

## Chapter 31

### Shelter-Related Infrastructural Needs of Women in Low-Income Settlements of Bombay

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The issue of shelter-related amenities is linked to the urban problems and the political ideology of the state. The existing power and social relations in class, patriarchy, and culture affect the shaping of built environment, and women are adversely affected by these factors. Patriarchy is its most expressive in the institution of family to which the concepts of shelter and infrastructure are closely linked. Women's contribution as reproducers is not valued and as producers is not recognized, resulting in the invisibility of their needs in policy.

The growing feminist awareness of the planning of environment has led to many hypothetical solutions. This paper examines several within the reality of the sociocultural context of low-income settlements of Bombay. The aims of the study are: (a) to analyze how the amenities provided by the state in the settlements fulfill the needs of women; (b) to identify the chores for which immediate relief is required and culturally acceptable; and (c) to explore the women's response to proposed new amenities to improve the quality of their lives and provide necessary infrastructure for a non-sexual division of labor.

Long-term structural changes are needed in the society to improve the status of women, including a reformulation of housing policy addressing gender issues. Certain practical measures are suggested in the present context. However, a holistic gender-aware approach would require joint efforts of professionals, and feminist activists, and other progressives.

#### Conceptual Framework

The need for shelter-related infrastructure cannot be seen in isolation. It is closely linked to the urban problems of housing, which in turn are closely linked to the political ideology of the policy makers. The present deteriorating housing situation is proof of this fact and therefore needs to be critically examined.

The development model adopted by India is of a mixed economy but in reality negates all socialist measures, clearly leaning toward capitalist policies. This is most apparent in a city like Bombay. As a result of maximum industrialization, it has expanded into one of India's fastest growing urban centers, with maximum capital accumulation and the most unequal distribution of land. The problem is further aggravated by the continuing arrival of migrants from rural areas, because of lopsided economic development benefiting only urban areas. The land is concentrated in the hands of few agencies. With

their manipulative power, prices have risen phenomenally, compelling the working class, especially unorganized labor, to occupy any available vacant lands and form slum colonies. The upper classes of the society make use of this cheap labor, but neither they nor the government wish to improve the quality of their lives by providing better housing or infrastructure. During the pre-independence and early independence period, the state authorities did provide formal housing for the working class population, but soon this became inadequate. The present government policy is to dispense with government-built formal housing, and instead finance housing through the newly formed housing banks, encouraging them to buy from the private builders at market rates. Needless to say, the low-income population will never have access to formal housing. "The nexus that exists between the rich in the city, the higher echelons of bureaucracy and the politicians belies any possibility of a people oriented rational housing policy (Jha: 1986, p. 146)."

Women are the worst affected, suffering the property relations of class and the property and social relations of a patriarchal culture. Women's access to housing is mediated through their relationships to males—father, husband, or son. Patriarchy is its most expressive in the institution of family, to which the concept of housing is closely linked. There exists a strict hierarchical order in the family: the husband or the father-in-law is at the top of the ladder and the women are at the bottom, and labor is strictly divided based on sex. Family also conveys a set of values attached to this division of labor. A home becomes a strong medium to keep women dependent, and they suffer the deprivation and oppression to retain shelter. Women's reproductive role (biological and social) is not valued economically and culturally; their productive roles as wage earner are not recognized; and therefore the needs of amenities like crèches are not taken seriously.

With the World Bank investing a large amount of money in the low-income housing projects, in the last five years the issue of housing is on the political agenda of the Indian government, as in other Third World countries. To study gender awareness in planning the infrastructural amenities, we decided to approach women in the housing settlements with the following aims:

1. To identify women's needs in the low- and middle-income housing settlements of Bombay for the physical infrastructural social amenities.

2. To see how the existing amenities help women in their daily lives, and to pinpoint inadequacies.
3. To examine the existing planning standards stipulated by the state housing policy.
4. To explore the response of the women to a new set of proposed amenities that would help to improve the quality of their present lives and change their social status.

## **Existing Planning Standards for Provision of Infrastructure**

### **Development Plan of Bombay**

The Bombay Municipal Corporation stipulates the standard for all the development activities of Bombay by devising Development Plan and Development Control Rules, including the planning standards for the infrastructure, i.e., the ratio of minimum plot area for an amenity to a certain number of population. The amenities include playgrounds, primary and secondary schools, health and medical facilities, markets, libraries, fire stations, parking, lots, cinema theaters, burial and cremation grounds, road depots, and welfare centers, including a gymnasium facility. The welfare center is the only amenity in the existing settlements which could be, and which is very occasionally, used for women's activities. The allotted area for a welfare center, of 15,000 sq. ft. per ward (a ward may constitute about 500,000 to 2 million people) is ridiculously low. Owners of the land reserved for public amenities are allowed to use 50% of the buildable area for commercial purposes, provided they use the remaining 50% for the amenities.

The proposed new low-income housing is through World Bank funded "site and services" projects implemented by the state authority of MHADA (Maharashtra Housing and Area Development Board) (Murphy: 1990).

### **Provision of Infrastructure in the Existing Slum Settlement**

The existing "authorized" low-income housing stock in Bombay is the slum settlements and "Chawl" settlements. Provision of infrastructure in the existing authorized slums is under two authorities, the Slum Improvement Board of BMC and the MHADA Slum Improvement Board. They concentrate mainly on physical amenities like common toilet blocks, water taps, electricity, etc. The World-Bank-aided "Slum Upgrading Program" also provides similar services. But electrical services in interior lanes are provided only if they are wide enough for a maintenance vehicle to pass

through. Needless to say, the settlements don't always meet this condition.

#### **Provision in the New Housing Schemes Funded by the World Bank**

In the new housing under the "Site and Service" scheme, the World Bank package includes provision of an individually constructed toilet block and a demarcated plinth on which the owner builds as per his/her needs. In addition, the package includes roads, water supply, and amenities like markets and schools. Plots for welfare centers (30,000 sq. ft. for a population of 35,000) are earmarked. Although the norm for welfare centers is better than the provision in the Development Plan of BMC, the welfare centers' chance of getting built is remote because, as per the authority, the residents have to undertake the responsibility of building them.

#### **Provision of Social Services by the State Welfare Department**

The Bombay City Social Education Committee, funded by the government, started in 1939 by opening adult education classes in low-income settlements. Unfortunately, even at present, the emphasis is only on adult education; 1,000 classes are run in Bombay. Although the committee claims to have activities for women, they are limited to two kindergarten classes, two child nutrition centers, and eleven "motherhood development centers" in the entire city of Bombay. This organization's plans for the future do not indicate any quantitative or qualitative modification of the existing policy.

### **The Study**

#### **Selection of Settlements**

Three types of settlements were selected on the basis of physical development, available infrastructure, and socio-economic status of the residents, namely (1) Slums, (2) "Chawls," and (3) Blocks. Only women belonging to low- and middle-income groups were selected as subjects for the study, with an emphasis on the low-income category, as they form the majority of the women's population in the city. The city of Bombay is a linear development with the business and commercial center concentrated on the southern tip. The city was divided into three zones, south, central, and north. Each type of settlement was selected from every zone so as to allow maximum representation. A total of 17

settlements was selected. Specific characteristics of each type of settlement selected are given below.

#### **Slums**

Important characteristics of a slum settlement are unplanned growth without any initial infrastructure, extreme high density, low-rise development with only narrow lanes dividing the rows of tenements, and no common open spaces within. Electricity, common sanitary block, and water supply are subsequently provided wherever possible by the Slum Improvement Board. The slum settlements have a mixed culture as the residents are mostly migrants from all over India.

#### **"Chawls"**

"Chawls" belong to the formal housing stock provided by the Bombay Development Directorate of the state between 1945 and 1965, built at subsidized prices for working classes. This is a planned layout of the ground plus three-story buildings, with a playground and community welfare center. The two-room (kitchen and outer room) tenements, about 8 to 10 per floor, are accessible by a common corridor in the front. A similar corridor on the rear provides access to the common toilet block on each floor. The population is mainly of early migrants from the rural areas of Maharashtra, economically better off than people living in the slums.

#### **Block of Flats**

Small independent flats of not more than 500 sq. ft., accommodated in a cluster of 4-5-storied buildings, form a housing colony. There are four flats on each floor. The income strata are low- to middle-income, and residents are of varied cultural backgrounds.

Populations staying on pavements, which are below the poverty line, and upper classes staying in big apartments were excluded from the study.

#### **Selection of Women from the Settlements**

On an average, three women in the age group of 25 to 50, selected with a preference for earning women, from each type of settlement were interviewed with the help of a structured questionnaire. A total of 66 women from all the three types of settlements were interviewed: 28 women from slums, 18 from chawls, and 20 from flats.

Earning women constitute 91% (N=60) of the total sample. Two remaining 9% (N=6) are non-earning, full-time housewives.

## Findings

The findings are presented in two parts. The first part includes information about the existing physical and social infrastructural amenities provided in the settlements visited, and the second part includes information obtained from individual women.

**Table 1: Existing Physical and Infrastructural Amenities in the Settlements**

No. of Settlements Surveyed	No. of Slum	No. of Chawls	No. of Block Flats
	7	4	6
<b>Physical Infrastructural Amenities:</b>			
<b>Toilets:</b>			
1. Common toilet blocks	6 toilets/floor	common toilets	individual
2. Distance to the toilet from residence	6 min.	1 min.	—
3. Average waiting period	20 min.	12 min.	—
4. No toilet facility	1	—	—
<b>Water Source:</b>			
1. Common	6	—	—
2. Individual	—	4	6
3. No water source	1	—	—
Electricity	6	4	6
Drainage	open	covered	covered
Internal Roads	4'-0" narrow lanes	4	6
Garbage Disposal	—0—	4	6
<b>Social Infrastructural Amenities:</b>			
1. Welfare center	—0—	4	—0—
2. Mahila Mandal (informal groups of women)	6	3	3
3. Kindergarten classes	5	4	5
4. Adult education classes	4	2	1
5. Distance to public dispensary	30 min.	30 min.	Private

## Existing Physical Infrastructure

As Table 1, giving physical and infrastructural amenities in the selected settlements, indicates, infrastructure varies with the category of the settlement. However, one can make a general observation that all the amenities provided are inadequate.

### Sanitation

In slum settlements particularly toilets are inadequate and inconvenient for women. Lack of enough privacy, insecurity at night, long waiting periods and unhygienic conditions due to bad maintenance are common problems. In chawls the problems are less because the common toilets are on each floor of the building. However, problems of privacy, inadequacy, and bad maintenance remain.

One of the slums located in the richest downtown commercial area has no toilet block. Women suffer the most due to the lack of toilets, e.g., they avoid meals during the day to save themselves from the embarrassing and insecure situation of having to use secluded places at night. The norm of the Slum Improvement Board is to provide one W.C. (water closet) per 25 to 50 people. This is inadequate as seen from the average waiting time; and there is no provision of water inside the toilet in all the settlements. Three slums out of seven had no lights in the toilets, and two slums had no lights in the access to the toilet. The women's toilet blocks were observed to be dirtier because the children accompany their mothers, and, due to the dark, unsafe conditions of the W.C. units, prefer to use the outer steps or the corridors between the W.C. units.

### Water Supply

In the slums the norm for common water taps is one standpost for 150 to 200 people, which is inadequate. The tap is on average five minutes away, and women have to wait in queues at odd hours for their turn to fetch heavy buckets to their tenements. Few households have spent collectively for a private connection. Most of the tenements have a small enclosure for bathing in a small corner of the back room or outside, if space permits. The stored water has to be enough for washing the clothes and utensils, for cooking, and for drinking. It is stored in drums mostly outside the tenements in the narrow access lanes which are 4 to 5 ft. wide.



### Existing Social Infrastructure

No space is earmarked for any social amenities except welfare centers provided in government-built "chawls." Social amenities in slums and "chawls" are limited to adult education classes and kindergarten classes either provided by the welfare department of the government or as a part of N.G.O. community development activities. The kindergarten classes are mostly run privately on a commercial basis.

#### Welfare Centers

The "Chawls" built by the Bombay Development Directorate have a community hall and a playground in each cluster. The community hall is almost totally appropriated by men for sports from which women are excluded. However, in one of the centers a few sewing machines were kept on the mezzanine floor by the welfare department for use by women. Women seem to be too inhibited to use the welfare centers for their "Mahila Mandal" activities, because the men have been the dominant users of the community hall as well as the outside playground.

#### Mahila Mandals

Mahila Mandals are informal groups of women who get together in the community. This is a culturally accepted structure mainly for middle-class women who come together to plan some entertainment and/or charitable activities. However, this structure is now common in "chawls" and to some extent in slums. Unfortunately, the activities are limited to celebrations of religious festivals only. For lack of common meeting places, women meet in one of the tenements or on terraces.

#### Local Residents' Committee

Each settlement has some local committees composed of the active and enthusiastic residents, all men, who undertake various activities at the settlement level. However, the most common and popular activities are celebrations of religious festivals. The committee also does minimum liaison work with the state authorities for basic infrastructure, such as lights and water. Not a single local committee in all the settlements surveyed had a woman member on it, and we found no desire to take up issues related to women.

### Dispensaries

Public dispensaries are at a walking distance of half an hour, on the average. On the other hand, private doctors are available near all the settlements. People spend a large sum per month for their services.

### Interviews with the Women of the Settlement

To identify women's needs in the roles of producer and reproducer, we need to learn their perception of the status and value attached to the domestic chores both in the Indian cultural context and in the context of their double role. The interviews therefore included questions about sharing the domestic burden by other family members, especially the husbands; the hobbies and other interests of the women which could be pursued were their burden reduced; and their mobility within and outside the city. We also tried to learn the subjects' perceptions of their needs for services such as counseling/crisis centers for women, and child care facilities in the settlements. The findings are presented separately according to the types of settlements, i.e., slums, "chawls," and block of flats, to compare the needs and aspirations of women from the three socioeconomic levels.

### Income-Earning Activities of Women

Figure 1 indicates the distribution of women respondents' earnings in home-based and outside home activities. It is seen that middle-class women who live in the blocks of flats are engaged in outside employment because of their higher education and class backgrounds, whereas in low-income settlements such as slums and chawls women are engaged both in home-based earning and outside employment.

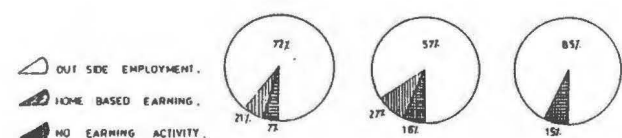


Fig. 1.

**Table 2. Average Daily Working Hours Per Settlements**

Earning Activity	Slum	Chawl	Block of Flats
Home-based	5.0	5.0	—
Outside earning			
Small production units	8.0	8.0	—
Service sector	7.0	6.0	7.0
Self-employed	5.0	8.0	—
Commuting time	0.5	2.0	2.0–2.5

**Home-Based Earning**

Women in home-based work are exploited to a greater extent than women in outside employment because the women do not form part of the organized sector. The Bombay Municipal Corporation's zoning regulations affect women's self-employed earning activities at home. In one of the "site and service" projects aided by the World Bank, women have started home-based informal shops through windows of their outer rooms, facing the access lanes to sell small grocery items, catering to the daily needs of the residents. In the residential zone, this kind of commercial activity is illegal, and these informal "shops" are liable to legal action.

A home-based worker spends, on the average, 5 hours at work, in addition to the time spent in obtaining the unfinished material and returning the finished product. The household chores and the income-generating activities always overlap, which allows no rest. Most of these activities involve a risk of pollution from the raw materials, in addition to the mess in a small room of 10' x 8' which the woman has to clean up every time this activity overlaps with other chores when other family members are present. The work is done in isolation even if women in adjoining tenements are engaged in the same work.

**Outside Earning**

Slum residents work mainly as contract laborers such as domestic servants and sweepers, and as job workers in the unorganized sector. In "chawls" the majority are workers employed in small-scale production units. The women in flats are employed mostly in white-collar

administrative jobs as clerks, receptionists, accountants, etc. Table 2 shows the working hours in different earning activities.

Middle-class women in flats have to commute by local trains to South Bombay's commercial area, whereas slum residents seek work within walking distance to save on transportation costs.

**Perception of Household Chores**

Household work is considered a natural primary activity for women, and it is assumed that women enjoy performing domestic chores. In reality, the domestic responsibilities which are solely the women's restrict them irrespective of their class, in pursuing either an earning activity or any other work of their own interest. The average time spent on household tasks was 6.5 hours per day. Women spent an average of 4.5 hours on these tasks. They thus contributed 70% of the labor for household chores.

To find out how women assess their chores, the value they attach to each, and the physical labor required for each, they were given a list of common domestic chores like cooking, preparation for cooking, sweeping, cleaning utensils, washing clothes, fetching water from the common water source, child care, serving meals, buying vegetables, and buying necessities like grains and fuel (kerosene) from government subsidized ration shops and private grocery shops. They were asked to categorize these as enjoyable chores, strenuous chores, and chores which give them some status. Sixty-one women from a total number of 66, said very vehemently that all the chores are very strenuous and questions of pleasure do not arise. The five exceptions were women who stay in flats (see Figure 2). When pressed on this matter, some of the women identified a few chores which gave them some pleasure in spite of the fatigue. The positive values assigned to some tasks vary with the status of the settlements; more women living in flats claimed to get pleasure from activities such as cooking, child care, and shopping (Figure 2).

The affordability and variety of foods and the status attached to exclusiveness of personal cooking seem to be the main reasons for middle-class women's higher values assigned to cooking. For slum and "chawl" women, shopping is mainly standing in long queues in front of government-subsidized ration shops for daily necessities and fuel almost every alternate day, and therefore it is not enjoyable. Home-based income

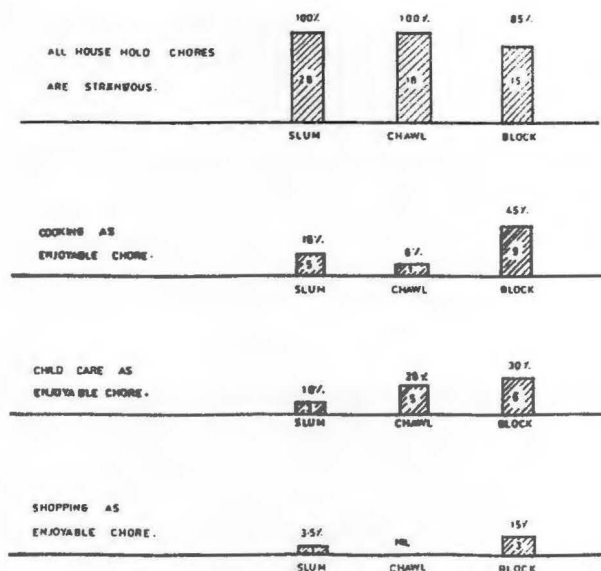


Fig. 2.

generating activity is the only domestic activity conferring status, as reported by all the women who undertake home-based earning work.

#### Sharing of Work by Husband and Other Family Members

The relationships between husbands and wives in sharing the domestic work were examined by finding out whether the wives ask their husbands to help them. Of the respondents, 81% (54) women (in slums, chawls, and blocks) replied that they never ask for help. The reasons varied by class. Slum and chawl women expressed hopelessness and anticipated negative replies to such requests. They responded with, "I know he is not going to help so why ask?" Women in the flats said, "I can manage on my own, so why ask him?" Maximum help in the family is provided by the daughters, mothers-in-law, and very occasionally sons, in extended households of single women. Figure 3 shows the help extended by other family members.

It was amusing to find out that the chores in which the husbands help are very similar. The chores are restricted to "clean," fast, and outside jobs, namely, shopping, getting the children ready for school, and occasionally fetching water during the wife's illness. In the most tiring and time-consuming jobs, cooking, cleaning, and washing, the husbands do not extend help. However, four women said they do receive their husbands' help in all the chores. The women were

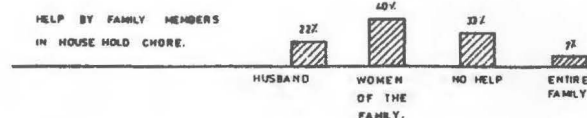


Fig. 3.

asked to identify the chores which other family members can possibly undertake. Fetching water, buying rations from ration shops, and looking after school-going children are prominently identified.

#### Collective Organization of Services

The concept of socialization of domestic chores was unheard of by all the women who were interviewed. This was expected, and therefore the questions under this head were framed carefully. Certain consumer items and services, like buying ready pickles and getting ready flour from flour mills, were part of household chores a few decades ago, but are well accepted as commercial services today, even in the low-income households. By citing these examples, further response was sought to the proposal of similar organized help for cooked "chapatis" (bread), cooked vegetables, and collective services for washing clothes by a set of washing machines in the community. Basic affordability of these services was assured. In some of the earlier informal discussions with middle-class women, such a proposal was turned down as unrealistic and ridiculous. However, in the present study, the uninhibited responses came as a pleasant surprise. The proposal was not discarded as unrealistic but was probed into with curiosity. The degree of acceptance of the unfamiliar concept of organized help is shown in Figure 4. On the whole, it was observed that cooked chapatis and cheap laundry would be welcome. Chapati-making is a laborious process involving rolling and roasting of flattened dough on the kerosene stove, which increases chances of the sari catching fire in the small multipurpose room.

Women who get regular help from the family members are not so much in favor of outside service. The charts show that women from all the categories are eager to be relieved from the chore of washing clothes. It is interesting to see that in one of the poorest slums surveyed, where women work mostly as domestic maids, they cannot comprehend paying for the very services they sell, like washing clothes, whereas they do cherish the dream of getting ready-made meals. On the

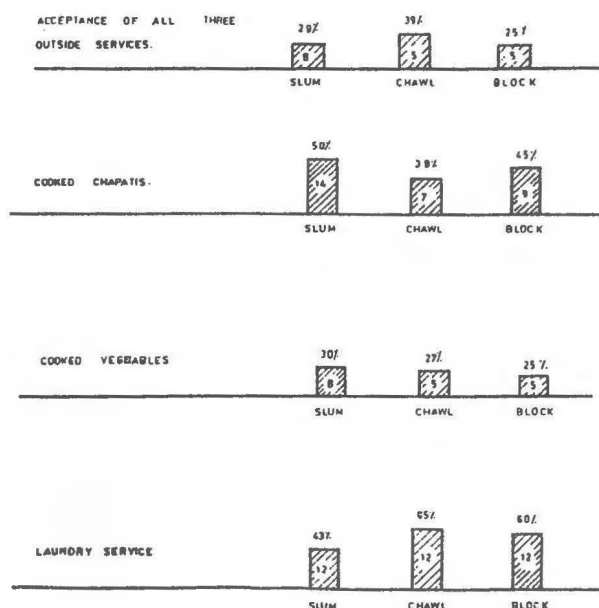


Fig. 4.

other hand, middle-class women are less interested in cooked items than in laundry services. This may reflect the difference in the attitudes of the two classes towards the status attached to different chores.

#### Activities Which Women Would Like to Undertake If They Got Relief from Domestic Chores and Hobbies They Would Pursue

Through the interviews the women were asked to identify their hobbies encouraging them to carve out at least some part of their time exclusively for their own interests. Yet the answers show how difficult it is for these women to allow themselves to think about their own satisfaction. As can be seen in Figure 5, for 50% of the slum and chawl women, the priority is income generation in the saved time rather than any leisure activities. The concept of hobbies is alien to nearly 50% of the women in slums. They laugh it off as an unthinkable luxury at the first instance. Women in blocks could specify a few hobbies, and almost all the women said they had pursued some hobby before they got married. Tailoring and knitting are culturally accepted hobbies, encouraged by parents in all classes: they restrict the girls to their homes and make them self-sufficient in stitching their own clothes. These may also be potential income-generating activities in their married life,

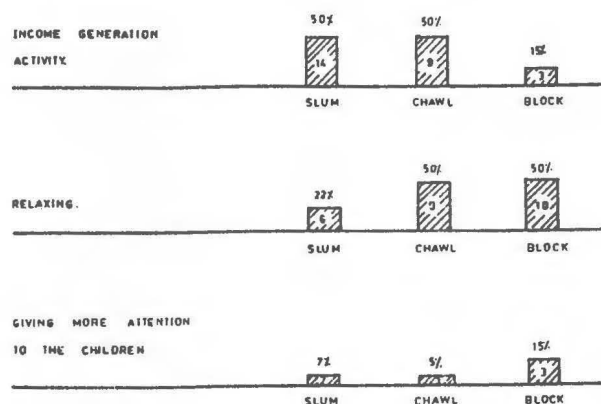


Fig. 5.

especially in an emergency situation, e.g., the husband's death or desertion.

#### Mobility

Women get inhibited due to lack of mobility. Many factors in patriarchal society restrict the mobility of women, domestic responsibilities among them. The degradation of life in slums adds to the insecure atmosphere. In the study, the mobility of the women was judged from their use of time in the holidays, out station travel in vacation, mobility in the settlement, and within the city of Bombay. Mobility within the settlement is found to be negligible compared to that of the men, as shown in Table 3.

Mobility of women is found to depend mainly on the place of work and commuting. Women from low-income settlements choose to work close to their homes, thus minimizing their mobility. Inflation has curtailed pleasurable activities of traveling or sightseeing within the city; 85% of the women in the slums and 55% of those in chawls are not even aware of the activities in the main downtown commercial and administration area. Faulty town planning, totally segregating commercial and residential areas, added by the real estate pressures, segregate the middle- and low-income population from the main town. "Women are the most affected population, who become extremely inhibited and scared to venture beyond their immediate environment" (Matrix: 1984). However, in this respect it should be noted that the original unplanned character of Bombay has been advantageous to a majority of women in that commuting for work is necessary. Women who work are therefore forced to and become competent in navigating the city.



**Table 3: Sightseeing Mobility of Women**

Destination	Slum %	Chawl %	Block %
Sightseeing in the vicinity of settlement	64	85	100
Beach	53	95	100
Main railway stations	64	88	100

A very good system of public transport in Bombay also helps women to be mobile.

#### Awareness of Services Such as Crèches and Women's Counseling Centers

Whether the women are aware of services like crèches or counseling/crisis centers, and whether they perceive the necessity of having these services in their settlement or in the vicinity is indicated in Figure 6. Many women in slums who had not heard of crèches earlier felt that, if such services were to exist, in part, their children would not have missed their schooling by having to look after the siblings while the parents went out to earn money. Awareness of women's counseling centers and the need felt for this service is also indicated in Figure 6. It was found that the awareness for this service is seen only if such organizations are working in women's own settlements.

#### Conclusions

The study establishes that there is an apathy toward inclusion of women's needs in the process of planning housing and its infrastructure. The study sought to identify and analyze the needs of women in the two categories of low income and one category of middle income, as indicated by where they lived, namely slums, chawls, and block of flats. It led to the emergence of new insight and also confirmed the hypotheses, e.g., it has shown that the needs of women in the three different socio-economic categories vary in degree but not in kind. The variation is attributable mainly to the degree of internalization of patriarchal values and upholding of many myths, especially about the status and value attached to domestic chores.

Women's perspectives of domestic chores are changing due to their increased awareness of the importance of their roles as producers. Analysis of the double burden of earning and household responsibilities confirms that

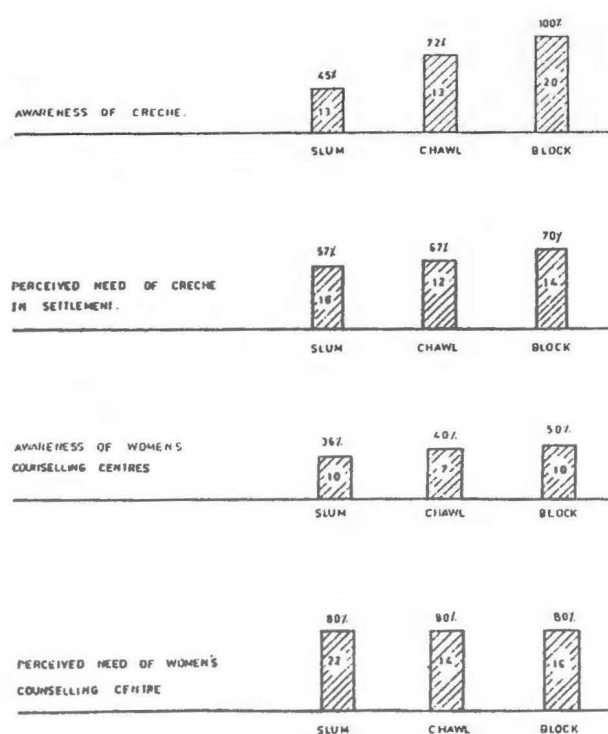


Fig. 6.

immediate measures are needed to socialize some of the most strenuous chores for which women would be willing to accept outside help. Most women no longer consider cooking as a status-giving activity, contrary to what has been assumed in the Indian cultural context.

The socialization of chores as with the "British Restaurant" of post-war England (Matrix: 1984, p. 108) and the "Common Kitchens" of the socialist countries like the Soviet Union, would, within the Indian social framework, run into factors related to caste, religion, and regionality. These might play a restrictive role in socialization of domestic chores, especially cooking. Caste pollution and caste and regional identity may adversely affect eating meals cooked by women of other castes. Thus one would have to start with a limited scale to make this a workable concept. Instead of all the daily items of meals, only a few basic items could be prepared and managed at the community level. This should be encouraged and financed by the state welfare department.

The local residents' committee would play an important role here. It was observed that in all 17 settlements not a single local committee had a woman member. This fact contradicts Caroline Moser's analysis of the triple role

of women in Third World countries, woman as a producer, a reproducer, and a community manager (Moser and Peake: 1987, p. 13). In the Indian urban context, the leadership capabilities of the women at the community level are revealed, unfortunately, only during crisis situations like religious riots or police repression during compulsory eviction. The degradations of life in the low-income settlements due to the corrupt political climate affects the lives of the poor to a great extent. They are divided on caste and religion lines for political gains, and the local residents' committees are used by the nexus of politicians and criminals in the power game. In such a situation women are further marginalized.

With this background, it seems practical that the existing structure of Mahila Mandals (informal groups of women in the settlement) should be imbued with feminist consciousness. Women should be mobilized around tangible demands such as crèches, community space for collective domestic work, etc. The examples of SPARC and of Maitrei, a feminist women's organization, are worth noting. Maitrei's, through the Mahila Mandal, stimulate social awareness among the women by taking up issues such as domestic violence, health, sexuality, etc. Such "consciousness-raising" would help to link the concept of socialization of work with the sexual division of labor. The study shows that the women have begun to realize the unjust division of work between men and women, even on the domestic front. Equal sharing of household responsibilities by the husband is a part of the long-term process, but simultaneous efforts are needed to empower women to make demands on both fronts.

#### Changes in the State Housing Regulation

The present political and economic policies of the Indian government are heavily inclined toward a private market economy. All welfare expenses are being heavily cut and women are going to be the worst sufferers. In this situation, on the one hand, demands based on the state provision for housing and infrastructure will have to be made with renewed efforts in collaboration with all other progressive movements. On the other hand, demands will have to be made for changing norms in favor of women, in the building regulations, and within the private sector development.

Some of the changes which could be implemented in the state policy are:

- Inclusion in the development plans of BMC and World Bank-funded projects of MHADA, the amenities of

welfare/community centers especially for women, e.g., crèches and shelter homes/crisis centers for women. The state should also ensure the construction of these amenities rather than leaving it to the private owners as in the present provision.

- Zoning regulations need to be reformulated to allow women to undertake home-based small-scale commercial activities. The critique of zoning regulations of Third World countries by Caroline Moser applies accurately to the Indian situation. Zoning regulations which separate residential and business activities may prohibit the development of small-scale self-employed income-earning activities at home, e.g., women selling products from their front door (Moser and Peake: 1987, p. 21).
- Slum Improvement Board and World Bank-funded Slum Upgrading Program for existing settlements should incorporate the suggested social amenities in their package of services, in addition to the quantitative changes needed, e.g., addition of low-cost open-air toilets for children will go a long way to keep the women's toilet block less dirty.

In conclusion it appears that to change the situation documented in this paper two areas need to be addressed.

- Policy makers should be aware that the definition of shelter cannot be complete without the provision of physical and social amenities for women.
- The infrastructural needs of women have to be identified in the feminist perspective and in the cultural context, giving equal weight to their double roles of production and reproduction. Solutions should be geared toward long-term objectives ("strategic"), empowering women to live free of exploitative power relations within the society, not token welfaristic measures of quantitative modifications as in the existing provision. Even short-term measures ("practical") should be aimed toward structural changes in the social status of the women. The participation of men in domestic and child care would have to be enhanced by consciousness-raising of the women of the settlements through existing social services like adult education classes and Mahila Mandals.

To make such demands of the state authorities and to mobilize the women of the community, forums of progressive architects and feminist groups would have to collaborate and work at multiple levels, at the level of research, at the level of lobbying, and at the level of activism. All shelter-related struggles therefore go hand in hand with women's movements: the struggle for subsistence production, the struggle of the unorganized sector, and the struggle for a balanced and healthy ecology.

## Note

<sup>1</sup> This study was assisted by Sandhya Naik, Nandadeep Society, Goregaon, Bombay, India.

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