke Commission** which was **to study the socio-economic conditions of NT/DNTs across the country.** The Commission **submitted its report in July, 2008.** However, the **report has not yet been made public.** One of the ways to bring together disparate interest groups for the NT/DNT cause could be through pressuring the government to make the report public. Debate on the facts and recommendations of

the report can at the very least provide greater visibility to the problems faced by this section of society and may also lend a common ground for mobilisation of various NT/DNT communities to seek revision or implementation of demands.

Another platform for deliberation on demands and for encouraging common activity among the NT/DNT groups living in urban areas can be established in form of a **Resource Centre and Advocacy Cell**. Such a centre can serve to address the various issues faced by individual nomadic tribes/denotified families in course of their everyday life in the city. But most importantly it can play an active role in building the political agenda for NT/DNTs, raising the consciousness of the members in favour of their common interests and uniting them for common political action. The centre can contribute towards building an information base regarding migration and settlement of NT/DNTs in the city and documenting case studies of the problems faced by them. Tasks such as providing legal assistance in terms of legal advice and securing legal aid for the poorer sections of NT/DNTs, assisting in securing official identity documents and in lodging complaints in case of identity-based

harassment and discrimination, monitoring media reports, organising sensitisation campaigns in various institutions such as schools, colleges and police training centres can be undertaken by the centre. It can conduct or organise research on people's perspectives on rehabilitation, both in terms of housing and work, and convey it through advocacy to the government. It could seek participation in designing of projects and schemes that can have repercussions for NT/DNTs. **Such a centre could be established in a densely populated settlement of NT/DNT members and can hold regular meetings in the different areas across the city in order to become accessible to the NT/DNT population.** The office bearers of this centre should be drawn, as far as possible, from the youth of NT/DNT population.

Another political organisation that can serve the interest of the concerned group is trade union. Considering that most NT/DNT members are employed in the informal sector as casual labourers, trade unions can serve to protect the interests of this group.

One of the shortcomings of this report is the insufficient space allocated to identifying the specificity of the **problems faced by**

women in the Pardhi community. These women have to bear not only the stigma associated with poverty and their historically discredited community identity but are also subjected to the patriarchal violence within the community and to domestic violence at home. Participation of women in labour markets is laced with patterns and instances of gender-based discrimination, most noticeably in the form of gender gap in wages. Inadequate provision of basic civic amenities by the State has put considerable pressure on women as they have to make a greater effort to secure the basic services and goods for the household. For instance, due to absence of community taps in the settlement many Pardhi women walk long distances to secure water from other sources and some even have to beg for water. The absence of proper sanitation facilities is a source of great insecurity for women. Thus, it would not be wrong to say that **women face the brunt of urban poverty more intensely.**

Among the Pardhi women, these very frustrations have made them more vocal critics of the anti-poor character of urban planning of Mumbai. In almost all the meetings that we have held in the Pardhi

enclaves, majority of the participants have been women. Even in cases of problem solving which required visiting schools, municipal offices, collector's office, etc., it were the women who were in forefront in organising and vocalising the agenda of every task. Of course, one can trace the domination of Pardhi women's participation to mistrust, insecurity and uncertainty that Pardhi men face vis-à-vis the apparatuses of the State. Whatever be the reason, it has been our experience that organising women greatly helps in organising the community. **A sustained organisation for NT/DNT women can go a long way in contesting the unjust political and economic orders and in addressing the strategic needs of women.**

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Annexures

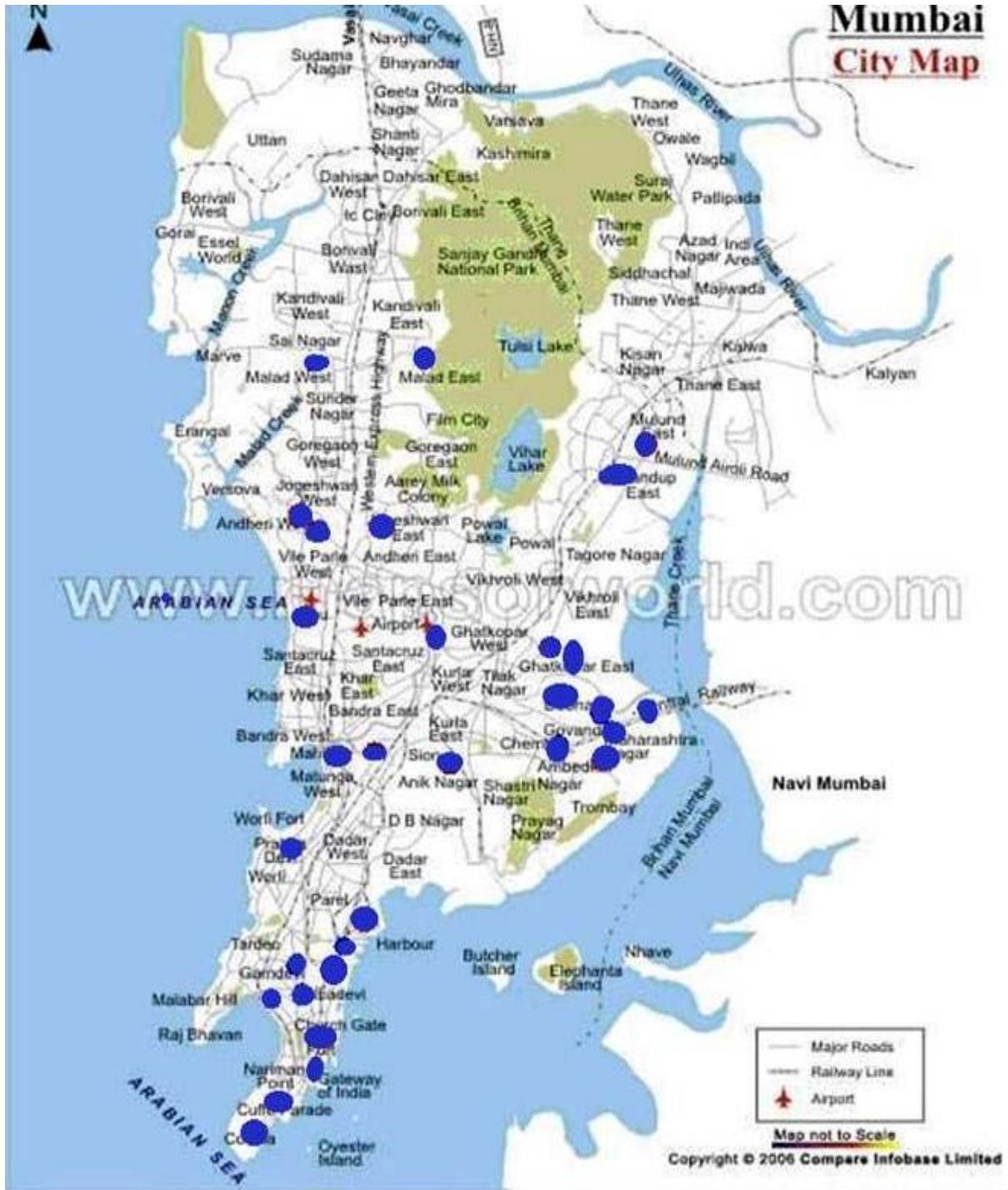
Annexure I

List of Denotified and Nomadic Tribes of Maharashtra

Denotified Communities	Nomadic Tribes
1. Berad 2. Bestar 3. Bhamta 4. Kaikadi 5. Kanjarbhat 6. Katwoo 7. Banjara 8. Raj Pardhi 9. Rajput Bhamta 10. Ramosi 11. Wadar 12. Waghri 13. Chhapparband (Muslim)	1. Gosavi 2. Beldar 3. Bharadi 4. Bhute 5. Chitrakathi 6. Garudi 7. Ghisadi 8. Golla 9. Gondhali 10. Gopal 11. Helve 12. Joshi 13. Kashi Kapdi 14. Kolhati 15. Mairal 16. Masanjogi 17. Nandiwale 18. Pangool 19. Rawal 20. Sikkalgar 21. Vaglale 22. Vaidu 23. Vasudev 24. Bhoi 25. Bahurupi 26. Thelari 27. Otari 28. Dhangar 29. Vanjari 30. Mariaiwale, Kadkalakshmi, Margammawale 31. Gihara/Gahara 32. Gusain/ Gosain 33. Muslim Madari, Garudi, Saapwale and Jadugar 34. Bharatiya Irani 35. Gawli, Muslim Gawli 36. Darweshi, Vaghwale-Shah (Muslim), Aswalwale

Annexure II

Location of Pardhi Enclaves in Mumbai Included in the Survey



*Location of Pardhis enclaves are denoted by blue circles.

Annexure III

Brief Descriptions of Pardhi Enclaves in Mumbai City

Section 1: Enclaves Included in the 2010-2011 Pardhi Survey

Appapada

Appapada is a large slum settlement in east Malad. The Pardhi enclave at Appapada is located on a mound at the outskirts of Borivali national park on land owned by the forest department. Families have been living here since two decades. They have access to civic amenities like water supply, sanitation facilities and electricity. Many of them have been allotted letters for relocation and rehabilitation.

Ambujwadi

It is located in Malad close to the MHADA colony. It is the biggest Pardhi enclave in Mumbai and also one of the oldest. Main source of water are the self-dug wells. Most houses have access to electricity. Caste panchayat holds considerable control over the members. Many criminal cases have been registered by the police against Pardhis here. Till some time back collective and public interrogation and beatings of Pardhis in this settlement was common. It faced large-scale demolition in 2004 but most families have managed to resettle.

Ambujwadi Patra Chawl

It is the notified slum adjunct to Ambujwadi slum. It came into being in 2004 and comprises of families who were able to provide proof of their pre- January 1995 residence at Ambujwadi.

Andheri Flyover

Families live below the flyover in precarious conditions and are prone to accidents in the ongoing traffic. They were displaced from a nearby slum settlement where they had been staying for several years at the time of construction of the flyover. Members of this enclave have

complained about regular police harassment. Almost all the elders and youth have fingerprint records in the nearby police station.

Bapu Nagar

This enclave is located in Vidya Vihar. Some of the families residing here were expelled from their villages in 1980s due to allegations of their involvement in local murder cases. Most families are engaged in small-scale hawking.

Ganesh Murti Nagar

It is large slum settlement located in Cuffe Parade area near a B.E.S.T. bus depot. Pardhi enclave comprises of non-recognised katcha dwellings and is located in proximity to several households of other communities who live in notified dwellings. Some Pardhi families have rented rooms here.

Garib Janta Nagar

It is located in Cuffe Parade, a posh area of Mumbai, amidst a larger slum settlement. It is a crowded enclave of katcha dwellings of bamboo and plastic. Many claim to have been living here since before 1995 but do not have the requisite documents.

Gateway of India Footpath

These families have been living around the gateway of India and Apollo Bunder area since two decades. Yet it is only in the last two years that some of the families have been able to secure homeless ration cards. Most are engaged in casual work as manual labourers. Some also earn their livelihoods as tourist guides and photographers. During the course of our study, three children and one pregnant lady living on this pavement were arrested under the charge of beggary and moved to Dongri remand home.

Ghatkopar Bridge

Their condition is similar to the Pardhis residing near Ramabai Colony.

Ghatkopar Footpath (opposite Ramabai Colony)

The families are from Osmanabad district. Most are engaged in casual labour. The rate of document possession among them is one of the worst amongst the Pardhi enclaves in Mumbai.

Girgaum Chowpatty (near Malabar Hill side)

The families put up temporary tents of plastic at night. They are engaged in self-employment (limbu-mirchi) and begging. The children are not enrolled in schools and also engage in beggary. The families are frequently evicted by the police and municipality, especially since their ragtag enclave is an eyesore for many Malabar hill residents who routinely complain to the police about their residence at chowpatty. Despite living a life of uncertainty and insecurity of livelihood and residence, the families refuse steadfastly to relocate elsewhere.

Goregaon

10 Pardhi families reside near the goregaon station on the footpath. Some of the families have relatives in Girgaum Chowpatty (near the Malabar side). Despite a government school nearby and the keenness of the Pardhi children to learn, they have not been enrolled in the school. Casual labour is the dominant form of work among the people here.

Indira Nagar

This enclave is located in Mulund the eastern suburbs of Mumbai. It is a regularised settlement that consists of many communities living together.

Jai Ambe Nagar

Jai Ambe Nagar is located in Mankhurd adjoining the Eastern Express Highway. This enclave has emerged and grown in the last decade. Adjoining the cluster of Pardhi households are enclaves of Wadaris and Vasudeos-other denotified communities. The other side of the settlement is dotted by households of dalits, members of Shindari community and some Muslim families. Almost all the dwellings in this settlement are katcha structures. Despite the dense agglomeration of the settlement, there is a lack of basic civic amenities like sanitation facilities and drinking water supply. The settlement is not electrified, though some households have secured a connection through extra-legal ways.

Juhu (near Royal Hotel)

The enclave at Juhu comprises of a mix of a few Pardhi families who stay in pucca legalised housing amidst many who have katcha non-recognised dwelling structures.

Kandivali Station

It is a squatter settlement on Kandivali railway tracks comprising of only Pardhi households. The families have been living here since past 4-5 years. There are no dwelling structures. Plastic sheets and blankets are used to cover up at night. None of the children are enrolled in schools. Possession rate of official documents is very dismal.

Kapaswadi

This enclave is located on the footpath near ABC colony. Some of the families are engaged in basket making. Begging seems to be common among children and old men. In this enclave, we came across a Pardhi young man with polio who had cleared his 12th standard exam but had not been able to secure a stable job.

Kapaswadi (on Juhu-Versova Link Road)

It is a pavement community located close to the above enclave. Its members are mostly from Karnataka region and Maharashtra-Karnataka. They hardly interact or inter-dine with the members of the enclave near ABC colony who are from Marathwada region in Maharashtra, presumably due to salient cultural and linguistic differences.

Khar (Regularised settlement)

It comprises of only three families. Earlier residents of the Khar footpath, they were able to legalise their self-made single-storied *pucca* houses due to availability of necessary identity documents.

Khar Station

The families here live, work and sleep on the pavements outside the crowded Khar station. They earn their livelihood mainly through garland making and at times by engaging in casual work. Children do not go to school.

Lallu Bhai Compound

LBC is a huge public housing complex constructed for rehabilitation of families displaced due to various infrastructure and real estate projects. Most of the Pardhi families settlement here were relocated from Mahim, Elphinstone, Matunga, Cotton Green and Reay Road. They were participants of a social mobilisation of pavement dwellers begun by National Federation of Slum Dwellers, SPARC and Mahila Milan. While the Pardhi residents are proud of their journey from pavement to their own house in the city, they are also disillusioned by the few instances of harassment faced by them at the hands of the police. Despite close proximity to public and private schools in the area, many Pardhi children do not have a regular schooling.

Lamington Road Footpath

It is a pavement community involved in self employment and casual work. The families have been living in Mumbai since many years and to have arrived to this pavement after multiple displacements.

Mafatlal Road

The families here live on the pavements outside the Mafatlal and Air India buildings. They have no place to cook food and have to subsist on begging or buying small portions from nearby food stalls. Some children attend school. Most of the families here are single-mother households. Women in this enclave have reported sexual and physical abuse by beggars and drunkards.

Mankhurd Transit Camp or Patra Chawl

It is a massive transitional housing for the population dispossessed due to the world Bank's MUTP project and who await allotment of permanent and affordable housing. The Pardhi families are clustered together though they share the neighbourhood with households of other communities. They have pucca houses but continue to face problems of access to clean drinking

water. The younger children are enrolled in balwadi centres. Very few children regularly attend school.

Patharwadi (behind Thakker's Hotel)

The families have been living in and around Girgaum *chowpatty* (beach) since more than a decade and in Mumbai since several decades. They came to settle in current location at Patharwadi some seven to eight years ago. They stay in katcha dwelling structures made of bamboo, plastic sheets and gunny bags. Many families engage in self employment and put up stalls to take advantage of the evening crowds at chowpatty. Most young children are enrolled schools with the help of salaam balaak trust, though the cases of dropout increase with age. The enclave frequently faces demolition drives. One of its members is languishing in jail under charge of participating in gang robbery.

Reay Road

The Pardhi enclave is located near jaibhim nagar. Some households have pucca dwelling structures, while others are living in katcha to semi-pucca state. Many send their children to local government schools. Economic differentiation between the Pardhi families here is stark.

Regal Cinema Circle

This group of families are constantly on the move in and around Shyama Prasad Mukherjee road and Apollo Bunder area. Very few children attend schools.

Siddhivinayak Temple Footpath

The families live on pavements. They are engaged in self employment (garland making) taking advantage of the huge crowds that visits Siddhivinayak temple. The children do not go to school.

S.P. Patel Road

It is close to the Wadi Bunder settlement, before the Dongri bridge. Is a notified slum comprising of families living in pucca single-storied houses. Some have even have television sets. During course of our study we followed the case of Dadiya Pawar, a school going kid who was arrested

by the police along with his uncle and friend who live in the same enclave under charges of mobile theft though his parents are convinced of his innocence.

Sukhsagar Bridge

The families live on the pavement and earn their livelihood by making and selling limbu-Mirchi garlands at the nearby signals. They share kinship ties with the community settled in Patharwadi enclave but everyday relations between the two are mostly tenuous.

Wadi Bunder

The families live in a highly precarious condition here since their hutments are located around and beneath a highly dilapidated and unsafe building. This settlement comprises only of Pardhi families. The enclave is under constant surveillance by the police. Some members are engaged in stealing vehicle parts parked around the dockyard area and selling them in black market. The residents face eviction due to the construction of a nearby flyover.

Section 2: Enclaves not included in the 2010-2011 Pardhi survey

Gandhi Garden

The Pardhi enclave here comprises of around 100 families. Though the settlement at Gandhi garden emerged in 2004-05, most of the families have lived most or all of their lives in Mumbai and have faced multiple displacements. These families had been part of massive protest at Azad Maidan against the state practice of forcibly evicting poor without rehabilitation and have since then settled down in Gandhi Garden in front of Mantralaya. Due to help from a local corporator they have been able to secure sanitation facilities at subsidised rates. Some children attend school. Some of the members have been arrested or interrogated by police in cases relating to pickpocketing and stealing small goods. Some of the youth here have learnt driving.

Antop Hill

The families here live in pucca houses besides Ganesh Nagar.

Amar Mahal Bridge

Around 30 families live under the Amar Mahal bridge in chembur and cover themselves with only plastic sheets and torn blankets at night. Beggary and drug abuse is commonplace among these families.

Grant Road

Around fifty families have been staying on the pavement outside the Grant Road (West) railway station since more than a decade. Many of the youth have been born in Mumbai. Children of some families have been admitted to residential schools by the missionaries with the consent and support of the parents. The families earn their livelihood by making and selling garlands, cheap wares like clips and toys in local trains.

Annexure IV

Pardhi Community Survey (2010) Form

पारधी समाज सर्वेक्षण (2010) फार्म

बस्ती का नाम और पता :

उत्तर देने वाले का नाम :

जाति और उप-जाति :

जिला (मुलुक) :

सदस्यों की संख्या : पुरुष _____ महिला _____ लड़का _____ लड़की _____ कुल _____

परिवार का व्यवसाय:

प्रकार	स्वरोजगार	वेतनभोगी (रेग्यूलर) काम	मजदूरी (कैजुअल)	अन्य
मुख्य				
सहायक				

दस्तावेज:

दस्तावेज	हाँ	नहीं
जन्म प्रमाण पत्र (संख्या लिखें)		
चुनाव आई. डी. कार्ड/पायती (संख्या लिखें)		
राशन कार्ड (प्रकार स्पष्ट करें)		
जाति प्रमाण पत्र (संख्या लिखें)		
पैन कार्ड (संख्या लिखें)		
बैंक अकाउंट - पासबुक		
जनगणना पायती 2011		

दिनांक

साक्षात्कार कर्ता का नाम

टाटा सामाजिक विज्ञान संस्थान (TISS), देवनार, मुंबई
घर बचाओ घर बनाओ आंदोलन (GBGBA), दादर, मुंबई

Annexure V

Types of Ration Cards

Items	White	Orange	BPL	Antyodaya	Annapurna
Wheat	-	20 kg (Rs 7.20 per kg)	20 kg (Rs 5 per kg)	20 kg (Rs 2 per kg)	Free (5 kgs)
Rice	-	15 kg (Rs 9.60 per kg)	15 kg (Rs 6 per kg)	15 kg (Rs 3 per kg)	Free (5 kgs)
Sugar	-		500 gm per person (Rs 13.50 per kg)	500 gm per person (Rs 13.50 per kg)	

*Source: Process Documentation of Ration Kruti Samiti

Annexures VI 1-VI 11

Annexure VI-1: A “nowhere” home: A footpath family outside Grant Road station



Annexure VI-2: The Appapada Pardhi enclave on the small hill adjoining Sanjay Gandhi National Park



Annexure VI-3: A typical katcha dwelling of a Pardhi family



Courtesy: Matthew

Annexure VI-4: The inside of a Pardhi home in the Mankhurd Transit Camp



Courtesy: Vikas Jadhav

Annexure VI-5: Cluster of Pardhi households in the Jai Ambe Nagar slum settlement



Annexure VI-6: Aftermath of slum demolition of Jai Ambe Nagar settlement in 2009



Annexure VI-7: A Pardhi family selling flower garlands on a local train station



Annexure VI-8: A Pardhi family with its wares on an evening at Girgaum Chowpatty



Annexure VI-9: (Left) Pardhi women living under the Andheri flyover source water from a nearby stationed water tank; Annexure VI-10: a Pardhi child filling gutter water for household chores at Jai Ambe Nagar



Annexure VI-11: Dice games: A common type of entertainment for Pardhis that often involves gambling



Annexure VII

Enclave –wise possession of basic identity documents among Pardhis in Mumbai

Name of the Enclave	Number of households	Total Population	Birth Certi. (%)	Election Card (%)	Ration Card (%)	Caste Certi. (%)	Pan card (%)	Bank a/c (%)
Appapada	28	153	14	89	82	11	21	11
Ambujwadi	221	1071	27	90.5	85	9.5	10	8
Ambujwadi Patra Chawl	18	88	17	100	100	17	72	50
Andheri Flyover	48	210	29	12.5	33	2	0	2
Bapu Nagar	8	37	0	100	100	0	0	0
Ganesh Murti Nagar	13	68	15	31	38.5	0	8	15
Garib Janta Nagar	29	141	55	52	90	48	7	7
Gateway of India Footpath	34	137	18	0	44	0	3	6
Ghatkopar Bridge	12	62	0	17	17	0	0	0
Ghatkopar Footpath (opposite Ramabai Colony)	94	468	1	65	79	1	24.5	1
Girgaum Chowpatty (near Malabar Hill side)	15	82	20	73	100	0	0	13
Goregoan	10	42	10	0	10	0	0	0
Indira Nagar	19	97	0	100	95	0	10.5	10.5
Jai Ambe Nagar	41	174	24	83	98	27	93	12
Juhu (near Royal	30	183	53	60	60	73	20	23

Hotel)								
Kandivali Station	5	25	0	0	0	0	0	0
Kapaswadi	42	168	29	29	12	24	2	12
Kapaswadi (on Juhu-Versova Link Road)	16	60	19	6	19	0	0	6
Khar (Regularised settlement)	3	14	33	100	100	67	67	33
Khar station	23	114	13	4	96	0	26	43.5
Lallu Bhai Compound	53	397	4	98	98	0	0	91
Lamington Road Footpath	7	30	71	14	14	0	0	0
Mafatlal Road	18	74	22	28	68	11	0	11
Mankhurd Transit Camp or Patra Chawl	80	378	1	0	7.5	0	35	4
Patharwadi (behind Thakker's Hotel)	21	96	48	9.5	95	62	52	9.5
Reay Road	63	396	33	68	63.5	0	32	32
Regal Cinema Circle	11	41	0	0	18	0	0	0
Siddhivinayak Temple Footpath	9	57	11	33	11	11	0	0
S.P. Patel Road	11	109	82	100	100	18	0	45.5
Sukhsagar Bridge	5	22	0	0	20	0	0	0
Wadi Bunder	31	195	39	39	32	13	0	19

Annexure VIII

Minutes of Meeting on Agenda for Action-Research with Denotified Communities in Maharashtra

On 21st February, 2011, a meeting of activists, academicians and students was held in Tata Institute of Social Sciences to delineate an agenda for action-research on issues faced by the denotified tribes and communities settled in rural and urban areas in Maharashtra. TISS fellows presented a snippet of their ongoing study with denotified tribes, specifically Pardhis, settled in Mumbai city. A general framework of further action-research, the scope of which extends to both rural and urban areas, was also discussed. The participants provided valuable insights and suggestions on the same.

The key points that emerged in the meeting are as follows:

Terminology

- There was some contestation to the use of the term “denotified communities” (DNCs) by the Fellows to refer to communities notified under the Criminal Tribes Act. The Fellows were in favour of the DNC label over denotified tribes (DNTs) to refer to the groups notified under the Criminal Tribes Act because some criminalised groups have been part of the caste society. eg. Mang garudi in Maharashtra. Some participants were in favour of using the term DNTs instead of DNCs.
- There was a general agreement that all denotified tribes should be listed under the ST category. The separation of administrative categories of STs and DNTs has been the cause of much confusion.
- There was a strong opinion that all Pardhis are *adivasis*. The use of different administrative categories- STs and DNTs- for classifying different sub-groups among the broader Pardhi fold is highly problematic.

Research

- The participants listed many other places (besides the ones that the participants have covered in their study) where DNC settlements are to be found in Mumbai city. It is clear that the population of DNCs in the city is severely underestimated by the government. There is also a need to collect data on other DNCs so that a broader picture of the situation of DNCs as a socio-economic group can be arrived at.
- TISS can contribute valuably in terms of documentation, research and publication. Most of the information on denotified communities was produced in the colonial period and is interspersed with misinformation and prejudice. There is a dearth of factual information on the history of various DNTs as well as on their current socio-economic status, cultural life and cognitive processes among them and nature of their aspirations. A conceptually empowered and field-sensitive research would require collaboration of TISS with seasoned activists who can introduce the researchers to the field and provide insights as key informants.
- Community Mapping and Baseline surveys should be conducted all over Maharashtra and for all denotified (14) and nomadic tribes (28).
- Need to take a historical perspective to understand their present mindset and behaviour.
- Need to understand the migration status among the DNTs, the motives behind migration and the processes through which they adopt different livelihood practices with changing physical and social spaces.
- Need to understand their patterns of thought, perception and evaluation which have been influenced by the long-drawn process of stigma experience and stigma management.
- Need to document the cases of atrocities on DNCs by state apparatuses and other sections of society.
- It is necessary to study the conviction rate among DNC members arrested for different violations (Laxman Mane provocatively termed DNCs as “Ready-Made Criminals” who are forced into a life of criminality by the police). Thus, it is important to unearth the real reasons for the arrest of DNC members.

Education

- The immediate area of intervention should be education.

- TISS can facilitate a survey and an in-depth study on the educational status among the DNCs.
- Mr. Raju Korde suggested that in the settlements that the Fellows have surveyed intervention can be made at the beginning of the next academic year (2011-12) at schools in Mumbai (in June and July) to ensure that children from DNCs are enrolled in the nearest government school.
- Laxman Gaikwad emphasised that efforts to improve the educational status among the DNCs is adapted to the needs and work pattern of the family. For example, mobile schools can be started that hold classes for the children in the afternoon. An important supplement of primary education is provision of nutritious meals to the students. Also to encourage parents to forego the reward derived from the earning activity of the child, the government can grant “scholarships” to parents as an incentive for them to send their children to schools.
- Mr. Renke emphasised the need for provision of “relevant education”. This involves fusing formal education with vocational training for students from DNCs so as to build their employable skills. The training should also co-opt the traditional skills of these communities.

Housing and Rehabilitation

- Mr. Renke and Mr. Laxman Gaikwad stressed the need for encouraging DNCs to give up their itinerant lifestyle and establish more durable settlements. This is a preliminary need for sustaining educational and socio-economic development of DNCs.
- Their rehabilitation should not be done within the confines of the market principles but rather through co-operative efforts. Once people are settled they can be encouraged to contribute collectively towards reconstruction of their own lives. In such a co-operative model, there is a greater likelihood of emergence of leadership from within.
- In context of Mumbai, Mr. Raju Korde stressed the need for organising the DNCs in a collective struggle to demand housing as a basic right. At the same time, those households who are granted free housing under government schemes should be strongly discouraged from selling their houses.

- In light of the resolutions taken by many gram sabhas in Maharashtra against settlement of Pardhis and other DNCs within or near their villages, Mr. Korde suggested collecting evidence on the same and bring it to the attention of the Supreme Court.

Other Key Points:

- The participants of the meeting have agreed to give in-depth interviews to the TISS fellows about the general conditions of DNTs in Maharashtra state.
- Based on more comprehensive research and deliberation, TISS can develop a framework for the rehabilitation of DNTs and submit it to the government.
- A meeting or a seminar may be called in July this year for presentation and discussion of more concrete ideas for further research and action in relation of denotified tribes.

Participants

1. Avinash Gaikwad	Activist	Maharashtra
2. Balkrishna Renke,	Ex-chairperson National Commission for Denotified, GOI Nomadic and Semi-nomadic Tribes	
3. Chandrakant Puri	Faculty Member	SNDT
4. Dr. S. Parasuraman	Director	TISS
5. Laxman Mane	Activist	Maharashtra
6. Laxman Gaikwad	Activist	Maharashtra
7. Ram Rathod	Faculty	TISS
8. Vijay Raghavan	Faculty	TISS
9. Paankhi Agrawal	Fellows	TISS
10. Mayank Sinha	Fellows	TISS



A *basti* of Pardhis in Mumbai

“The common argument that crime is caused by poverty is a kind of slander on the poor.”

H. L. Mencken